

date: **6/18/17**

Bible Passage: Matthew 28:16–20; Acts 1—2
(Ascension and Holy Spirit)

God's Spirit Changes Everything

REMEMBER VERSE

He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever—holy and awesome is his name.

Psalm 111:9

Inspire

Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives

One of the most powerful and meaningful experiences in my spiritual life was the day I began learning about the Jewish roots of Christianity. I heard a speaker who began to explain what discipleship meant during the time of Jesus.

A command to “go and make disciples” (Matthew 28:19) was much more than inviting people to ask Jesus into their hearts. A disciple was someone who gave up everything to follow a rabbi. A disciple lived with his rabbi, memorized the things the rabbi said, ate with him, and walked like he walked. A disciple’s goal was to be just like his rabbi.

I found it all very beautiful. And also intimidating. For me to love Jesus the way a disciple truly should seemed like a challenging task. But God doesn’t leave us to do this on our own. The story of the Holy Spirit coming at Pentecost is a refreshing wind of God’s grace. He sent the Holy Spirit—the third member of the Trinity, God Himself—to live within us and guide us in truth. It’s through the love, power, and prompting of the Holy Spirit that we can live as disciples of Jesus. What a beautiful God.

Denise Morris
CrossRoads Church

Equip

Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage



The day of Pentecost marked the beginning of the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, in which God had promised to bless everyone through Abraham's seed. Pentecost also marked the initial fulfillment of the Davidic covenant, in which God had promised a king who would rule forever and be a blessing to the nations. Pentecost also began the fulfillment of Joel 2:28, in which God promised to "pour out [His] Spirit on all people."

Right before His ascension, Jesus commanded His church to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). Jesus also gave the gift of the Holy Spirit to empower His followers to fulfill that mission. The new covenant, introduced by the shedding of Jesus' blood, also brought the new heart, promised in Jeremiah 31:33, in which God promised, "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts."

On the day of Pentecost, three thousand people came to faith in Christ. Pentecost was also known as the Festival of First Fruits. During this festival, Jewish people would offer the first fruits of their harvest to God and ask Him to bless the rest of their crops. The three thousand new believers were the first fruits of all believers that would come through the church, forever. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit also empowered the disciples to preach the good news in many languages—the good news that would eventually travel the world.

Support

Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word

Jesus charged the church with the task of "[making] disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). We have the ability and privilege to do this because of God's Spirit inside us. The Great Commission is clear. God wants us to be about the work of spreading His love and helping make disciples to follow and serve Him. Along with giving us His Spirit, He's given us gifts we're to use to glorify Him and edify the church.

As you prepare for this lesson, think about how the Holy Spirit has used others to change you. How has He helped you to be more merciful, more patient, or more kind? Then ask yourself: What does it mean to help others be followers of Jesus? How is God calling you to bring others into His story, to "make disciples of all nations"?

Pray the kids in your ministry will be filled with the Holy Spirit so they will have the desire and the ability to be used by God. Pray God will use them to be disciple-makers.

SMALL GROUP
SECTION

EXPLORE// 10 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children engage in fun, creative activities designed to pique their curiosity about the day's portion of The Big God Story.

Today your children will learn the amazing truth that God's Spirit changes everything. With these fun science experiments, get them thinking about how one ingredient can change everything.



Balloon Blowup

SUPPLIES

- Disposable tablecloth or tarp
- Balloon (uninflated) 
- Vinegar (½ c.) 
- Funnel
- Baking soda (5 Tbsp.) 
- Empty narrow-necked bottle (e.g., water bottle)

SET UP

Spread the tablecloth or tarp on the table and place the supplies on top of it.

RELATE

Pour the vinegar into the bottle. Insert the funnel into the balloon, pulling the neck of the balloon over the neck of the funnel. Pour the baking soda into the balloon. Pinch the balloon closed and then carefully attach it to the bottle by stretching the neck over the opening. Tell the kids that as the baking soda empties into the bottle, mixing with the vinegar, they'll see a big change! The fizzing and foaming will create a chemical reaction—a release of carbon dioxide gas—that will slowly blow up the balloon.

LARGE GROUP
SECTION

DISCOVER// 30 min.

Host/Worship Leader/Storyteller

Children participate in discovering God's Word through Bible verse memorization, interactive storytelling techniques, and worship as response.

Traditions and Remember Verse

SUPPLIES

- [Remember Verse image](#) (see Resources)
- Mementos for your church Traditions (rocks, marbles, gum balls, etc.)

RELATE

Give the children mementos (such as rocks, marbles, or blocks) for accomplishments such as memorizing the Remember Verse or bringing their Bibles. Have them put the objects into a clear container or add them to a structure, and celebrate when it's complete.

This week's Remember Verse focuses on a character trait of God that's highlighted in today's portion of The Big God Story.

He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever—holy and awesome is his name. Psalm 111:9



Connect

Question

When did you experience a big change in your life (such as moving to a new neighborhood, going to a new school, or getting a new sibling)?

The Big God Story

Bible Passage: Matthew 28:16–20; Acts 1—2
Storytelling Technique: Signs with Key Words
God's Spirit Changes Everything

SUPPLIES

- [Timeline image](#) (see Resources)
- [Timeline animation](#) (see Resources)
- [Speech Bubbles template](#) (see Resources)
- Bibles
- Card stock (13 sheets)
- Scissors
- Jumbo craft sticks (13)
- Tape or glue

PREPARE AHEAD

Today's portion of The Big God Story will be told with the help of key words inside speech bubbles. As the Storyteller, you can choose to hold up the speech bubbles yourself, or you might enlist a couple of other leaders (or even children) to hold up the bubbles as you storytell. As each bubble is held up, you may also project that bubble's corresponding image, if you wish.

SET UP

Print the Speech Bubble template onto card stock. Cut out the bubbles and glue a craft stick to the back of each one.

RELATE

What is the good news—the best news ever? Invite responses. **Right—it's the news of Jesus Christ dying on the cross and rising again so people can be in relationship with God! This changed the world forever. Before we hear more, let's pray together.** Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds.

After Jesus rose, He stayed on earth for about 40 days and appeared to His disciples. Hold up "He's alive!" speech bubble near your mouth and/or *cue image*. **They touched His scarred hands and feet. Jesus ate with the disciples and "spoke about the kingdom of God"** (Acts 1:3). Hold up "The kingdom of God is like ..." speech bubble near your mouth and/or *cue image*. **Before Jesus went up into heaven, He gave His disciples one last instruction: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"** (Matthew 28:19). Hold up "Go and make disciples" bubble and/or *cue image*.

Who is the Holy Spirit? Invite kids to respond. **Great thoughts. The Holy Spirit is God. It's the Holy**



Spirit whom the Father sends to live inside everyone who trusts and obeys Jesus. The Holy Spirit gives us wisdom, comfort, and power (hold up “Wisdom, comfort, and power” bubble and/or *cue image*) **to love and serve God. The Holy Spirit even talks to the Father on our behalf! In the Old Testament, God’s Spirit came upon kings and prophets in a special way to help them serve God better. But watch what happens in today’s part of The Big God Story!**

Invite children to open their Bibles to Acts 1:4 and follow along. **The Bible says, “On one occasion, while [Jesus] was eating with [the disciples], he gave them this command: ‘Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John [the Baptist] baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit’”** (vv. 4–5). **A few months earlier, Jesus had told the disciples, “It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the [Holy Spirit] will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you”** (John 16:7). Hold up “The Holy Spirit is coming” speech bubble and/or *cue image*. **Jesus is both God and human, and because He’s human, He can only be in one place at a time. But the Holy Spirit can be everywhere. He can be with everyone, everywhere, at the same time!**

Finally, the day came for Jesus to go up to heaven. Jesus told His disciples (invite kids to follow along starting at Acts 1:8), **“‘But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight”** (vv. 8–9). Hold up “WOW!” bubble and/or *cue image*.

The disciples stayed in Jerusalem, just as Jesus had told them, praising God (hold up “Glory to God!” Bubble and/or *cue image*) **and waiting for the Holy Spirit. Several days later, as the disciples celebrated the festival of Pentecost, God’s Spirit changed everything!** Invite kids to turn to Acts 2:2. **They heard a sound like a rushing wind.** Hold up “Woosh” bubble and/or *cue image*. **They saw what looked like tongues of fire rest on one another’s heads. And they spoke languages they didn’t even know!** Hold up “Gloria a Dios! Jaha kwa Mungu!” bubble and/or *cue image*. **Other people asked, “What does this mean?”** (v. 12). Hold up “What does this mean?” bubble and/or *cue image*.

Peter, one of Jesus’ disciples, got up and preached to the crowds and told them the good news about Jesus’ death and resurrection. Hold up “We are all witnesses of it” bubble and/or *cue image*. **Peter even explained Bible verses from the past to prove that Jesus had fulfilled what God had been promising throughout The Big God Story. The Bible says about three thousand people believed in Jesus that day!** Hold up “I believe” bubble and/or *cue image*. **Afterward, the people worshipped God together, and the disciples performed many miracles so that more and more people heard the good news, believed in Jesus, and joined the community of believers praising God** (v. 43). **The Holy Spirit changed everything!**

For thousands of years, the people of God had waited for the time when God would pour out His Spirit on all people (Joel 2:28–29). **They would know God and know how to obey God. This time had finally come! Since that day, all people who put their faith in Jesus receive the Holy Spirit to live inside them. God’s Spirit leads them, teaches them, and pours love into their hearts** (hold up “Leads, teaches, and pours love” bubble and/or *cue image*) (Romans 5:5). Share a brief story about a time when God’s Spirit gave you the courage and love to tell someone about Him.

Jesus’ death on the cross made the way for you and me to be in relationship with God and receive the Holy Spirit to live inside us. Sin had once destroyed our relationship with God, but Jesus’ death healed this relationship so completely that not only can we be in God’s presence, but also God’s Spirit actually comes and dwells inside us! When God’s Spirit came, He changed everything ... and He



changes everything about the way you and I live today! We can know that God is always present with us, we can talk to Him anytime, and we can turn to Him as our Helper, Comforter, Teacher, Guide, Friend, and the One who gives us power.

SECTION

RESPOND// 15 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children reflect on what the Holy Spirit is teaching them and respond through creative activities and games.

Reflect: God's Spirit Changes Everything

Encourage children to look up the following references in their Bibles.

Questions for Younger Kids

- **What is a disciple?** Matthew 28:18–20
- **Why is making disciples of all nations important?** Psalm 86:9; Matthew 24:14
- **Why is it good that God sent the Holy Spirit?** John 14:16–17a, 26
- **Why do we need the Holy Spirit today?** Acts 1:8; Romans 8:26
- **How has the Holy Spirit changed your life?**

Questions for Older Kids

- **Before He left, what did Jesus tell the disciples to do?** Matthew 28:18–20
- **What is a disciple?** Matthew 28:18–20
- **Why is making disciples of all nations important?** Psalm 86:9; Matthew 24:14
- **How did receiving the Holy Spirit change things for the disciples and the early church?** Acts 2:42–44
- **Why do we need the Holy Spirit? How does He help us?** John 14:16–17a, 26; Acts 1:8; Romans 8:26
- **How has the Holy Spirit changed your life?**



BLESS// 5 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing may be prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse cards (see Resources)
- Bible

RELATE

Invite children to make up motions to go along with Ephesians 3:16–19 as you read the verses over them. If you want, decide on the motions that you'll do as a group. Otherwise, allow the kids to choose their own motions.

Open a Bible and read Ephesians 3:16–19:

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Finally, have the kids form a circle as you finish with the following blessing:

May you be filled with power from God's Spirit to know how wide and long and high and deep Jesus' love is for you. May you see God's power at work in you, in our church, and in your conversations with those who don't know Jesus yet, so that they can hear your story and believe in Him.

