



SESSION 1 of 4

## Ascension

### MEETING AIM

To discover that the ascension was part of a bigger story, and that Jesus will return one day.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 1:1-11

### BACKGROUND

God holds history, the present and the future in his hands. This session is designed to help the children understand his sovereignty a little more. Take some time for yourself before the session to reflect on God's hand in your life, the journey he has taken you on, and your hopes and prayers for the future.

### 5 CIRCLE TIME

Welcome the children as they arrive and share out any refreshments you have provided. Chat together about what has happened since you last met. Share in the triumphs and difficulties of the children's lives and share something appropriate from your own life. Take turns to tell the group something funny from the last week and something you are looking forward to in the future. Ask questions and allow the children to ask questions about each other's hopes.

### 5 INTRO ACTIVITY

**You will need:** a random selection of objects  
Spread some of your objects out in front of the group and ask them to try to remember what is there and where the objects are positioned. Choose a volunteer to go out of the room. As they go, make sure everyone waves goodbye to them. Remove or change the position of one of the objects, then invite the volunteer back in. Can they see what is missing or has been moved? Repeat the game with a slightly different selection of objects for each new volunteer.

Alternatively, you could do this with the children rather than objects. When the volunteer leaves the room, one child moves to a place, takes up a new position or hides!

### 20 BIBLE STORY

**You will need:** paper and pens; Bibles; props such as wigs, beards, glasses, suit jackets or microphones; a video camera (a smartphone or tablet would be fine)

Divide the children into three groups and ask each group to create a news report. Every group will need the following roles: a newsreader, an interviewer, eye witnesses, interviewees, a cameraperson and a director. The roles can be interchangeable if group numbers are minimal, or you could do this exercise all together if you have a small group.

Give each group a news scene:

1. Jesus died on the cross and came back to life
2. Jesus went up to heaven
3. The angels said that Jesus is coming back.

The children can then decide on their roles and research each news story using the Bibles provided and the passage for today. They will need to think about the characters who need to be interviewed, for example a disciple, a bystander or Mary. They must then put their scripts together, including a list of questions to ask each witness.

Provide the groups with a corner of the room or quiet space where they can film their reports. Encourage and support them when needed. When all three groups have completed the filming, sit together and watch the news stories in order.

### 10 CHATTING TOGETHER

Continue chatting about the story, using these questions and others to stimulate discussion:

- How do you think the disciples felt when they saw that Jesus was alive again?
- What would you have done if you had seen Jesus going up into the sky in a cloud?
- What do you think the angels meant when they said that Jesus would be coming back?
- What difference do you think it will make to the world when he does?
- How does believing that he will return change the way we live our lives now?

### 10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

**You will need:** a Kinder Surprise plastic egg capsule per child; white stickers; paper; scissors

Before the session, write or print out these questions and cut the paper up into small strips, each containing one question:

- What is your life like now?
- What do you enjoy doing?
- What do you want to say to Jesus?
- What do you want to thank him for that has already happened?
- What do you want to ask him for?
- What are you hoping for in the future?

- Do you want Jesus to come back? Why?

Give each child a sticker and a capsule. Encourage them to decorate the sticker with their names and anything else they want to draw. Give out the slips of paper with the questions on and ask them to write their answers on the reverse, then pop them inside their capsules.

Keep the capsules somewhere safe for a year, then return them to the children (you may need to set a reminder!) and see what has happened during the course of that year.

### 5 PRAYER

**You will need:** a play parachute (or a large cotton sheet or similar piece of lightweight material); a gentle worship song and the means to play it

Stand around the parachute with everyone holding the edge and lift it up in a mushroom shape. Everyone should bring the edge of the chute down over their heads and behind their backs, then all sit down on the edges to make a kind of tent with everyone inside. Ask the children to remember their answers to the capsule questions.

Stand up again, holding the parachute and mushrooming it in the air. Shout out the questions below it, one at a time. The children should shout-pray their answers while running underneath the parachute and swapping places with someone on the other side.

- What do you want to say to Jesus?
- What do you want to thank him for?
- What do you want to ask him for?

Sit down again, all holding a piece of the parachute. Play a gentle worship song. While the music is playing, ask the children to close their eyes and think again about the difference it makes to us when we know that Jesus is going to return. Invite them to say their thoughts out loud to encourage each other. As the song draws to an end (or attentions spans dwindle), pray and thank God for his hand over history, the present and the future.

### HELEN HODGSON

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## SESSION 2 of 4

# Pentecost

### MEETING AIM

To explore the Pentecost story, and to discuss the difference the coming of the Holy Spirit made to the early Church and to our lives today.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 2:1-41

### BACKGROUND

We all have different experiences of the Holy Spirit, but it's clear that God intends us to rely on his power to live as followers of Jesus. Use your preparation time to invite the Holy Spirit to strengthen and help you in your own life.

## 5 CIRCLE TIME

Welcome the children as they arrive and share out any refreshments you have provided. Chat together about what has happened since you last met. Share in the triumphs and difficulties of the children's lives and share something appropriate from your own life. Chat with the children about their best friends. What do they like about them? What would life be like without them?

## 5 INTRO ACTIVITY

**You will need:** a bucket; lots of small balls

Place the bucket full of balls in the middle of the room. One player must attempt to empty the bucket while everyone else tries to refill it. Change the 'emptier' frequently to keep the game moving.

Alternatively, if you are able to go outside, divide the children into two teams and stand the teams in lines. Place a bucket full of water and a sponge at one end of each line with an empty bucket at the other end. The player next to the bucket should fill the sponge with water and pass it down the line. The player at the end squeezes out as much water as possible into the empty bucket before passing the sponge back to the start. The team with the most water in their bucket when the time limit is up are the winners!

## 15 BIBLE STORY

**You will need:** two dice; music; the story sections below on numbered cards; blank paper; pens

Place two sets of the story sections (numbered one to five below) at the front of your space. Divide the group into two teams and sit each team in a circle. Give each group a die. Play the music, passing the die around the circle. When the music stops, a team member should throw the die and run to collect the corresponding story section from the front. When teams have collected all the sections, they should order the story and guess what happened next.

Listen to both versions of the story, then read the passage out from the front to check that the groups had it in the right order. Encourage sound effects as you read!

1. Jesus had gone back up to heaven. The disciples had witnessed amazing things during their time with him, but they had never seen anything like that. He told them that they wouldn't be alone because the Holy Spirit would come to them and they would have power. It sounded good!
2. But it hadn't happened yet...They were sitting in a room together, wondering what was coming next, when there was an enormous noise. It sounded like the strongest wind in the world. The whole house shook. The noise sounded like it was coming from heaven. Was this the power Jesus had told them about?
3. Suddenly, they all had flames of fire on top of their heads! It wasn't burning them on the outside, but inside they felt God's power running right through their bodies. What a feeling! They had never known such joy and such peace! The Holy Spirit had come, just as Jesus promised!
4. Then they started speaking in different languages! Crowding around them, some Jews who were from different countries could hear the disciples speaking their own languages. Amazed, they asked each other: "Aren't these men just simple fishermen from Galilee? How can they speak our languages? We're from all over the world but they're telling us all the great things God has done in our very own languages! How can this be?"
5. Some of the Pharisees, who had been watching from further away, raised their eyebrows and tutted. "They're drunk!" they exclaimed. "Making fools of themselves yet again."

At this point, get the two groups to come up with their own version of what happened next. When they've finished, encourage them to read these endings out.

Finally, tell the group what happened:

Peter suddenly felt very brave. He stood up and started speaking in a very loud voice, which rose above all the noise and chatter. Explaining to everyone what was happening, he invited them to follow Jesus and be baptised. That very day, 3,000 people became Christians and were baptised, and that was the beginning of the Church.

## 5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Continue chatting about the story, using these questions and others to stimulate discussion:

- I wonder how the disciples felt after Jesus had gone up to heaven.
- How do you think they felt when they heard the wind and the house shook?
- What happened to Peter to make him so brave?
- How does this story make a difference to our lives today?

## 10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

**You will need:** coloured, rectangular sponges, each cut into four strips; felt-tip pens; thin string or fishing wire

Encourage each child to choose eight pieces of sponge. Chat about how a sponge works. To do its job, it must soak up water. In the same way, we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

What is important to the children about this story? Invite them to write this on the strips of sponge. Layer four pieces on top of the other four. Tie the string around the middle and spread the strips out into a star shape.

## 5 PRAYER

**You will need:** reflective music and the means to play it

Ask the children to sit separately in their own space. Play a gentle song and invite them to think about the power of God: the roar of the wind and the house shaking in the story. Encourage them to think about their own lives and situations in which they might need God's power.

Invite the children to hold out their hands and ask the power of the Holy Spirit to come into their lives, bringing his power to make the difference they need.

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SESSION 3 of 4

## Meeting together

### MEETING AIM

To explore what the Bible says about church, and to decide how we can be a meaningful part of our church community.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37

### BACKGROUND

Many of our children have grown up in church without really thinking about what the Church is and what's important about a church. As adults we can also become familiar with our own ways of doing church. But when we look at Acts and the early Church we are challenged about how radically different the Church was. Use this session to help the children come to their own conclusions about how they can be church, and perhaps think again about ways you can be church in our desperate world yourself.

### 5 CIRCLE TIME

Welcome the children as they arrive and share out any refreshments you have provided. Chat together about what has happened since you last met. Share in the triumphs and difficulties of the children's lives and share something appropriate from your own life. Ask them what they enjoy doing with their friends. What's important in their friendship group?

### 5 INTRO ACTIVITY

**You will need:** a tape measure

Divide the children into two or more teams. Using only the items they have brought to the session, they must make the longest chain possible. They can use shoelaces, hair bobbles, coats, hats, jumpers, sunglasses, socks and anything else they can think of. The only rule is that they must keep on the clothes that cover their shoulders to their knees! Apart from the two ends, every item must somehow be connected to the items either side of it. Give them a time limit, then measure each chain to decide who the winners are!

### 10 BIBLE STORY

**You will need:** Bibles; paper and pens; wheat biscuits breakfast cereal (such as Weetabix); buttercream icing (shop-bought or home-made); ice cream cones; icing in small tubes; small biscuits; sweets; cover-up and clean-up equipment

Divide the children into two groups and give out Bibles. Ask one group to read Acts 2:42-47 and the other to read Acts 4:32-37. Challenge each group to create a list of elements that are important in a church. (Make sure you have a leader with each group to guide the discussion if needed.)

Ask each group to share their lists and create one joint list that incorporates suggestions from both groups.

Once the list is made, ask each group to create a structure using the wheat biscuits as bricks. Each individual biscuit brick must show one element of church from their list, either by writing it on with icing or by using the other resources to create it. The biscuit bricks can then be stuck together with the buttercream to create a structure. They can also decorate the biscuit wall with whatever edible decorations you have provided, gluing everything together with the buttercream.

When everyone has finished, allow time for the groups to present their walls and invite them to explain each brick's meaning. Make sure all the elements below are included: teaching, sharing, prayer, breaking bread, miracles and signs, having everything in common, selling possessions to give money to those in need, meeting in temple courts, meeting in homes, eating together, praising God together and more people following Jesus.

If the children would like to, they can eat part of their construction! Alternatively, you could all wait until the end of the session to have a snack. Be aware of food hygiene and allergy issues, and provide alternatives for those who need them.

### 5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Continue chatting about the story, using these questions and others to stimulate discussion:

- Did anything surprise you about the list of things that are important in a church?
- Of the things you found, which do you have in your church?
- What do you think you need to have more of?
- Why do you think you built a structure out of these things?
- Is there anything in the list you can do or be part of?

### 10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

**You will need:** list from 'Bible story'; paper; pens

Have another look at the list from the Acts passage. Give out paper and pens, and encourage each child to create a mind map with 'Church' in the middle and the elements as the spokes. From each individual spoke the children should add more spokes with anything they can do to make sure these things happen in your church. Can they pray? Can they invite someone for a meal? Can they raise money for a charity?

Ask the children if there is there anything they can do as a family. Or perhaps there's something you can do together as a group. If so, plan how you can do it and follow that up at a later date.

Make sure the children take their mind maps home as a reminder, and so they can talk about it with their parents or carers.

### 5 PRAYER

**You will need:** mind maps from 'Creative response'; paper; pens

Divide into twos and threes, and encourage the children to share their mind maps with one another.

Choose one or two action points from each other's mind maps and then pray for each other. Pray for courage, wisdom, boldness and ideas; whatever they need to make their action points become a reality.

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SESSION 4 of 4

## Telling others

### MEETING AIM

To challenge the children's perceptions of whom they might share the good news of Jesus with, and to listen to God and hear what he wants us to do.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 10

### BACKGROUND

We all have our preconceived ideas, sometimes subconsciously, about who might make a 'suitable' follower of Jesus. Peter certainly did, and we are no different! Allow God to speak during your preparation for this session and to show you his heart for others.

### 5 CIRCLE TIME

Welcome the children as they arrive and share out any refreshments you have provided. Chat together about what has happened since you last met. Share in the triumphs and difficulties of the children's lives and discuss something appropriate from your own life. Ask the children to tell everyone about their favourite foods and the foods they dislike the most.

### 5 INTRO ACTIVITY

Divide into two teams and arrange each team so that they are all standing in a line facing the same way except for the person at the front of the line, who faces the opposite way.

Whisper to this person an action to mime, for example riding a bike, swimming, peeling a banana, brushing their teeth or taking a selfie. This person turns and taps the next person on the shoulder and performs the mime. The action is passed down the line until the last person is reached and they have to guess the original action. The first person then goes to the back of the line and play begins again.

### 10 BIBLE STORY

**You will need:** items for each group to wear that distinguishes them from the others; a white sheet; card; pens; paper plates  
You are going to retell the story in modern-day terms, involving the children in creating it.

When a word is in bold below, replace it with the name, place or item chosen by the group.

Cornelius was a centurion in the Roman army. He was not Jewish, but he lived in a place called Caesarea in Judea. He loved God.

Peter was a Jew and a disciple of Jesus. He was staying in a place called Joppa.

Jews and non-Jews (called Gentiles) didn't mix. Peter didn't think the good news about Jesus was for people like Cornelius. In fact, it was against Jewish law for Peter to even mix with people like Cornelius.

*Ask the children who this would be where they live. Two different schools? Two different neighbourhoods? Decide on local places to represent Caesarea and Joppa. What would Peter and Cornelius be called today? What types of food do the two groups like to eat? Divide everyone into two groups, standing on separate sides of the room with a divider down the middle. Give each group some card and ask them to create a place name sign. They can draw their group's favourite foods on the paper plates.*

An angel appeared to **Cornelius** and told him to send some servants to a place called **Joppa**. They were to find a man called **Peter** and bring him to **Caesarea**.

Meanwhile in **Joppa**, **Peter** was peckish. While he was waiting for his **food**, he had a vision from God. In his vision, a large sheet was unravelled from heaven. *Hold a large sheet over the group.* On it was all the food the people from **Caesarea** ate. *Place the paper plates on top.* It was completely against **Peter's** beliefs to eat this food. It was unclean! But he heard a voice saying to him: "Get up and eat it." *Ask the group what they think Peter said in response.*

The sheet was lowered three times, with the same voice telling him to eat. Just as he was trying to understand what this vision meant he heard a knock at the door. *Send some of the group over to the other side of the room.*

The Holy Spirit told **Peter** to go with these men because they had been sent by God. So, with a bunch of others from **Joppa**, he began the journey. **Cornelius** was expecting them and had gathered a crowd to welcome them. What do you think they did when they arrived? Would it have been awkward?

Going inside the house, **Peter** reminded them that it was against Jewish law for him to visit the house of a **Gentile**. But God had shown him that he shouldn't call anyone impure or unclean, even **Gentiles!** **Cornelius** told **Peter** about his visit from the angel, and they were all astonished.

**Peter** realised the good news about Jesus wasn't just for the **Jews**. As he was talking the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they all started speaking in other languages and praising God together. How strange

would that have been? Can you imagine this happening today?

The people from **Caesarea** were baptised in water. *If you are able, throw some water over the group.* The Church began to grow, with **Jews** and **Gentiles** alike hearing and sharing the good news about Jesus!

### 5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Continue chatting about the story, using these questions and others to stimulate discussion:

- Was there anything you didn't understand about the story?
- Why didn't Peter understand the vision straight away?
- How would it feel to go to the one place where you feel unwelcome?
- How should this story affect our lives today?
- What does this story tell us about God?

### 10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

**You will need:** a white sheet; pens; small squares of material; music and the means to play it

Spread the white sheet out on the floor. Explain that God asked Peter to speak to the people Peter hadn't originally thought were worth talking to about Jesus. It was uncomfortable for him, and maybe he was scared.

Give out the squares of material and pens. Play some reflective music and invite everyone to take a quiet moment and ask God what he wants them to do. Explain some of the ways we can hear God through thoughts, pictures, Bible verses and words, for example.

They should write or draw on their material what they have heard and place it on the larger sheet. They can take these squares home to show their parents or carers.

### 5 PRAYER

**You will need:** balloons; pens; music and the means to play it

Think of the people who you would really love to know Jesus. Write their names on the balloons. Play music that is suitable for dancing and bat the balloons around the room. When the music stops, grab a balloon and pray that the person will come to know Jesus. Then restart the music and bat the balloons again.

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