



PENTECOST

MEETING AIM

To discover that God's helper and comforter is still with us.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 2:1-41

BACKGROUND

The events of Easter and the time following that can be a bit confusing for younger children. Jesus dies and comes alive again, then he goes back to heaven. He promises a helper, the Holy Spirit, and that's who arrives in this Bible story today. This is a lot to take in! The mysteries of salvation, the Trinity, who the Holy Spirit is and how he lives with us might be beyond the understanding of our children, but we can talk about and demonstrate these concepts in our day-to-day lives and so lay the foundation for greater revelation as they grow.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments and chat about what your children have found exciting today (or yesterday, if you're doing this in the morning). What do your children know about the Holy Spirit? Have they heard about him at church? Or at home?

PLAY

10 MINS

You will need: toys that encourage helping

Set out some toys to help the children explore the idea of helping – this could be dressing-up clothes for firefighters, hospitals or schools. You could also just play at being 'at home': help each other with pretending to make tea or dig the garden.

Let the children choose what they would like to play with and how they would like to play with it. Join in with the play as your children direct you. Congratulate all the examples of helping that you see throughout this play time.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: Bible; *The Big Bible Storybook* (SPCK) or similar

Find your Bible and show your children the book of Acts. Explain that the book of Acts tells the story of what Jesus' friends did after he died and came alive again at Easter, and went back to heaven. Ask your children what they can remember, or what they know, about Easter. Briefly recap the story for them.

Show the children your Bible storybook. *The Big Bible Storybook* is ideal as the angle the story takes mirrors the focus of this session, but you could use another – if you do, try to emphasise that the Holy Spirit was the person Jesus promised and that he helps us and is always with us. If you have *The Big Bible Storybook*, read the story of Pentecost from page 221, making sure everyone can see the pictures.

Read the story again, but this time, ask your children to imagine that they are there with the friends of Jesus as the story takes place, and to act it out. What might they do when they hear the strong wind blowing, when the flames dance around and when they can speak different languages? Can anyone say anything in another language?

Wonder together what the Holy Spirit is like. You could share your own experiences – think carefully how you might explain these to children who don't think abstractly.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Chat about the story using these questions:

- What is your favourite part of the story?
- How might the friends of Jesus have felt before the Holy Spirit came?
- How might the friends of Jesus have felt after the Holy Spirit came?
- How do you think the Holy Spirit can be with us and help us today?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: paper straws or garden dowelling; red, yellow and orange ribbon or crepe paper; sticky tape; scissors

If you're using crepe paper, cut out long strips of each colour. Give your children a straw or stick and show them how to stick lengths of ribbon or strips of crepe paper onto the end of the stick or straw. Continue chatting about the story as you work. Remind them how, when the Holy Spirit came to Jesus' friends, it was like flames dancing around and resting on the disciples' heads.

When you've finished, show how to wave the sticks or straws through the air. The ribbon or crepe paper strips should stream behind, looking like flames dancing through the air. Pretend to be Jesus' friends: listen for the sound of the wind (encourage your children to create their own sound effects) and wave the streamers through the air, before letting them rest on your heads. (Remind everyone to be careful with the sticks, and not to hit or poke anyone.)

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: streamers from 'Creative time'; play windmills; praise music and the means to play it

Play the praise music and encourage your children to dance around your space, waving their streamers and the play windmills in the air. Enjoy seeing the different colours of the streamers and how the windmills twirl. Stop the music and encourage your children to shout thank you to the Holy Spirit for being with us and helping us every day.

After a few minutes, stop the music and ask your children to tell the Holy Spirit about something they'd like his help with this week. It could be getting along with their brother or sister while they're at home. Finish with a short prayer thanking the Holy Spirit for being with you and helping you.

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PAUL AND SILAS

MEETING AIM

To discover that God can help us in the most difficult situations, and change things for the better.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 16:16-40

BACKGROUND

Paul and Silas were in prison for setting a girl free. However, they focused on Jesus, not their immediate predicament. A younger child's world can sometimes be confusing and scary. How can we help our children focus on Jesus in these confusing times? How do we do it in our own lives?

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments and chat about what your children have found exciting today (or yesterday, if you're doing this in the morning). Can the children remember a time when they were scared or in trouble?

PLAY

10 MINS

You will need: coloured paper; scissors; child-safe scissors; sticky tape

If your children don't have great motor skills yet, then cut out some strips from coloured paper before you start. If they can cut out, then let them choose the coloured paper and show them how to cut strips with the child-safe scissors.

Once you have some strips, demonstrate how to loop the strips to make circles, then join those together with other strips to make chains. As you work, continue the conversation you started in 'Starting out'.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: Bible; *The Big Bible Storybook* (SPCK) or similar; paper chains from 'Play'

Find your Bible and show your children the book of Acts. Explain that the book of Acts tells the story of what Jesus' friends did after he died and came

alive again at Easter, and went back to heaven. If you have already done the Pentecost session, ask your children what they can remember.

Explain to your children that Paul was a friend of Jesus. He went all over the place, telling people about Jesus. Sometimes he took friends with him. He travelled with Barnabas, John Mark, Luke, Timothy and others. This time, he was with a friend called Silas. He had gone to a place called Philippi to tell the people there how amazing Jesus is.

Show your children your Bible storybook. *The Big Bible Storybook* is ideal, but you could use another one that contains this story. If you have *The Big Bible Storybook*, read the story of Paul and Silas from page 235, making sure everyone can see the pictures.

Read the story again, but this time, ask your children to imagine that they are there with the friends of Jesus as the story takes place, and to act it out. What might they do when they feel the earthquake, when their chains fall off and when the jailer is scared? They can use the chains they made in 'Play' and then rip them off when the earthquake happens.

Take turns in being Paul and Silas, the jailer and the other prisoners. What songs might the prisoners have sung in the prison? Could you sing one now?

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Chat about the story using these questions:

- What is your favourite part of the story?
- How did Paul and Silas feel when they were in the prison?
- How did Paul and Silas feel when the earthquake happened and their chains fell off?
- What do you think happened to the jailer and his family next?
- What do you want to say to Jesus after hearing this story?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: art materials; large sheets of paper; cover-up and clean-up equipment

Get out whatever art materials you have in the house. Give everyone a large sheet of paper (A3 or larger – cut some old wallpaper if you have any). If you're using messy art materials, make sure you cover up your children and wherever you're doing this activity!

Encourage your children to create a picture in response to what they have heard and thought about in the story today. The end result of what your children produce isn't important here, rather the process they go through. Be ready to chat with your children if they would like to ask you questions or explain what they are doing, but don't impose your own interpretations on what they have created.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: chains from 'Play'; marker pens

Chat about how Paul and Silas might have felt in the prison. Where they scared? Were they sad? Were they upset that they had been punished for no real reason? Recall times when you might feel the same as Paul and Silas. Help your children to think of one thing they would like to tell Jesus about and write that for them on a link of the chain.

Once everyone has thought about something to write, ask Jesus to help you in all those situations. Rip the chain up together, and shout thank you to Jesus for solving those problems. If possible, keep the ripped chain links around the house, so you can discover over the coming days how Jesus has answered your prayers.

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PAUL IN DANGER

MEETING AIM

To discover that God helps us to be brave and do his work, no matter how young we are.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 23:12-22

BACKGROUND

This is just a small episode in the rollercoaster ride that is Acts, but it has big things it can teach our children about trusting God to keep us safe, being brave and never being too young to do God's work. Sometimes children can be sidelined and not involved in active work for God, but everyone has a role to play in telling the good news.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments and chat about what your children have found exciting today (or yesterday, if you're doing this in the morning). Can the children remember a time when they had to be brave in a scary situation?

PLAY

10 MINS

You will need: play people, such as Playmobil or Duplo; building bricks

Get out whatever construction toys you have and encourage your children to create buildings or structures to keep the people safe. As your children do so, continue your chat from 'Starting out' about being brave. When might your play people have to be brave?

Carry on the play for as long as you have time, joining in if they invite you to.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: Bible; *The Big Bible Storybook* (SPCK) or similar

Find your Bible and show your children the book of Acts. Explain that the book of Acts tells the story of what Jesus' friends did after he died and came alive again at Easter, and went back to heaven.

Explain to your children that Paul was a friend of Jesus. Sometimes, when he travelled around, people got angry.

They didn't like it that Paul was telling everyone he met about Jesus. Paul got beaten up and even arrested!

Show your children your Bible storybook. *The Big Bible Storybook* is ideal, but you could use another one that contains this story. If you have *The Big Bible Storybook*, read the story 'Paul in danger' from page 239, making sure everyone can see the pictures.

Read the story again, but this time, ask your children to imagine that they are Paul's nephew. What would they have done? Would they have been brave enough to go and tell the big important soldier about the danger Paul was in?

Take turns in pretending to be the big important soldier and Paul's nephew. Finally, ask how God kept Paul safe. Who did God use?

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Chat about the story using these questions:

- What is your favourite part of the story?
- How might Paul's nephew have felt when he heard the news about the group of men?
- Have you ever been brave, like Paul's nephew?
- Who helps you to be brave?
- What do you think Paul's nephew did next?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: art materials; large sheets of paper; cover-up and clean-up equipment

Get out whatever art materials you have in the house. Give everyone a large sheet of paper (A3 or larger – cut some old wallpaper if you have any). If you're using messy art materials, make sure you cover up your children and wherever you're doing this activity!

Encourage your children to create a picture in response to what they have heard and thought about in the story today. The end result of what your children produce isn't important here, rather the process they go through. Be ready to chat with your children if they would like to ask you questions or explain what they are doing, but don't

impose your own interpretations on what they have created.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: play people from 'Play'

Share out the play people from 'Play'. (Your children may wish to keep the same ones they had earlier or have different ones – make sure you solve any disputes that might arise over this!) Ask them to hold the people in their hands and think about a time when they have to be brave this week. This could be a birthday party cancelled, or having to stay at home when they don't want to. After a moment invite your children to close their hands around the play people. Say that God keeps us safe, just as you're keeping the play people safe.

If you have any missionaries linked to your church, this would be a good time to help children discover more about them and pray for them. They may be in danger, like Paul, but your family can make a difference by asking God to keep them safe. Do the prayer activity again by imagining the play people are the missionaries.

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SHIPWRECK!

MEETING AIM

To discover that God is powerful enough to keep us safe.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 27

BACKGROUND

Shipwrecks seem a common outcome in the Bible when characters take to the sea, and this story is no different. However, each time Bible characters get in danger on the water, God shows his command of all creation, and rescues his people from danger. Paul gets into trouble on his way to Rome, but God keeps him safe along with all the sailors with Paul on the ship. God is sovereign over all.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments and chat about what your children have found exciting today (or yesterday, if you're doing this in the morning). Ask your children if they remember times you have been to the seaside. Do they recall seeing big waves crashing on the shore? If you've never been to the seaside, show some videos of huge waves on a phone or tablet.

PLAY

10 MINS

You will need: water toys; cover-up and clean-up equipment

Set out your water toys in a place where it doesn't matter if you spill water (or use waterproof covers to protect floors etc). Give your children waterproof aprons to wear. Let them play with the equipment, seeing if they can create waves or discover how the water travels through some of the toys.

Let your children lead the play and join in with them if they invite you to. Chat about the water and relate it back to the videos you shared in 'Starting out' (if you watched any videos).

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: Bible; *The Big Bible Storybook* (SPCK) or similar

Find your Bible and show your children the book of Acts. Explain that the book of Acts tells the story of what Jesus' friends did after he died and came alive again at Easter, and went back to heaven.

Explain to your children that Paul was a friend of Jesus. Sometimes, when he travelled around, he got into difficulties. Today's story is about a time when Paul was involved in a shipwreck – he was travelling on the sea and there was a huge storm!

Show your children your Bible storybook. *The Big Bible Storybook* is ideal, but you could use another one that contains this story. If you have *The Big Bible Storybook*, read the story 'Paul is safe' from page 242 making sure everyone can see the pictures.

Read the story again, but this time, act out being in a storm. Use chairs to form a ship-shape, or just pretend you're on a boat. Do your children think they'd be safer in the boat or trying to swim to shore? How can they look after those people who can't swim? Finally, ask how God kept Paul safe. Chat about how God is powerful – more powerful than big waves.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Chat about the story using these questions:

- What is your favourite part of the story?
- How did Paul and the sailors feel when they were on the ship in the storm?
- Are there times when you feel scared? When? What do you do about it?
- Who helps you to be brave?
- What do you think the sailors did next?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: large tray (such as a roasting tin); sheets of paper the size of your tray; water; marbling ink (available online); pencil or similar pointed tool; cover-up and clean-up equipment

Make sure everyone is covered up to stop them getting messy, then show your children how to make marbled paper using ink and water. Fill the tray with a couple of centimetres of water and drop blobs of ink onto the surface of the water. Use the pencil to swirl the ink together slightly (but not too much that the colours mix into one). Lay the paper carefully on top of the water, then peel it back again. The ink should have transferred onto the paper.

Encourage your children to make their own patterns. As you work, chat about how the patterns are like the waves on the sea. Use this to continue chatting about the story.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: marble paintings from 'Creative time'; spare marble paintings; felt-tip pens

Before your family Bible time, make some spare marble paintings to use in this activity.

Once the marble paintings from 'Creative time' are dry, invite your children to think about times when they want to ask God to keep them safe, like he kept Paul safe. Encourage them to write or draw this on their marble paintings. If they don't want to 'spoil' their painting, then give them one of the spare ones.

Once everyone has finished, stand in a circle and put all the paintings in the middle. Thank God that he is more powerful than waves, and he is more powerful than all the situations you have drawn about. Ask him to keep you safe. Stick the paintings up around your house, so that you can think about when and how God answered your prayers.

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