

Pentecost

MEETING AIM

To explore how the coming of the Holy Spirit transformed the lives of Jesus' followers and the Church.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 2

BACKGROUND

It has been 50 days since the Passover festival, which followed Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus had been taken up to heaven only a week or so previously, and here his followers (perhaps around 120 of them, see Acts 1:15) are waiting for the Holy Spirit, as promised by Jesus. What happens next changes their lives and the course of history. They go from waiting around to proclaiming the gospel, from quietness to not being able to shut up, all because of the enabling of the Spirit.

5

WELCOME ACTIVITIES

OPTION ONE: Speaking other languages

You will need: long sheets of paper and marker pens (optional)

Challenge your congregation to say something in another language. You could do this as people arrive, encouraging them to chat to others about the languages they can speak or to write a message on the long sheets of paper placed around your worship area. These could be words of praise to God or simply 'Welcome' or 'Hello'.

Alternatively, you could do this at the start of the service, inviting some volunteers to say something in a language they can speak. Ask them how they came to speak this language.

OPTION TWO: Testimony

You will need: a volunteer to give their testimony

Before the session, find someone in your congregation or wider community whose life has been dramatically changed.

At the start of your service, chat to them about how their life changed. Was it dramatic? What was it like before and after? What brought about the change?

10

BIBLE STORY

You will need: long strips of red, orange and yellow material; Acts 2:7b-11 written out on slips of paper (see below)

Before the service, write out the questions and statements below (taken from Acts 2:7b-11, CEV) on separate slips of paper and find volunteers to read them out:

- Don't all these who are speaking come from Galilee?
- Then why do we hear them speaking our very own languages?
- Some of us are from Parthia, Media, and Elam. Others are from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, parts of Libya near Cyrene, Rome, Crete, and Arabia.
- Some of us were born Jews, and others of us have chosen to be Jews.
- Yet we all hear them using our own languages to tell the wonderful things God has done.

Ask for volunteers to hold your lengths of flame-coloured material. (You could use ribbons, crepe paper or worship flags if you can't get long pieces of fabric.)

Challenge the congregation to make a sound like a rushing wind using their voices, hands and feet. Give them a moment to think about what noises they can make. Once everyone is ready, 'conduct' the sound effect from the front. Start off quietly, like the noise of a soft breeze. Then get louder and stormier, from a strong wind to a hurricane. Then bring the noise level back to a breeze, then stillness.

Split the congregation into two and ask one side to say: "What does this all mean?" and the other: "They are drunk!"

Read Acts 2:1-2 and then get the congregation to 'perform' their rushing wind, starting quietly and ending with a wild hurricane. Read verse 3 and ask your volunteers to run around the church trailing the coloured fabric behind them. Read verse 4 and ask people to shout out words of praise to God if they know them.

Read Act 2:5-7a, then ask your volunteers to stand and read their lines. After this, read verse 12, asking one half to shout "What does all this mean?" and then verse 13, with the other half shouting: "They are drunk!"

5

SMALL GROUPS

You will need: copies of the questions below; Bibles

Break into small groups – made up of one or two families, or different mixed-age groups – and give each group a copy of these questions and a Bible:

- If you had been in the room with the disciples, what would you have thought?
- If you had been in the crowd and heard the disciples, what would you have thought?
- What do you think this all means?
- What do you know of the Holy Spirit?

Give the groups time to chat about these questions, referring to the Bible passage if they need to.

10

REVIEW

You will need: a roving mic (if needed)

Get some feedback on questions two and three from 'Small groups' using a microphone to hear people's contributions if your meeting space is large.

10

RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

Set these three activities up in different parts of your meeting space. Explain what each one is and encourage people to go to the one that will help them process what they have discovered most effectively.

OPTION 1: Art

You will need: art materials

Encourage the congregation to create a picture of the events from the Bible story or a response to what God has been saying to them today. You may want to encourage some discussion about the story as people work.

OPTION 2: Discussion

You will need: volunteers to facilitate discussion; paper and pens

Gather people together in small groups, each with a facilitator, and challenge them to think about the difference the things they have discovered today will make in their lives.

OPTION 3: Evangelism

You will need: paper and pens

Ask people in the group what they can do to tell others about Jesus, as Peter goes on to do in the rest of Acts 2. Help people come up with a plan of what they might do at work, school or college. Then pray together, asking the Holy Spirit to help you.

5

CLOSING

Bring everyone back together and ask if anyone would like to share what they did, thought about or discussed during the response time. Thank everyone for taking part and say an appropriate blessing to close the service.

CREATIVE WORSHIP SUGGESTIONS

Use flame-coloured flags and ribbons during sung worship to echo the Spirit in the story. Leave art materials out for people to use to worship God as others sing.

ALEX TAYLOR

is resources editor for *Premier Youth and Children's Work*.

Kelly and the kebab question

Kelly plugged her phone in and pulled the duvet over her head. It had been a long, long day. She had got up early because she hadn't managed to finish her geography homework the night before. She hated geography, but she didn't want to get a detention for not handing it in on time. At lunchtime she played in the orchestra, then after school it was hockey practice. Her room was a mess of maps, trombone music and dirty sports kit.

Her phone buzzed. Kelly emerged from her duvet cocoon to check the screen:

"K, can I have ££? I need kebab."

Alesha.

Her friend was always asking for something. She had asked to borrow Kelly's trombone to fish out the bag she had dropped into the canal. She had asked for Kelly's best mascara at the cinema because her false eyelashes had fallen into her popcorn. She had asked to come over and use Kelly's bathroom because her dad was cleaning motorbike parts in the washbasin at her house. And now cash for a kebab!

Kelly ignored the message and snuggled up in bed again. But it didn't last long...

Buzz.

"Come on K. Mich came round. No food in house. Mum forgot 2 shop."

Nope. Not this time. Kelly was not going to get involved.

Alesha's requests always had some kind of long-lasting legacy. It had taken her ages to get that duck poo off her trombone.

Buzz.

"Get up! I'm outside."

What?! Kelly dragged herself out of her warm bed and staggered towards the window, tripping over a hockey stick in the darkness. Pulling back the curtains she saw Alesha waving to her from the street below.

"Kelly!" Alesha's attempt at a stage whisper echoed around the street.

Kelly yanked the window open.

"Shh! You'll wake up the whole street!" she hissed.

"Can you lend me a tenner? Michelle hasn't eaten all day. I don't think her dad's managing very well," said Alesha, no more quietly than before.

Michelle's dad had been made redundant and her mum had left home four years ago.

Kelly sighed. "OK." She took ten pound coins out of her savings jar. Having put them in a small bag, she threw them down to Alesha.

"Thanks! I'll pay you back tomorrow!"

That'll be the day, thought Kelly.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What would you have done in Kelly's position?
- What would make you get out of bed to help someone if they asked for it?
- Has anyone ever asked you for help that you didn't want to give?
- How difficult is it to help friends? What about people you don't like?
- Have you ever had to ask for something again and again? What happened?

This story is based on Luke 11:5-13. Read this passage to the group and compare Jesus' story and words with this one. Discuss what Jesus might have been saying through his parable, encouraging the group to think about it in a new way.

ALEX TAYLOR

is resources editor for *Premier Youth and Children's Work*.

Mental errors versus good decisions

MENTAL ERRORS VERSUS GOOD DECISIONS

Have you ever made a decision you knew was unwise but went with it anyway? Sometimes we make irrational and inconsistent decisions. Even Paul said: "For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing" (Romans 7:19). Research suggests there are several common mental errors called 'cognitive biases' that veer us away from making good decisions. Let's look at a key one called 'in-group bias'.

WHAT IT IS

In-group bias is when we unfairly favour those who belong to our group, crowd, tribe or community. As individuals we generally presume that we are impartial, fair and balanced, but we often automatically favour those who are most like us; those who share our values, appearance, background or networks. This often manifests as being exclusive to those outside the group. At best it is rude and cliquy, and at worst it is favouritism, racism or serious prejudice and intolerance.

THE CHALLENGE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Favouring people like ourselves is understandably the foundation of most communities across the world. Finding your place in a tribe or community is integral to adolescence. It is linked to identity formation in our teenage years, so we can't be too hard on young people for wanting to fit in. However, while having something in common does bring us together, the relief and importance of finding our own comfort zone can easily spill over into making others unwelcome or protecting what we have found from the threat of change posed by newcomers or outsiders. We can become resistant to outside ideas, which is a precursor to becoming a sect. Young people need to find the right balance between their own needs and the simple truth that others' needs and feelings are just as important.

The kind of community Jesus encourages us to form and invest in spans across these boundaries. Did he tell us to only love people like us? A community of people like ourselves is easy to be part of. Welcoming and loving people of different faiths, beliefs, values, backgrounds, appearance, abilities and so on is radical.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR MENTEE

Work through these questions together, encouraging them to be as honest as they can:

- What are the consequences of favouring people with similar ideas and values to yourself?
- How guilty are you of this on a scale of one to ten?
- What is the best way of challenging this behaviour in groups you are a part of?
- What is the best way to support those who are unfairly treated?
- What things might put you off trying to change or stop this from happening?

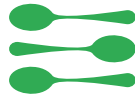
JOEL TOOMBS

has an MA in Christian mentoring and wrote the Grove booklet, *Mentoring and Young People*. He is a volunteer youth worker.

Games with cards

Despite the vast range of consoles and online games available, simple games are still surprisingly popular. No youth or children's group is complete without someone playing Uno or Dobble, so here are some suggestions for games you can play with playing cards. You'll need a pack of cards for each of these games (no surprises there...).

SPOONS



You will need: spoons (one for each player, minus one)

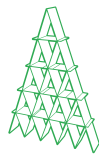
Sort the deck of cards into sets of four of the same value (for example four aces, four sixes and four kings), with enough for one set of four per player. Shuffle the cards and deal four out to each player. Place the spoons in the middle of the table.

On the word go, each player should try to collect a set of four cards by passing one card from their hand to the person on the left and picking up the card given to them by the player on their right. This continues until one person has collected four cards of the same value. At this point they grab a spoon from the centre, and all the other players should follow suit (regardless of whether they have a set of four). The player left without a spoon is given a point. The winner is the player with the fewest points at the end of the game (you could agree a certain number of rounds or just play until the group loses interest).

A variation of this game is called 'Slam'. Instead of using spoons, place a spare card in the middle of the table. When one player has a set of four, they slam their hand on the spare card. Everyone else must do the same, the loser being the one with their hand on the top of the pile.

Both variations can become quite aggressive, so set some boundaries in place before you start (and remove rings and watches). A quieter version would be for the first player who gets a set to put their thumb on their forehead. They can even carry on passing cards around until the other players notice.

HOUSE OF CARDS



You will need: playdough (optional)

Challenge the group to build the biggest tower they can from their pack of cards. You could give each child some playdough to secure the cards if you have it, as this may cause less frustration! The person, pair or team with the highest house of cards at the end of the time limit is the winner.

MEMORY PAIRS



This is the simplest of card games. Choose a number of pairs from your pack and lay them all face down on a table. In turn, the players choose two cards to turn over. If they reveal a pair they take these cards and choose two more to turn over. If not, the cards are turned face down again and the next player takes a turn. Continue until all the pairs are revealed. The winner is the player with the most pairs.

You can tailor this to your session by creating your own set of cards. Famous couples, pairs of Bible characters, countries and their capitals could all work...There are many ways to create a unique game from this one idea.

For an older group, you could try a game like Obama Llama, which has this memory pair idea at its heart but expands it with extra mini-games.

TARGET CARDS



You will need: buckets, baskets or containers; chalk or masking tape
Gather together a variety of buckets, baskets or containers and place them around your playing space. Mark out a line at one end for the players to stand behind. Assign the different receptacles different numbers of points depending on their distance from the playing line.

Give each player a number of playing cards. Competitors should try to throw their cards into the buckets, baskets or containers to gain points. The winner is the player with the most points. Award bonus points for the most creative or flamboyant way of throwing the cards.

Meeting together



COMMUNITY CIRCLE

You will need: paper cut into circles (side plate size); a pen or a pencil; scissors

This craft is a great way to emphasise the concept of coming together as a group joined by a common purpose. Each of the people shapes look fairly equal, so it's a good visual to help speak about the fact that everyone was an equally important part of the community, whatever their background.

Fold the circle in half three times (so it is technically split into eighths). Draw on the pattern as shown in the photo and cut around the shapes. Open it out and you will find a circle of eight people! Decorate it as you wish, maybe using each person to represent someone from your church.



COMMUNITY BISCUITS

You will need: 100g butter; 50g sugar; 150g plain flour; 50g cornflour; people-shaped cutters; heart-shaped cutters; a rolling pin; a baking tray; baking paper; a mixing bowl; a wooden spoon; access to an oven; coloured icing and other decorations (optional)

The followers of Jesus met to pray, worship and eat together. Here is a simple recipe that children can make and share. You can use people and heart-shaped cutters to represent what is going on in the readings, but any shapes will do!

Preheat the oven to 180°C or gas mark 4. Beat the sugar and butter together in a bowl until fluffy. Add both types of flour and mix to form a dough (this might take some time, but it will eventually come together). Roll out the dough until it is about the thickness of a £1 coin. Cut out the people and heart shapes, then place them on the baking tray. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes or until starting to turn golden at the edges. Cool the biscuits and decorate if you would like to. Share them out and enjoy!

Make sure you take into account food hygiene, allergy and safety issues as you make these biscuits.

Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-37 give a clear picture of what life was like for the early Church. The following craft ideas will help children explore themes of sharing, generosity, passing on the message and meeting together in community.



'PASS IT ON' PAINTING

You will need: paper; scissors; paint; paintbrushes

This is a fun, and hopefully not too messy, activity that helps carry the idea of awe and wonder the followers of Jesus had. It also helps children think about how the message was 'passed on' to those around them so that more were added to their number.

Fold the paper in half, cut out a symmetrical heart shape (if desired) and open the paper out. Paint on one side of the paper using quite thick strokes. Fold the painted section over the top of the unpainted section and gently press down. Open out to see that the painted design has transferred onto the blank half.



GENEROSITY JAR

You will need: clean jars; PVA glue; glitter; newspaper or scrap paper; washi tape (available in craft shops or online); stickers; paintbrushes

This is a way of helping children engage in financial generosity and sharing what they have, just as members of the early Church did. You could encourage them to think of a Christian charity to give their coins to when they have been collected.

Paint PVA glue onto the jars. Sprinkle some glitter onto a piece of paper and roll the glued part of the jar in the glitter so that it sticks to the glue. You might need to sprinkle more on by hand to fill any gaps. Decorate the rest of the jar with washi tape and stickers. Ask the children to fill the jars with low-value coins and then, after an agreed period, collect the money together as a group and donate it to charity.

MINA MUNNS

is founder of Flame: Creative Children's Ministry flamecreativekids.blogspot.co.uk.



To All the Boys I've Loved Before

CLIP: 00:17:32 – 00:24:42 / RATING: 15

SYNOPSIS

It's a bit of a slow month for new Netflix content, so we're delving back into its vast database to talk about one of its biggest surprise hits from 2018: *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* (based on the bestselling novel by Jenny Han). What makes it so refreshing is that it not only stars an Asian-American lead, but it is also written and directed by women.

The story follows 16-year-old Lara Jean, who lives with her two sisters and widowed father. Lara Jean is not a particularly popular girl at school and doesn't have much of a social life. In fact, she spends most Saturday evenings watching *Golden Girls* with her younger sister Kitty.

Kitty eventually decides she has had enough, and after discovering five unsent love letters to Lara Jean's previous crushes she decides to post them all out, alerting the boys to her sister's current or previous affections. Soon we see fake relationships, gossip spread on Instagram, jealous ex-friends and real-life crushes turning into love.

The clip for this session takes place relatively early in the film. Having established that Lara Jean is living a rather stilted lifestyle, we see the immediate aftermath of her secret letters being mailed out to the five crushes by her younger sister. While running in a PE class, Lara Jean is interrupted by Patrick, who brandishes one of the love letters, which contains statements such as "you have golden specks in your eyes". Lara Jean then sees her older sister's ex-boyfriend arrive, also holding one of her letters. Panicking, she kisses Patrick in a bid to imply that they are together and runs away.

DISCUSS

After showing the clip as a stimulus, break into small discussion groups (you may wish to have a designated discussion leader in each group) and discuss the following questions:

- How do you think Lara Jean feels when she discovers her letters have been sent out?
- Is it always right to share your feelings with someone? Or should some things stay secret?
- Is Kitty (the younger sister) right to send out the letters?
- Does the film portray a realistic picture of what it is like to be a young person who has 'crushes' today?

Read through Psalm 37:1-10 (or the whole psalm if time permits), then return to your groups to discuss the next set of questions:

- Is it right to use the Bible as a tool to help us deal with issues such as fancying someone?
- Is it important that someone you fancy or are in a relationship with shares the same beliefs and lifestyle as you?
- Do you think verse 4 includes romantic relationships?
- How could the first ten verses be used as practical advice for someone who is struggling with relationships at the moment?

If you have time, watch the whole of *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* to see the clip in context.

TOM WADE

is the head of philosophy and theology at Haileybury and Imperial Service College.



Giant

ARTIST: Calvin Harris and Rag'n'Bone Man

SUITABLE FOR: Over-13s

INTRODUCTION

Young people often face deeply challenging situations, which can weigh heavily on them. This session explores how God lifts us up above our struggles so that we can experience true freedom in him.

Begin the session by asking the group if anyone has a £2 coin with them. Ask the young people to read what it says on the rim. Explain that "Standing on the shoulders of giants" is a phrase used by Sir Isaac Newton to acknowledge all those who had gone before him.

Discuss as a group:

- Who are the 'giants' in your life?
- Whose shoulders are you standing on?
- Who could you be a giant for?

LISTEN AND DISCUSS

Play the track, providing copies of the lyrics. As a group, discuss:

- What do you notice first from this song?
- Can you relate to any of these sentiments?
- Who is supporting who in this song?
- Does this challenge or encourage you? Why?

Distribute Bibles and look at Isaiah 40. Read the whole chapter or focus on verses 27-31, perhaps keeping the chapter open as you discuss the following questions and referring back to any key verses, as appropriate:

- How does this passage relate to the lyrics of the song?
- What would God say to the singer?
- What does he say to us here?

Allow the young people to continue the discussion with reference to the things that resonate with them from this song, perhaps thinking about friends they support or their own need to be lifted up.

Ask them to think about what it means for God to give us strength when we are weary. You could share a story of a specific time when you felt God lifting you up and then invite the young people to share their own stories.

As you draw the discussions to a close, invite them to pray together for specific challenges they are facing—things that are holding them down. Where would they like to experience God's strength in their lives? Pray for individuals or together as a group, whichever is best for your group.

Play the song again, this time inviting the group to use it as a response to the reading, declaring themselves free as they are lifted up in God's strength.

As you draw the session to a close, encourage the young people that they can leave as giants, soaring on eagles' wings. God doesn't promise that our problems will go away, but he does promise to lift us up and carry us through.

BECKY MAY

is a freelance writer and experienced children's and youth leader. She can be found at theresourcescupboard.co.uk.

GET OUTSIDE

Go outside into a garden, park or whatever outdoor space is available to you.

Read the verses of Psalm 19 and ask yourself:
how do "the heavens" proclaim the glory of God?

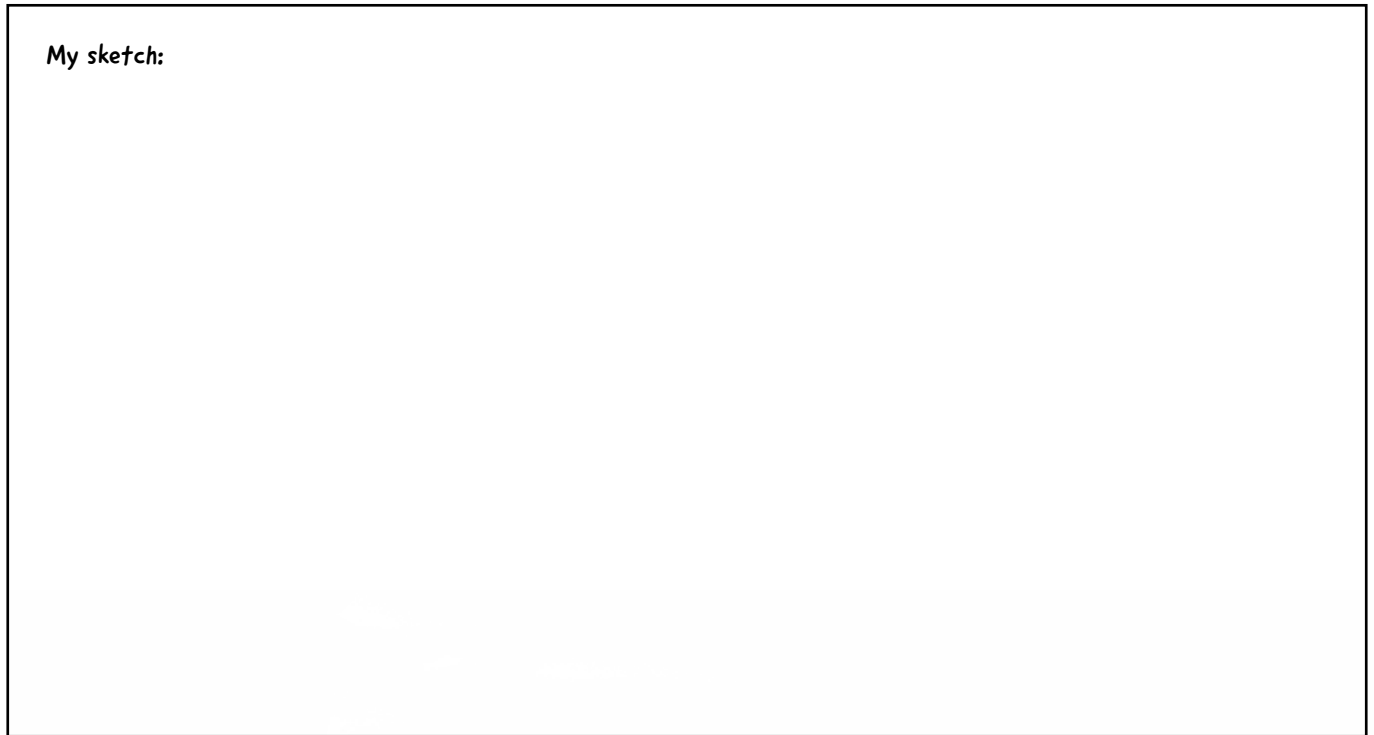
.....
.....
.....
.....

Next, look around for something in nature that
can teach you something about God. Sketch it
below as you reflect on God's character:

Psalm 19:1-4a (NLT) says:

"The heavens proclaim the glory of God.
The skies display his craftsmanship.
Day after day they continue to speak;
night after night they make him known.
They speak without a sound or word;
their voice is never heard.
Yet their message has gone throughout the earth,
and their words to all the world."

My sketch:



What this thing in nature shows me about God:

.....
.....
.....

