

PENTECOST

MEETING AIM

To explore how the Church was born.

BIBLE PASSAGES

Acts 2:1-41

BACKGROUND

These sessions are designed for you to do online in a group video call (on something like Facetime or Zoom). Make sure you have parental permission to do this, as well as following your church's safeguarding procedure (see p13 if you need more help). As with your usual sessions at church, make sure you have at least two leaders online.

Pentecost is generally seen as the birthday of the Church. It is the event that marks the transition of a group of people from timid, scared and hiding away to going out into the crowds and sharing the good news of Jesus.

JOINING THE SESSION 5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. Did anyone have a birthday? You could all sing happy birthday to them.

INTRO ACTIVITY 5 MINS

Ask the young people to go and find a pen and some paper. Use the following questions as a quiz, with everyone playing individually. When they know the answer to a question, they should write it out and show it to the camera. After each question, check what people have put, then give the right answer.

Q: What causes a tsunami, or tidal wave?

A: *An earthquake beneath the sea*

Q: What causes the tides to rise and fall?

A: *The moon and its orbit*

Q: What causes a cold and flu?

A: *A virus*

Q: What event is widely regarded as the cause of the start of World War One?

A: *The assassination of Archduke Ferdinand*

Q: What is added to bread dough to cause it to rise?

A: *Yeast*

Q: What is the cause an infection?

A: *Bacteria*

BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

Have the group get comfortable but stay in front of their cameras. Use the following guided meditation to explore the Bible reading for today:

Jerusalem is a busy city. It is full of many people. It sits at the crossroads between the Roman Empire in the west and the Asian empires in the east, while to the south lies Egypt and the great continent of Africa. Today, it seems like there are people from every nation as you walk around. It is noisy and busy and the dust is everywhere.

All of a sudden you hear a noise. You can't quite make it out. It is like something you have never heard before. It almost sounds like a storm or a strong wind, but the air is still and there are no clouds in the sky. As soon as you hear the noise it is gone. You carry on your way through the city.

Then there is a commotion. There is shouting. Jerusalem is always like this; it is often noisy and quite often there are disturbances. The Romans and the Jews, especially the zealots and those who want to rule their own land, are often causing an uproar. Or it could be an argument about observing their faith and religion. People continue to shout. You hear someone say that there are a group of drunk people – but it is so early in the day, surely that can't be the cause. You see a crowd gathering, and then someone in the centre of it begins to speak. You listen.

Go on to read Peter's speech from Acts 2:14-36, then continue with the meditation:

When the man stops talking, you can see that many of the people listening have been affected by his words. They must know this Jesus who the man spoke about, and they must know what happened. They are asking him what they have to do to change; they seem to be happy with what they are being told.

You notice that the mood has changed. Before the man spoke it had been like a disturbance. Now, despite the large crowd there is a peace and calm.

You wonder – perhaps there is something in what the man has said; perhaps you will find out more about this Jesus.

CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Continue your exploration of the Bible story by discussing these questions:

- You imagined being a bystander at the events of Pentecost, but what do you think it was like for one of the followers of Jesus?
- What impact did the Holy Spirit have? What did he cause the disciples to do?
- What impact did the Spirit have on those listening?
- What impact does the Spirit have today?

PRAYER 5 MINS

Finish the session with a simple prayer:

Fill us with your Holy Spirit, to know God's story, to share God's story with others and to be part of God's story. Amen

CREATIVE RESPONSE 15 MINS

If the group is keen, after your online session has finished, invite them to use whatever art materials they have at home to create a visual representation of the Holy Spirit. Encourage the group to look for other Bible references to the Holy Spirit, such as Galatians 5:22-23, which they can use to develop their images.

Before they go, explain to the group that the starting point for the events at Pentecost was the arrival of the Holy Spirit. Throughout the New Testament the Holy Spirit played an important role. He still plays an important part in the life of the Church today. Point out that from today's Bible reading we know that without the Holy Spirit there would be no Church.

DARREN HILL

tells stories at the creative minimalist: darrenhill.com.

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PAUL AND SILAS

MEETING AIM

To see how God works through secular culture.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 16:16-40

BACKGROUND

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Paul and Silas are in Philippi, part of a Roman province in Greece that adheres to Roman law. Although there are Jewish people living there, the majority of the population is not Jewish. There are so few Jews that it has no synagogue. Divination was big business in the area at this time, for example at Delphi. People would go to 'fortune tellers' for all manner of things. It was part of everyday life.

JOINING THE SESSION 5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. Encourage them to share both the positives and negatives, but be aware of any situations that may upset anyone.

INTRO ACTIVITY 10 MINS

Before the session, ask everyone to message you a unique fact about them that no one else in the group will know. Read out these facts one at a time and, after each one, the group should try to guess who the fact is about. A twist on this is that you could allow the group to write a true or false fact and then the group have to decide who and then whether it is true or not.

BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

Make sure everyone has access to a Bible or Bible app. As each section is read out,

invite the group as a whole to discuss how each of the characters feel. Encourage them to be open with what they say; there are no right or wrong answers.

Read Acts 16:16-18. After discussion, ask: "How does the girl feel?" There is no reason to believe that the girl was referring to the God of the Bible. Her comment is likely to refer to any god. However, Paul does respond with the name of Jesus.

Read Acts 16:19-21. After discussion, ask: "How do the slave girl's owners feel?" The minders invoke prejudice and truths to protect their livelihood. Paul isn't one of us and he is acting in a way contrary to us. Similar arguments are still used against different cultures and people.

Read Acts 16:22a. After discussion, ask: "How do the crowd feel?" The people join in, as with many arguments involving prejudice.

Read Acts 16:22b,23. After discussion, ask: "How do the magistrates feel?" They want to keep the peace. Following Roman law was vital in Philippi and they thought Paul was an outsider.

Read Acts 16:24-27. After discussion, ask: "How does the jailer feel?" The jailer was responsible for the prisoners. He assumed that they were all gone and that he would be killed for their escape.

Read Acts 16:28-34. After discussion, ask: "How does the jailer feel now?" The jailer's original call for salvation was more to do with sorting out the situation with the prisoners. However, Paul leads both the man and his family into the love of Jesus

Read Acts 16:35-40. After discussion, ask: "How do the magistrates feel?" Paul turns the magistrate's original response on its head. They now find out he isn't an outsider but a Roman citizen. As they want to uphold Roman law, they now realise what a mistake they have made.

CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Continue your exploration of the Bible story by discussing these questions:

- Paul was privileged – he was a Roman citizen, which gave him certain rights. Who are the privileged today?
- Paul used his privilege to spread the gospel of Jesus. Are there any positive things you can do if you

belong to a privileged group?

CREATIVE RESPONSE 15 MINS

Before you start this activity, make sure everyone has a couple of sheets of A4, some scissors and some sticky tape (or a stapler). They should cut the paper into strips about 2cm wide. Ask the group to think about areas of their life where they feel they live it more the way the world wants than the way God wants. They should write these on the paper strips.

Once they have written on several strips, they should stick and loop them together to make a simple paper chain. Ask the young people to put their hands through loops of the chain as if they are wearing handcuffs. Make sure that you are taking part in this activity as well.

As a symbol of the earthquake, let the young people pull their arms apart and break the chains. Explain that as we trust in God anything that stops us fulfilling our role in God's plan can be overcome and broken just like paper chains.

PRAYER 5 MINS

You will need: chains from 'Creative response'

Close the session with a time of open prayer. Encourage the young people to ask God to help them in their lives, to follow God's plan for their lives and to keep them safe as they do it.

Ask the young people to gather the broken paper chains together and rip them into tiny pieces so that the words and images on them can't be seen or read. Close by asking God to bring us closer to him in everything we do.

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tells stories at the creative minimalist: darrenhill.com.

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PAUL IN DANGER

MEETING AIM

To see that Paul worked within the law to fulfil God's plan.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 23:12-22

BACKGROUND

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We know nothing of Paul's nephew and wider family. We can only speculate about Paul's nephew from what is written in this passage. Why he was able to hear about the plot suggests he was involved with the Pharisees, but how is pure guesswork. The monologue in today's session is a fiction based on the passage and makes several assumptions.

JOINING THE SESSION 5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days.

INTRO ACTIVITY 5 MINS

Ask the young people to choose their favourite film or book and think about its story, or plot. They then have to describe their favourite film or book using just six words. Once they have their six words, they tell the rest of the group and see if they can guess the film or book from the six-word plot description.

BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

Use the following monologue to explore this session's Bible passage. If possible, ask a confident member of your group to perform it:

Let me introduce myself; actually, my name's not important, but you might know one of my relatives. My uncle is

Saul, although you probably know him under the name he now goes by – Paul. He's my mum's brother and, just like her, he is a very opinionated person. He always has been. Ever since he was my age. In fact, we're both following similar lives. My uncle was a disciple of Gamaliel, one of the best Jewish teachers; he was a firebrand, a zealot.

Now I am learning how to be a good follower of God too. I am doing my training and one day I hope to be a religious teacher. As I was finishing my day, I heard some men enter and talk to the other priests. They had made a vow, a promise that they wouldn't eat until my uncle was dead, and they were willing to kill him. They wanted the priests to arrange a meeting; they would capture him on the way. It was a simple plan. They were going to kill my uncle.

I didn't know what to do. He is family, and Mum says family is important even if we don't always agree with each other.

It was my turn to take the food to Paul. If family or friends don't give prisoners food, then they don't eat. When you're in prison, you're just as likely to die of starvation than anything else. So I took the bread and water to the prison and gave it to my uncle.

I stood there, unsure of what to do, but as soon as I saw him I told him all that I had heard. It would be funny if it wasn't so serious; I am now protecting my uncle from people he was exactly like, many years ago. He used to go after the followers of Jesus and now he is one himself.

Anyway, Paul called one of the centurions who took me to the commander and I told him everything I knew about the plot to kill my uncle. Fortunately, he believed me and told me not to tell anyone; that way they wouldn't try to do something else.

Actually, I suppose I shouldn't be telling you...

CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Continue your exploration of the Bible story by discussing these questions:

- Have you ever had to speak out about something you know? If you have an example, remember to share it as well.

- How would you decide whether speaking out is the right or wrong thing to do?
- What does this story tell you about telling others about Jesus?

CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

Explain that Paul's nephew made a difference by speaking up and telling others what he had heard. It is often easier and simpler to stay quiet about something, to not tell others and just let things be. It is not always the right thing to do.

Ask someone to read Acts 23:11. Point out that Paul believed God was going to take him safely to Rome. Yet it was through the actions of his nephew that Paul survived this plot. In the passage, Paul's nephew didn't stay silent. In today's world of social media, we know how people react when someone says something or stands up for a point of view. Quite often they can be bullied and abused for speaking out.

Make sure everyone has a piece of paper and a pen and ask them to write a short poem about their feelings when deciding whether to speak out or not. It can be on a specific subject, or about speaking out in general. Encourage the group to explore the feelings on both sides of the argument, to speak or stay silent. For those willing, give them time to share what they have written.

PRAYER 5 MINS

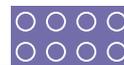
Finish the session with a simple prayer:

Ask for protection. *Pause.*
 Ask for guidance. *Pause.*
 Ask for help. *Pause.*
 And may God's will be done.

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SHIPWRECK

MEETING AIM

To see how Paul's faith enabled him to follow God.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 27

BACKGROUND

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Paul believed he would get safely to Rome. Throughout today's Bible passage, that belief and faith must have been tested. There were many opportunities for Paul's journey to come to an end. Yet, by the end of the passage we find everyone, despite getting very wet, safe and well.

JOINING THE SESSION

5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. As they share, you can ask them if they or anyone they know has been on a trip or journey – was it long or short, and how did they travel?

INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

Before the session, search the internet for images of trains, planes, boats, bicycles, cars and lorries etc. The more obscure and abstract the image the better. Once you have the images, magnify a part of each one. Show the images to the group (if you're using something like Zoom, you can show the pictures during the meeting, otherwise you could print out the pictures and hold them up to your camera).

As you show each picture, ask the group to see if they can tell what form of transport each image is. You can finish by asking what all the images represent. Once they have identified them as forms of transport, you can explain that you'll

be looking at Paul's journey to Rome and how a journey by sea was so dangerous.

BIBLE EXPLORATION

10 MINS

You will need: copies of the blank map from youthandchildrens.work/links

Before the session, email the young people the blank map and ask them to print it out (or print them out yourself and post them to the young people). Make sure everyone has felt-tip pens or pencil crayons. Ask the group to find the Mediterranean Sea on Google Maps (or other mapping app).

Ask them to find a Bible and open it at Acts 27. Explain briefly that this passage tells the beginning of the story of Paul's journey to Rome.

To explore this Bible passage, ask the group to read Acts 27 and, using the pens and pencils, fill in the map. They should include all the places that are mentioned in the chapter, and also draw the route that Paul's ship takes. Encourage them to fill in as many place names and other cities that they know or can see in the atlases. Ask the group not to look up the route in their Bibles or online, but see if they can work it out just using the references in the Bible.

When they have read through the Bible and created their maps, ask them to show their efforts to the camera and explain what they've done.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

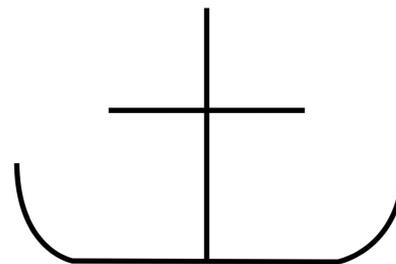
Continue your exploration of the Bible story by discussing these questions:

- Why was it important for everyone to make it to Malta?
- Do you think God caused the storm or simply allowed it to happen? How much do they think God 'controls' the weather?
- Where is God at work in this story?
- How would you describe Paul's attitude?
- What difference does Paul's faith in God make in this life or death situation?

CREATIVE RESPONSE

10 MINS

Make sure everyone has a piece of A4 paper or card, and some felt-tip pens.



Ask them to draw this shape on their piece of paper or card, so that it fills it.

Explain that the shape represents a ship and the mast represents Jesus through the cross. Paul's life included the journey to Rome via a ship. He knew that Jesus was with him as he travelled. We can know the same in our lives.

Our lives are journeys and depending on our belief, we can have Jesus with us. Encourage the group to illustrate their 'life journeys'. Add images that represent family, things they like and enjoy and things that they don't like or worry them.

Explain that their lives will include metaphorical storms and shipwrecks. We can live our lives like the soldiers and sailors on the ship with Paul, or we can be like Paul and put our faith in God. This doesn't mean our lives will be more successful; after all, everyone survived the storm, but it does mean we're following a route that God has provided for us.

PRAYER

5 MINS

Finish the session with a prayer. Remind the group that Paul was going through a very difficult time. We too face difficult times – they may not be as severe as what Paul faced, but they can feel equally distressing to us. That is when prayer and knowing God is with us can help.

Use Psalm 23 as a prayer and encourage the group to use it in their own prayer time when things are difficult. Suggest that it is a very useful prayer to memorise and recite whenever they may feel distress and need to feel calm.

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