

Growing in God's Love

A Story Bible Curriculum

A New Church



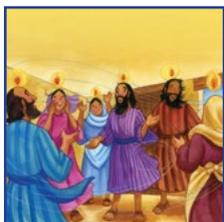
Growing in God's Love

A Story Bible Curriculum

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A New Church

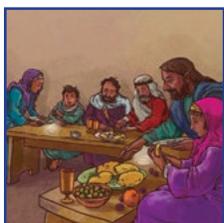
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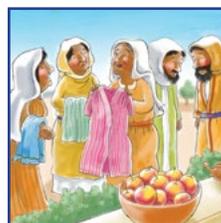
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The free At-Home Kit Guide provides instructions and suggestions for at-home faith formation. Download it at www.pcusastore.com/StoryBibleCurriculum or www.thethoughtfulchristian.com/StoryBibleCurriculum. Click on the unit title, and then click on the download button found at the bottom of the product page for this unit.

© 2020 Westminster John Knox Press

First edition
Published by Westminster John Knox Press
Louisville, Kentucky

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Printed in the United States of America

Connecting

🌿 **Goal:** To experience the excitement of Pentecost and explore how the Holy Spirit works in our lives.

Connecting with the Biblical Text

Happy birthday, church! For most people, the gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost marks the beginning of the Christian church. Pentecost was an annual Jewish festival, also known as Festival of Weeks, held fifty days after Passover. The noise of the wind in the room and the voices speaking foreign languages attracted the attention of people on the street, giving an occasion for Peter to address the crowd, along with the followers in the room.

Christians celebrate Pentecost fifty days after Easter at the conclusion of the fifty days of Easter. Hence, Jews and Christians, each celebrating Pentecost, do so for different reasons and at a different time.

The followers of Jesus had been waiting in Jerusalem for fifty days, as they were instructed to do by Jesus (Luke 24:48–49). He assured them that what God had promised would come to them (Luke 11:13). Fifty days is a long time to wait for anything, but it's especially long if you are grieving the death of a friend and leader. What a celebration must have been held on that special Pentecost!

For commentary on specific parts of the story, go to bit.ly/PentecostCommentary.

Connecting with the World

The Pentecost story brings the followers of Jesus into direct contact with immigrants living in Jerusalem.

- 🌿 Notice the joy and curiosity when the immigrants living in Jerusalem hear people speaking their languages. What immigrant community lives near you? How are they preserving their language and culture?
- 🌿 The followers of Jesus had been waiting for fifty days. The lives of many immigrants and refugees

are spent waiting and waiting. How can you or your congregation be an advocate for them?

- 🌿 The joy of Pentecost must have been infectious. Too many people outside the church have a gloomy impression of the Christian life. How might your congregation counteract this impression?

Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Children

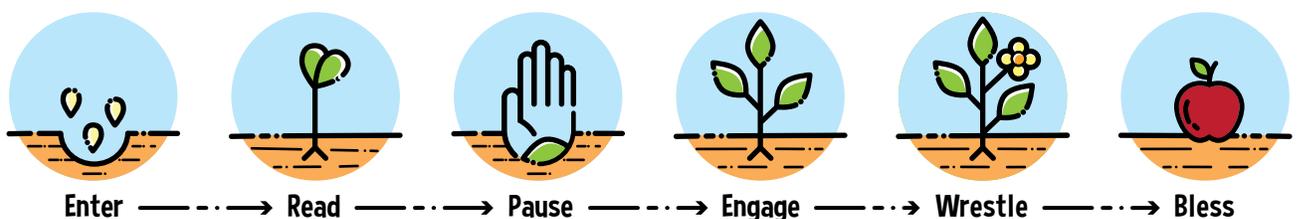
The excitement and joy of Pentecost is rarely lost on children. The noise of the wind and the dazzle of the flames (which somehow don't burn anyone) make for a good story to add to their repertoire of family faith stories. It's the birthday story for the church—the church that includes them, and kids love a good birthday party! These stories of celebration are necessary for children to hear regularly so that they can make them their own. Avoid getting bogged down with Peter's long speech, which is nicely summarized in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*. The main action occurs in verses 1–21 and 37–41. The Pentecost story in Acts should be as vibrant to them as the exodus story is to Jewish children.

Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Adults

After you have enjoyed the vibrancy and exuberance of the Pentecost story, think about the church that began that day and your experience of the church today.

- 🌿 What is your connection to your congregation? To your denomination? To the wider church?
- 🌿 What in your faith brings you Pentecost joy?
- 🌿 The Taizé song “Holy Spirit, Come to Us” is a quiet way to pray and meditate on Pentecost. Sing or listen to it using the *Glory to God* hymnal (#284) or YouTube video “Taizé song—Holy Spirit Come to Us” (bit.ly/HolySpiritComeToUs, 4:55).

Come, Holy Spirit, come. Inspire and ignite me to lead your children. Amen.



Gathering Supplies

Depending on your choices, you will need:

- ✓ *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*
- ✓ Red cloth
- ✓ Battery-operated candle
- ✓ Bible
- ✓ Internet-connected device
- ✓ One paper towel tube for each child
- ✓ Crepe-paper streamers, at least 24" in length
- ✓ Stapler
- ✓ *Glory to God* or other hymnal with "Spirit of the Living God"

Preparing to Lead

Read Acts 2. Even though today's session covers only Acts 2:1–41, read through the end of the chapter. As you read this account of the day of Pentecost, imagine yourself in the crowd. Think about how it must have felt to be there that day, when the power of the Holy Spirit came over everyone like a rushing wind. Jesus had promised to send the Spirit, but probably no one imagined that the arrival of the Holy Spirit would be so dramatic. Consider some of these parts of the story:

- ✓ The people gathered came from all over the known world. Look at the regions listed in verses 9–11. When have you been in such a diverse gathering? Consider how difficult understanding one another might be in such a crowd.
- ✓ As you read the story and think about the children in your class, consider the diversity represented in your gathering. Pray for wisdom in helping the children welcome differences and strive for understanding.
- ✓ Are there children in your class who speak languages other than English? Or are there people in your church who speak other languages? It might be fun for you to invite some of them to teach the class a simple phrase in another language.
- ✓ Read verses 42–47 to see how the coming of the Holy Spirit affected the new believers. Contemplate how the Holy Spirit is at work in your faith community. What effects can you see of the work of the Holy Spirit?
- ✓ Pray for the Holy Spirit to work within you as you prepare and lead the session. Recall the

names and faces and stories of children you will teach. Pray for them as you prepare to lead them.

Prepare the room by placing a red cloth in the middle of the seating area. Set the candle on the cloth with a Bible next to it. Make sure the space where you are reading the Bible story is big enough for the children to move around as they help you tell it.



Enter into sacred space together.

As the children enter, invite them to gather in the seating area. Encourage the children to describe something new and amazing they have seen or experienced. When all are gathered, tell them that today's story tells about something God did that was new and amazing on the day of Pentecost!

Turn on the candle and invite the children to repeat after you as you pray:

Amazing God, /
you are always blessing us /
in new ways. /
Make us excited to learn today /
about the beginning of your church. /
In Jesus' name, /
Amen. /



Read a story of God's people.

Invite the children to listen to how God gave us the church. Encourage them to help you tell the story by choosing one of the following parts to play:

- ✓ visitors from many lands murmuring like people are talking in a crowd
- ✓ the wind moving, whooshing, swirling, and dancing around
- ✓ the fire making flickers and flame motions

Practice the parts by starting with the visitors murmuring, adding the wind blowing, and then adding the fire crackling. When all groups have learned their sounds and motions, read "Pentecost" from *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* (p. 288), highlighting each group as they are mentioned in the text and pausing so that they may do their part.



Pause to let God's Word enter into hearts and minds.

After the energetic storytelling, give everyone a chance to slow down. Invite the children to sit in a circle and take three deep breaths with you. As they breathe in, say “Come, Holy Spirit.” As they breathe out, say “Blow, wind of God.” Pause between each breath. As the children grow quiet and still, invite them to listen to all the sounds around them.

After a few minutes of quiet, say, “Amen.”



Engage curiosity and imagination with God's story.

Invite the children to engage their senses as they think about this story. Wonder together:

- What did Pentecost look like? What did the people look like? What were the expressions on their faces?
- What did Pentecost sound like?
- What smells might have been in the air?
- How would it feel to be there in that place, with all the whooshing and talking?

Choose one or both options:

○ Telling the Story

- Watch the YouTube video “Dan Stevers—La Historia de Pentecostés” (bit.ly/PentecostVideo, 2:32), stopping at 1:56. This is a retelling of the Pentecost story in Spanish. You may watch it with the sound off or, if Spanish is not the native language of many of the children in your group, with the sound on to hear the story in another language.
- If the sound is off, ask questions such as “What is happening now?” “What are they doing?” and “Who is that?”
- Then, wonder together:
 - What was it like to see the story depicted this way?
 - Were there any parts you didn't understand?
 - If you listened to the video in Spanish, did you notice anything different about the story by hearing it in a different language?
- Invite the children to tell the story in their own words as you play the video again without the sound.

○ Wind Socks

- It can be hard to find ways to think about the Holy Spirit, especially for children who are concrete thinkers. Help the children understand the invisible power of the Holy Spirit by comparing it to the wind. Suggest that we can't see the wind or the Holy Spirit, but we can see what they do. Wonder together:
 - What are examples of how we see the results of the wind? (*We can't see the whoosh of moving air, but we can see the leaves lifted off the ground when the wind passes by.*)
 - What are examples of the Holy Spirit in our lives or the lives of others? (*We can understand the Holy Spirit when we feel God's love or get excited about something new and amazing God is doing.*)
- Hand out streamers and paper towel tubes. Have the children write one or more prayers on the streamers. Show the children how to staple the streamers to the inside edge of one end of the paper towel tube.
- If possible, move to an outside location. Invite the children to hold their windsock high while they run around. Watch the wind activate the streamers like the Spirit activates our prayers.



Wrestle with our place in God's story.

Ask the children where they see themselves in this story. Have them consider if they are one of the disciples, a new believer, a spectator, or even the Holy Spirit.

○ Singing a Prayer

- Teach the children the song “Spirit of the Living God” using the *Glory to God* hymnal (#288) or watch the YouTube video “Spirit of the Living God Lyrics” (bit.ly/SpiritSongVideo, 2:09). If your group is familiar with the song, consider learning it in American Sign Language. Watch the YouTube video “Spirit of the Living God” (bit.ly/SpiritASLVideo, 4:56).

If you aren't comfortable leading the children in song, recruit an adult or youth helper who is musical to lead the children in singing.

Leading

Wonder together:

- How is our praying for the Holy Spirit to come to us like or unlike the experience of Jesus' followers at Pentecost?
- What do you think it means for God's Spirit to melt, mold, fill, and use us?
- Was there a time when you felt the Holy Spirit? What was it like?



Bless one another with God's grace.

Close with the following prayer, inviting the children to repeat after you:

Come, Holy Spirit! /
Blow like the wind into our lives. /
Fill our hearts with God's love. /
Fill our minds with understanding. /
Help us to be ready /
for whatever is new and amazing! /
Amen. /

Sing or sign "Spirit of the Living God" together again.



Grow with more.

No Language

- The people gathered in Jerusalem heard Peter and the disciples in their own language. Ask the children to think about how they would understand a person who speaks a language they do not know. Wonder how they would communicate, say hello, or ask a question. Have the children invent ways they could communicate without using words at all.
- Invite the children to tell the story of Pentecost *without* using their voices. Encourage the children to work together to act out the story of Pentecost without talking—both as they plan and "tell" the story!

Many Languages

- Remind the children that on that first day of Pentecost, there were people from all over the world who had come to Jerusalem for the celebration. They did not know one another; they did not even speak the same language. But because of the power of the Holy Spirit, they could understand the message from God that was being shared with them.
- Perhaps some of the children know other languages or speak other languages at home. Invite them to teach others how to say "hello." Or watch the YouTube video "Greetings in Different Languages" ([bit.ly/HelloLanguages](https://bit.ly>HelloLanguages), 1:28) to see a number of different people saying hello in their native language. Watch the YouTube video "Hello to All the Children of the World—Graduation Presentation—Classroom Songs" (bit.ly/HelloChildrenOfTheWorld, 2:16) to learn a song saying hello in different languages. Invite the children to follow along with the motions as the song becomes familiar.