

Happy Birthday, Church!

Sunday School Lesson on Pentecost

Acts 2:1-21 NIV

Bible Lesson & Activities for Children



THE **SUNDAY SCHOOL** STORE

Church on Fire!



Pentecost is an important and exciting event in the history of the church.

Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit, and that promise was fulfilled at Pentecost. We see God’s power evidenced and the gospel of Jesus spread to many. Pentecost is often called the “birthday” of the church, so this lesson uses elements of a birthday party to relate to the special day. Emphasis is heavy on the gift concept, relating to how we receive the Holy Spirit as a gift, not just on Pentecost but always.

Before the saving work of Jesus, our salvation was dependent on following the law. Christ promised to fulfill that law and send the Holy Spirit to energize the church. The events of Pentecost assure and remind us that Jesus worked for us, spoke truth, and wants us to share His love with one another. He gave us the gift of His spirit to comfort and help us, and to build faith in us and in others. We should be encouraged and energized to share the Gospel and the love of God.

Passage: Acts 2:1-21; Romans 8:26-27; John 16:13-15

Target Audience: Kindergarten-6th grade

Materials Needed: Candles, balloons, gift bags, straws, construction paper, decorative materials, streamers, party horns, hair dryer, cups, glue, tape, paper plates, scissors, pencils, balls, Bible (all optional, depending which activities you choose to use—except for the Bible, you need that for sure).

More Resources Online

- Watch the [video demonstration of the object lesson](#).
- Watch the [video example for the craft projects](#).
- Watch the [video Bible story “God Sends the Holy Spirit”](#) from Saddleback Kids Club
- Watch the [video Bible story “Pentecost”](#) from Crossroads Kids
- For more free illustrations, visit [Christian Clip Arts](#) and [Ministry-To-Children](#)

Object Lesson (5 minutes)

Greet children and discuss birthday celebrations...

Hello, children of God!

Happy Birthday! Now, you're probably thinking that this is not your birthday (unless, of course, it is, in which case, have a great one!). But if it was your birthday, what are some things that you would expect to see at a party? *Hold up representations of elements as you discuss potential birthday party items.* Maybe you'd have a cake with some candles. People might sing to you...there would probably be balloons. And presents! One of the best things about birthday parties is getting lots of gifts, right?

Well, we are talking about birthdays today because this is Pentecost Sunday, and Pentecost is often called the birthday of the church. It is a time when a lot of people heard about Jesus and the disciples sort of kicked off their ministry of evangelism. Pentecost took place ten days after Jesus ascended to return to Heaven, and fifty days after He rose from the dead on Easter. Jesus had instructed the disciples to wait, and that He would send His spirit. So they were gathered on the day of Pentecost, and a lot of amazing things happened!

They might not have had cake, but there was fire: tongues of flame came and hovered over their heads! No one burned up, though. And they didn't quite have balloons, but there was a huge rushing wind. *For added effect, have a balloon blown up and let it go for the rush of air.* They didn't sing Happy Birthday, but they spoke in different languages without even studying them. Oh, and the gift! The disciples received the present of presents, the present of presence! The Holy Spirit came down at Pentecost. Jesus had promised to send His spirit, and at Pentecost, He came.

So why is this so important? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does He do? Well, the Holy Spirit is the third person of the trinity. He didn't just appear at Pentecost, but was actually present from the very beginning of creation, and is still with us now. He is one with God the Father and Jesus His Son. The Holy Spirit can be a little tougher to understand, but does very important things for us. He comforts us in times of trouble. He also helps us to pray. In the book of Romans, Paul describes how the Holy Spirit intercedes when we don't know what or how to pray, and helps when we don't know the words to use. He is always with us, and always helps us! Birthdays only come once a year, but we can rejoice that God is with us every day!

Prayer: (Invite the children to repeat each line)

Dear God,

Thank you for sending your spirit

Thank you for the amazing story of Pentecost

And for your church

Help us to share the good news

And spread your love to one another

Thank you for your love

We love you, God!

In Jesus name, Amen!

Game & Activities Suggestions

(10 minutes)



In this story, the Holy Spirit helper came to the disciples, just like Jesus had promised. The events of Pentecost are remarkable: flames on heads, speaking in other languages, enthusiasm and excitement...this could only come from God! Celebrate the story. Sprinkle some of these bonus items in before, during, or after the Scripture exploration.

Here are some potential activities to enjoy...(select the best ones for your audience and age group):

- Try your hand at some language fun! Pick a foreign language, and learn some new words in it. Learn about the culture and people who speak that language, too.
- Have a balloon race: blow up a balloon, let it go, and see where it lands. Continue to do this and race to see who is the first to make it across the room with their balloon.
- “Snacks on Fire”: Enjoy a tasty “flame” themed snack. Examples include flaming hot Cheetos, crackers with orange and yellow cheeses, red and yellow veggies (carrots, peppers, cherry tomatoes), or Dove chocolates (for the Holy Spirit symbol).
- Have a “wind-blown race”: provide each student with a straw and invite them to use the straws to blow a ping-pong ball or pom pom across a table or playing area. This can also turn into a form of “hockey”: have students line up on either side of a table, and try to blow the ball to roll off the other side of the table.
- Happy Birthday, church! As Pentecost is often called the birthday of the early church, celebrate with birthday party games and party favors.
- Light candles (very carefully and with safety supervision) to recount the tongues of flame that came at Pentecost.

Explain that Jesus had promised, before going to Heaven, that He would send the Holy Spirit for the disciples. He kept that promise, and in this lesson we will explore how Pentecost energized people to spread the Gospel good news. This message was not just for the early church, but for us, too, as we shine God’s love to one another.

Main Bible Teaching (15 minutes)



The passages here refer to the events of Pentecost and descriptions of the Holy Spirit. Have fun adding interactive elements as you see fit. Students can help to tell the story and act it out, if you wish, or listen as you present the Scripture. Older students can help take turns reading.

Acts 2:1-4 NIV *When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. (2) Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. (3) They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. (4) All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.*

Amazing things were happening here. Tongues of fire and rushing wind? Speaking other languages? Of course, we don't experience these things on a daily basis. This was a remarkable and special event in the life of the church. We may not see this all the time, but it's still amazing and exciting to learn about in order to consider how Christ still can and does work through us today.

Optional: use a fan or hair dryer to create a "rushing wind" for students. Light candles to recall the tongues of flame.

Ask: The Holy Spirit entered in this event, just as Jesus had promised to send His presence. How do we know that God is always present? (This could be a tricky question! Consider elements of prayer, knowing all we have comes from Him, and the Bible.)

Acts 2:5-13 NIV Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. (6) When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. (7) Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? (8) Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? (9) Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, (10) Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" (12) Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" (13) Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

Optional: look at these various places on a map to see how far people came from.

Sometimes people don't understand what God is doing in our lives. They might criticize or critique what confuses them. The disciples were filled with power to do amazing and remarkable things, like speak in other languages. A lot of people believed the things that they shared, but there are always some who will be skeptical or grumpy. Explain to kids that even in this experience, God gave the disciples wise words to help them explain what was happening.

Acts 2:14-21 NIV Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. (15) These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! (16) No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: (17) "'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. (18) Even on my servants, both men and women, I will

pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. (19) I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. (20) The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. (21) And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

Peter uses Scripture prophecies to remind the onlookers that God had promised what was happening would happen. The Holy Spirit enabled it, and that was only the beginning of the growth of the church. Peter and the other followers of Jesus spread out and told many others about who He was and what He had done.

Ask: The disciples were excited to tell everyone who would listen about Jesus. Who do you tell about Him?

Remind kids that all of us are called to celebrate what God has done. The church is not just one place, but is the way Jesus uses us and our love to continue spreading the joy and love of Christ everywhere. We can tell people about God, and we can also live as His people by demonstrating genuine care for one another. Everyone, everywhere is our mission field!

If you'd like to go into further detail (and have time) about who the Holy Spirit is, consider using the following passages, as well:

Romans 8:26-27 NIV *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. (27) And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.*

One important job of the Holy Spirit is being a helper for us. He is always with us, and He can help us when we don't know how to pray or the words to say.

Ask: Do you ever have a hard time praying? Did you know that you have a helper?

John 16:13-15 NIV *But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. (14) He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. (15) All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you."*

This passage is a reminder that Jesus promised to send His Spirit, and that He would help people believe and understand.

Note: it's important to point out that the Holy Spirit wasn't "born" at Pentecost. He always was, as a person of the Trinity, and has been around from the beginning. But the disciples received Him in a special way at Pentecost.

Craft one: "Dove from Above"

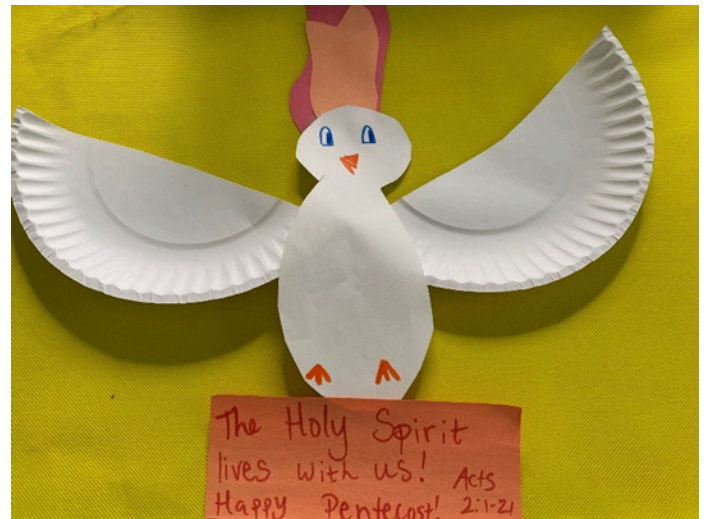
You will need:

- Paper plates
- Construction paper or cardstock
- Glue or tape
- Markers or crayons
- Scissors
- String or pipe cleaner (optional)



Procedure:

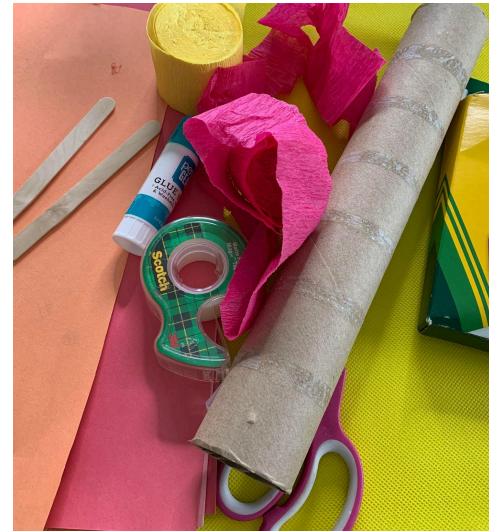
1. Cut a paper plate in half to create two "wings."
2. Cut a dove "body" out of paper or cardstock, using a circle for the head and teardrop shape for the body.
3. Draw feet and facial features on the dove.
4. Attach the wings to the body using glue, tape, or staples.
5. Cut out "flames" from paper and attach above the head of the dove.
6. Add verses or captions as desired. Option: add a string to hang the dove.



Craft Two: “Flame of the Spirit”

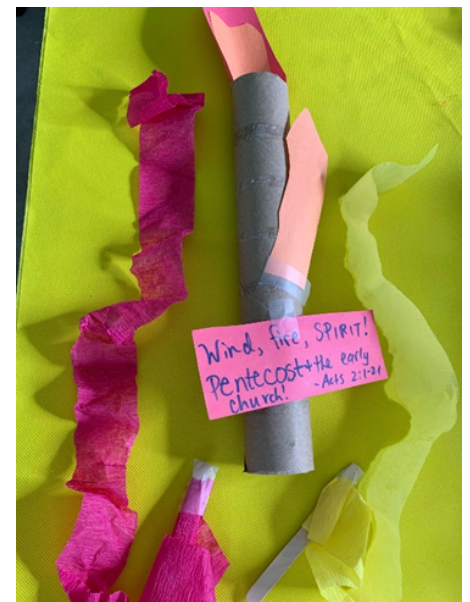
You will need:

- Paper towel or toilet paper tubes
- Crepe paper streamers
- Tape or glue
- Scissors
- Popsicle sticks
- Crayons or markers
- Extra decorations (stickers, glitter, etc.)
- Construction paper or cardstock



Procedure:

1. Attach strips of crepe paper to popsicle sticks to create the “windy flames.”
2. Decorate the outside of the tube with stickers, glitter, and verses or captions, as desired.
3. Cut out paper to resemble flames, and attach them inside or outside of the tube to make it look like a candle.
4. Tuck the streamers inside the candle to add an element of interactive interest. Use the craft to recall Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit!



Acts 2:4a NIV

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit



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Word Search Puzzle

Pentecost - Holy - Spirit - Heaven - Tongues - Egypt

Jerusalem - Language - Works - Judea - Intercede - Truth

L	L	B	P	Z	W	T	N	W	S	Z
I	A	R	J	B	O	E	Q	D	P	P
W	N	E	U	D	R	T	K	J	I	E
K	G	T	D	Z	K	O	D	E	R	N
G	U	R	E	Q	S	N	D	R	I	T
F	A	U	A	R	L	G	X	U	T	E
V	G	T	R	Z	C	U	T	S	U	C
N	E	H	E	A	V	E	N	A	F	O
V	U	D	N	U	Q	S	D	L	C	S
Q	M	T	H	O	L	Y	U	E	I	T
W	G	G	E	G	Y	P	T	M	S	S

Word Search Answers

L	L	B	P	Z	W	T	N	W	S	Z
I	A	R	J	B	O	E	Q	D	P	P
W	N	E	U	D	R	T	K	J	I	E
K	G	T	D	Z	K	O	D	E	R	N
G	U	R	E	Q	S	N	D	R	I	T
F	A	U	A	R	L	G	X	U	T	E
V	G	T	R	Z	C	U	T	S	U	C
N	E	H	E	A	V	E	N	A	F	O
V	U	D	N	U	Q	S	D	L	C	S
Q	M	T	H	O	L	Y	U	E	I	T
W	G	G	E	G	Y	P	T	M	S	S