



Stories on the Way: Lesson Plans for Small Sunday Schools

The Story of Pentecost Acts 2:1-11

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Written by Rhonda Waters

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The Story of Pentecost

On the day of Pentecost, all of Jesus' disciples were together in Jerusalem. All of a sudden a sound like the rush of a huge wind came from heaven and filled the whole house. Tongues of fire appeared and a flame rested on each of them. Everyone was filled with the Holy Spirit and the Spirit gave them the ability to speak in other languages – languages they didn't know before!

Now there were faithful Jews from every country in the world living in Jerusalem. When they heard the noise, a crowd gathered. Everyone was confused, because each person heard the disciples speaking in their own language. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Aren't all these people from Galilee? They don't speak our language. And we all speak different languages from each other. How can we all hear them speaking in our own native language, telling us about God's powerful works?"

(Acts 2:1-11)

In Our Own Language

(Story of Pentecost Lesson 1)

This Pentecost lesson looks at the power of language. As a bonus, it provides an easy in-church presentation for kids to offer at the Pentecost service which I encourage you to develop as a family service.

Things to know about this lesson:

- You will be teaching students how to say “Peace to you” in a number of languages. Keep in mind that this is an illustration and not actually a language lesson. Any respectful attempt at correct pronunciation is just fine!

Before the Lesson

Have a look at the phrases. You may want to use a site like Google Translate (translate.google.ca) to hear an approximation of the pronunciation.

Materials

- copies of the phrases you will use for students who can read (optional)

Open with prayer

Introduce the Story

Who remembers what the last holiday we celebrated was? (Easter)

And what happens at Easter? (Jesus dies and is raised)

After Jesus is raised, he tells his disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit to come. The Holy Spirit would give them the power they need to go into the world and tell everyone about Jesus and the things he taught them about God and the right way to live.

Fifty days after Easter, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came to the disciples. Our story today is about that day.

Read the Story (see page 1)

Discussion

Three things happened when the Spirit came to the disciples. Can you tell me what they were? (wind, fire, languages)

Today, I want to focus on the languages.

What languages do you speak?

What are some languages you don't speak?

Have you ever been somewhere where everyone spoke a language you couldn't understand? How did that feel? (Or can you imagine how that would feel?)

Language is pretty important, isn't it? But there are other ways to communicate with people. How can we communicate without talking or writing?

What were the disciples talking about in everyone's language? (the powerful works of God)

What works do you think those were? (miracles, creation, Jesus' resurrection)

The Holy Spirit is still with us, helping us to share the good news of God's work in the world and of Jesus, God's Son. We share that news by our words and by our actions so that everyone in the world can understand our message.

Introduce the Activity

Even though we can use our actions and our body language to communicate, it is still helpful to speak to people in their own language. Today, we are going to learn how to say a very important phrase in a few different languages.

When Jesus visited his disciples, after he was raised from the dead, he said this to them: "Peace to you".

We say a version of this phrase every Sunday: "Peace be with you".

What does it mean?

(It means we're friendly and we want others to be safe and happy. It means we don't want to fight but rather want to live cooperatively. It means there is no reason to worry or be afraid because God is with us.)

Those are good things to say to other people.

In Many Languages

Ideally, you will be able to present this in church (maybe on Pentecost). If so, tell the students now so they know that something is at stake. Reassure them that you will practice each Sunday until then.

If you have older students, hand out pieces of paper with the phrase. Otherwise, you will have to rely on call and response – which is actually more effective anyway.

Choose a few of the languages below (in addition to any languages represented in your group). Either working together or in small groups, practice the phrases until they are memorized.

Peace to you

- As-Salaamu `Alaykum (Arabic)
- paix à vous (French)
- Friede sei mit euch (German)
- eirini se sas (Greek)
- shalom aleichem (Hebrew)
- pace a voi (Italian)
- anata ni heiwa (Japanese)
- mir vam (Russian)
- paz a vosotros (Spanish)
- amani (Swahili)

Regrouping

Congratulate everyone.

Which one was hardest? Easiest? Why?

Was there a language you liked the most? If so, why?

Remind everyone about the presentation (if applicable).

Closing Prayer

Dear God, thank you for the gift of language and communication. Send your Holy Spirit to us so that we will be able to use your gifts to share the good news of your wonderful works and of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Like a Rush of Wind (Story of Pentecost Lesson 2)

This lesson on the Wind of the Spirit could also provide a component for a family Pentecost service (along with the languages prepared in *In Our Own Language*. Imagine a procession of pinwheels...

Things to know about this lesson:

- You may want to consider making a pinwheel in advance both for your own practice and to serve as an example.

Materials

- copies of the pinwheel template (see page 7)
- drawing paper
- crayons/markers/pencil crayons
- scissors
- pushpins
- new, unsharpened pencils.
-

Open with prayer.

Introduce the Story

Who remembers what the last holiday we celebrated was? (Easter)

And what happens at Easter? (Jesus dies and is raised)

After Jesus is raised, he tells his disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit to come. The Holy Spirit would give them the power they need to go into the world and tell everyone about Jesus and the things he taught them about God and the right way to live.

Fifty days after Easter, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came to the disciples. Our story today is about that day.

Read the Story (see page 1)

Discussion

Three things happened when the Spirit came to the disciples. Can you tell me what they were? (wind, fire, languages)

Today, I want to focus on the wind.

Where was the wind that the disciples heard? (in a house)

How do you think the disciples felt? (surprised, scared, confused)

Have you ever been in a really strong wind? How did it make you feel?

Have you ever been in a really gentle wind? How did that make you feel?

Can you see wind? (no)

Then how can you tell when there is a wind? (feel it, hear it, see it move things)

The Holy Spirit is like the wind. You can't see it but you can see signs of it. You can't control it and it can be wild and scary or gentle and refreshing.

Introduce the Activity

We're going to make pinwheels. Pinwheels spin even in a gentle wind, giving us a sign that the wind is blowing. They can remind us to pay attention to the signs of the Spirit.

Making Pinwheels

Distribute pinwheel templates, scissors, and crayons/markers/pencil crayons, and new pencils. Invite the students to cut out the square and decorate it on both sides.

Once the square is decorated, cut down the four lines towards the centre.

Bend down (don't fold) every other corner and pin the tips together in the centre. Spin the pin in its hole a few times to help the pinwheel spin more freely.

Finally, stick the pin into a pencil eraser.

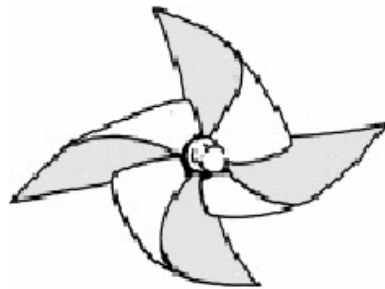
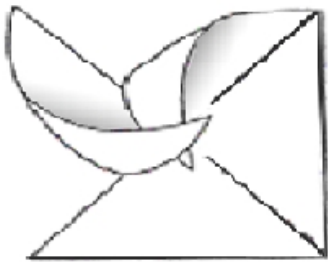
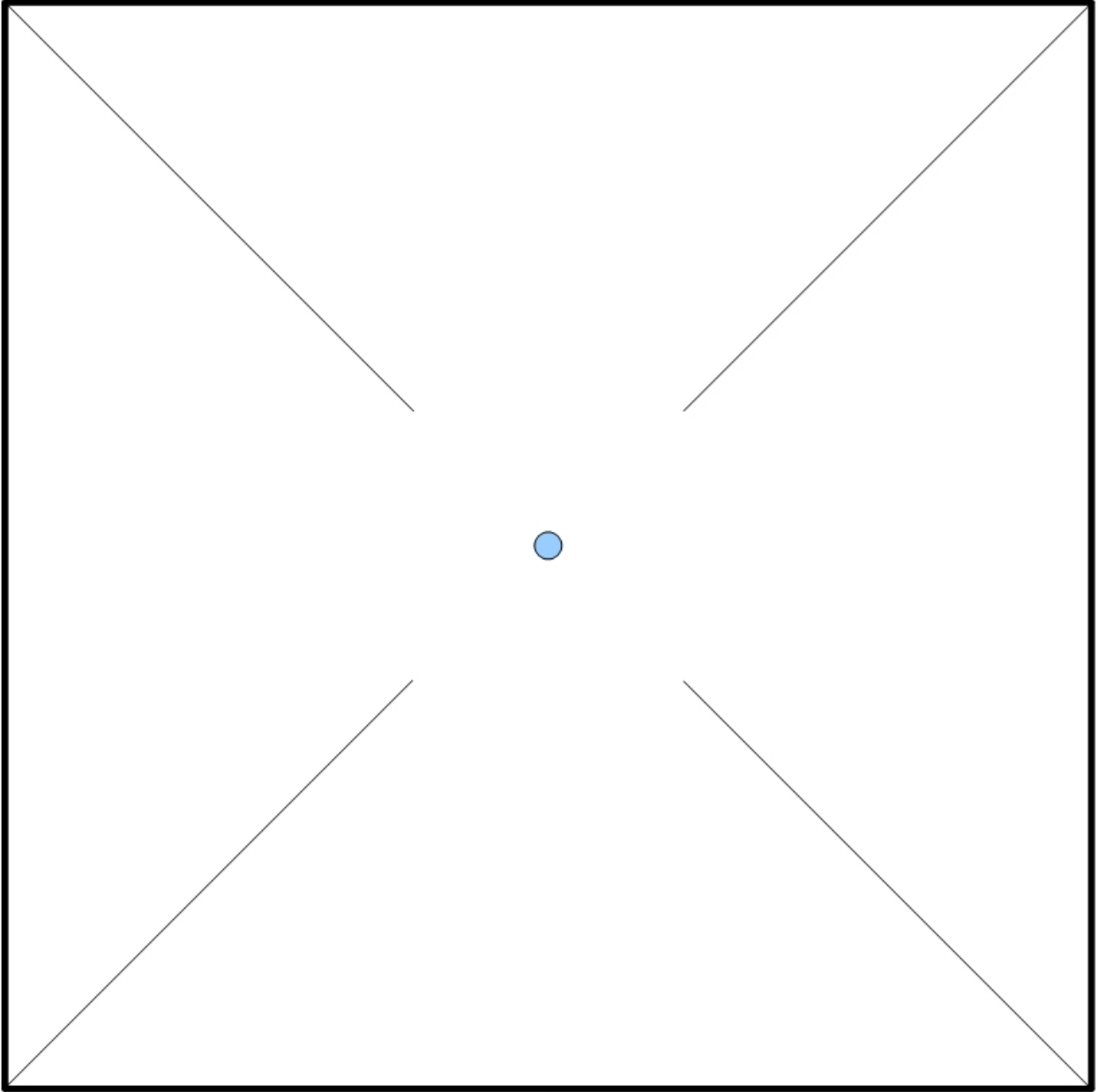
Blow on the front of the pinwheel and watch it spin!

Regrouping

Admire everyone's pinwheels. Ask if anyone wants to explain the drawings they made or colours they chose for their pinwheel. Finish with a synchronized pinwheel spin.

Closing Prayer

Dear God, thank you for the wind. Help us notice the signs of the Spirit blowing in our lives. Amen.



Tongues of Fire

(Story of Pentecost Lesson 3)

And here is the lesson on fire. It does, of course, include lighting candles but it will not suffer if you feel that it is inappropriate in your context. The central activity is a game that is straightforward to play but which I may not have explained very well. If you have any questions, feel free to email me: storiesontheway@gmail.com.

Materials

- candles
- matches or a lighter

Open with prayer.

Introduce the Story

Who remembers what the last holiday we celebrated was? (Easter)

And what happens at Easter? (Jesus dies and is raised)

After Jesus is raised, he tells his disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit to come. The Holy Spirit would give them the power they need to go into the world and tell everyone about Jesus and the things he taught them about God and the right way to live.

Fifty days after Easter, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came to the disciples. Our story today is about that day and next week we will celebrate that day in church.

Read the Story (see page 1)

Discussion

Three things happened when the Spirit came to the disciples. Can you tell me what they were? (wind, fire, languages)

Today, I want to focus on the fire.

What did the fire do? (sat on the shoulders of the disciples)

Is that what fire usually does? (no)

What can you tell me about regular fire? (it gives heat, it gives light, it can be hard to control)

How do we use fire in church? (candles; as a symbol)

What is fire a symbol for? (light and truth; power; warmth)

There's another interesting thing about fire. You can pass it on without your flame

getting any less.

So – why do you think the Holy Spirit and fire go together? (help the students recap the discussion points)

Introduce the Activity

What are some other things that you can pass on without having any less yourself? (If they get stuck: How about feelings? Can you pass on a good or a bad feeling to other people and still feel that way yourself? Or interests? Ideas? Worries? Hopes? Beliefs? Faith?)

Since playing with fire is a bad idea, our game today using something else we can pass on – poses. We're going to have a race to see who (or which team) can pass on a pose fastest.

Pass It On

Divide the group into teams of the same number. You (or the extra student, if your class is an odd number) will be the Actor. Each team stands in a row, facing away from the Actor. The Actor strikes a pose, using her face and body. The pose can be realistic or silly. When she is ready, she says "Now" and the person closest to her in each team turns to see the pose. They turn back to face their team, copy the pose, and each, when ready, says "Now". The next person in their line turns to see the pose and so on. Once they have made the pose, everyone must maintain it until the first team finishes.

Change the Actor between races, if there is time and desire.

Regrouping

We're going to finish our lesson today by passing a flame around our circle as a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Gather everyone into a circle. Distribute candles. Light your candle. Use it to light the candle of the person beside you, etc.

Closing Prayer

Dear God, thank you for fire. Thank you for its light and its heat. Help us use it wisely and safely. Thank you for the Holy Spirit, helping us to share our knowledge of your power and love with everyone around us. Amen.

(Blow out the candles.)