

# God's Plan: 2 LOVE Us 4-Ever!

## Bible Story

### The Infinite Implementation

Mark 16:15; Acts 1:1–11; 2:4,41–47; 4:32–35

## Bible Verse

"[...] live in love, as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us as a sacrificial offering to God for a fragrant aroma." Ephesians 5:2

## Session Goals

1. PARTICIPATE in telling the story of what Jesus' followers did after His ascension.
2. DISCUSS ways to show God's love to others.
3. THANK God for promising to love us forever, and ask for His help to show love to others.
4. CHOOSE to live as a member of God's family.

## Spark Principle— Chain Reaction

A series of events caused by the one before. Sharing God's love with others can start a chain reaction and go on and on and on!

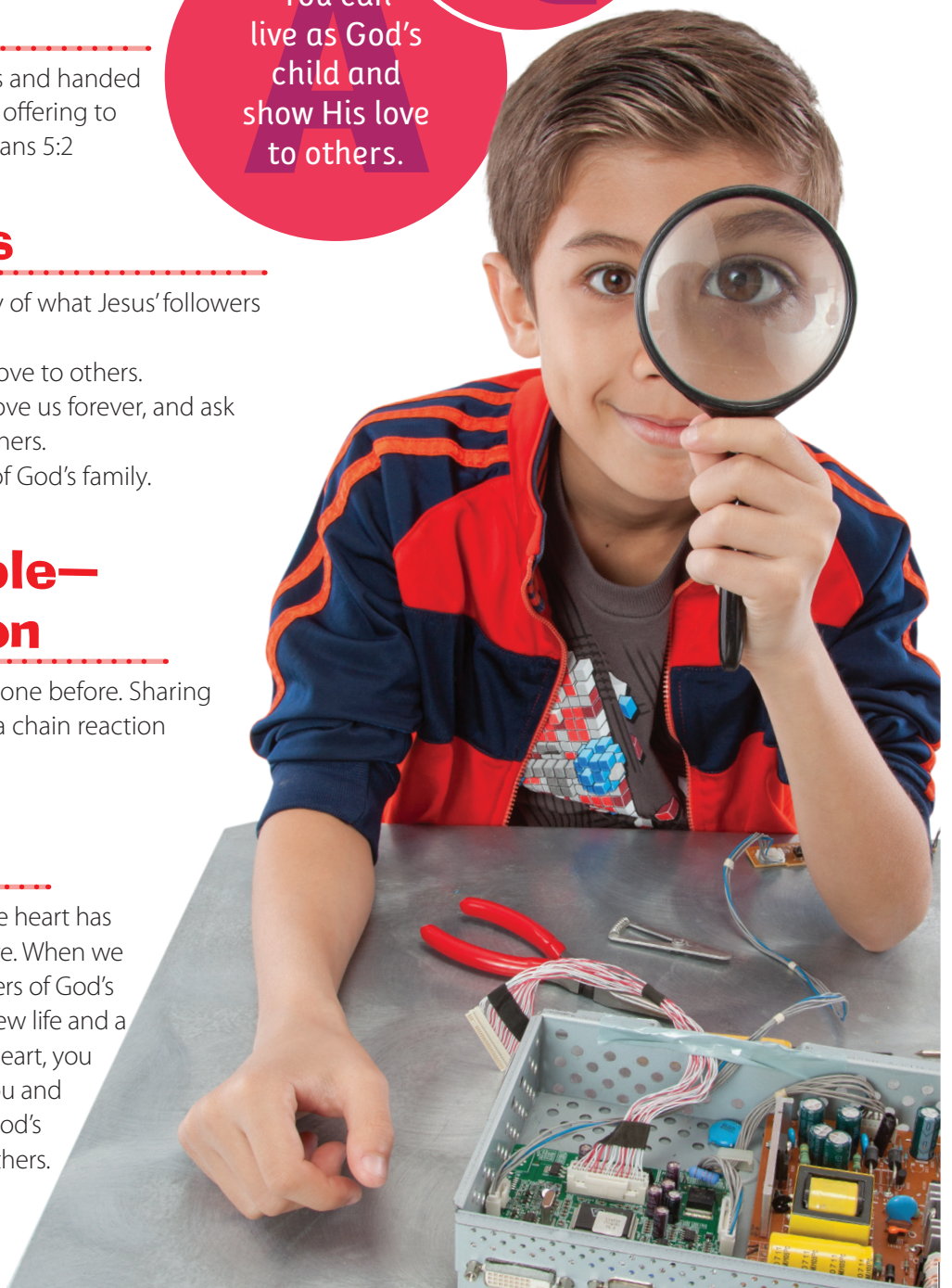


## Heart

For centuries, the heart has represented love. When we become members of God's family, at Baptism, we receive a new life and a new heart! Whenever you see a heart, you can remember how God loves you and how as a member of His family, God's child, you can show His love to others.

So...  
now what  
do I do?

You can  
live as God's  
child and  
show His love  
to others.



## Heart Prep

Salvation is a complete and finished work of God for us. Jesus on the cross said, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). God's plan was complete and finished in that moment! When we believe, we receive a new life, a new heart. We are made new creatures; we are given a new mind and new service opens before us. The new commandment of love is the only commandment of our new life.

Probably if you or I had gone through as much as Jesus did to make salvation possible, we would have been tempted to assure the spread of our work by some supernatural means. But when the Lord Jesus Christ went back to heaven, He left only a group of people to continue His work—a people called out of the world for His glory.

The Church is the organization that the Lord has ordained to carry on His work. The whole process of evangelization boils down to one point: Someone must tell of the love of Christ for others to know about it. You and I are the only messengers that He has. Throughout all of history, the Lord's people have with varying degrees of steadfastness continued this work. Now it is our turn.

The Lord promised that the gates of hell will not prevail against His Church. Instead, it will triumph until Christ returns. You and I can triumph, too, if we will let the Lord work in our lives to make us examples of the way in which members of the Body of Christ should act, both toward Him and toward others.

## Daily Recap

At the end of each session, take time to reflect on what happened. Use these questions as a guide:

- What did you learn this week? What do you think the kids learned this week?
- Thank God for the things that happened this week—the best, the worst, the strangest and the most laughable!
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you and your children show God's love to others every day.

## Materials

Optional Bible Story materials listed on page 37.

Bibles



Lab Journal



Session 5 Daily Plan Pennant



Session 5 Bible Story Poster from Bible Teaching Poster Pack



jumbo craft sticks



brick or other heavy object



markers



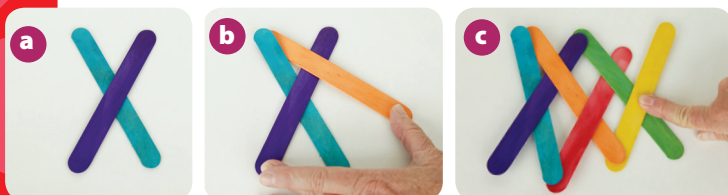


# Tell the Bible Story

*Preparation:* Mark the following passages in children's Bibles: Mark 16, Acts 2 and Acts 4. (Optional: Use Post-it Notes to mark Bibles.) If Bibles are not available for all children, mark your Bible and ask volunteers to read verses as indicated in the story.

Place a table near where you will be leading the Story Starter activity. Place craft sticks on the table following this pattern: Lay two sticks in an X shape (photo a). Place a third craft stick under the end of the craft stick on the bottom of the X, and over the other craft stick (photo b).

Place the next craft stick so that it lies on top of the third craft stick, with its end under the other end of the craft stick on the bottom of the X (photo c).



Continue weaving craft sticks in this manner, keeping pressure on the last craft stick placed. When you have a long chain, place brick or other heavy object on the last craft stick to hold it in place.

**Note:** Check out our Pinterest boards to see a video on how to do this “Cobra Weave.”

## Story Starter

Welcome to our final day at SonSpark Labs! Before you came in, I used craft sticks to make this very interesting design. Come check it out—but use your eyes only. Don't touch any part of it. Children examine the craft-stick chain—but make sure they don't move the brick!

Notice the brick. It doesn't really belong here, does it? So I think I'll move it . . . Lift brick to set off the chain reaction and send craft sticks flying. Ask children to help you gather the craft sticks.

Wow! That was really exciting! That was what is known as a chain reaction. Did you see how the craft sticks all flew up one at a time? A chain reaction is a series of events, each caused by the one before and causing the event that follows. In the same way, each craft stick was sent flying by the one before and also caused the next craft stick to fly up.

## Teacher Tip

If you have more than one rotation of children in your Bible Story Center, ask one or more volunteers to set up your craft-stick chain reaction. As you are telling the Bible story and leading children to work in their *Lab Journals*, volunteers can be setting up the chain reaction for the next group.



In today's Bible story, we'll hear how Jesus started a chain reaction that with His help we can keep going on and on and on—forever!

## The Infinite Implementation

Mark 16:15; Acts 1:1–11; 2:4,41–47; 4:32–35

### A Look Back

Let's begin our final session about God's awesome plan by looking back. Who created everything? God did! Everything began with God and His great love for us. **Volunteer with "God" strip staples it into a circle. (See "Bring the Bible Story to Life" at right.)** After Adam and Eve sinned, God let people know He still loved them by sending His Son, Jesus. Jesus came to show us what God is like. **Volunteer with "Jesus" strip places it through "God" link and staples it into a circle.** That wasn't the only reason Jesus came to Earth. Jesus came to complete the most important part of God's plan. Jesus came to die on the cross and rise again so that we could be forgiven for our sins and become members of God's family.

### Jesus Returns to Heaven

Yesterday we talked about Jesus' death on the cross and about His amazing resurrection. We also talked about how Jesus' friends first learned that He had come back to life. The women who went to the tomb and the friends who talked with Jesus as they walked on the road to Emmaus had amazing stories to tell.



## Bring the Bible Story to Life!

Before session begins, cut construction paper of various colors. Cut two strips for each child, with several additional strips. Some of the additional strips you will write on; others are for visitors to VBS. On separate strips, use a marker to write each of the following words or phrases: "God," "Jesus," "Jesus' friends," "Believers in Jerusalem" and the name of your parish. Give each prepared strip to a different volunteer. As indicated, create a chain by using a stapler to staple each strip into a link.

Over the next 40 days, after He had come back to life, Jesus showed Himself to His friends again and again. He ate with them and talked with them many different times. He wanted them to know for sure that everything He had told them about God's awesome plan was true. And He wanted to give them some important instructions.

One day Jesus and His friends went to the Mount of Olives outside Jerusalem. **Read what Jesus told His friends to do in Mark 16:15.** Jesus told His disciples to share what they had seen and heard so that other people could believe in God. He promised always to be with them, loving and helping them no matter where they went or what happened.

Then, as the disciples watched, Jesus returned to heaven, just as He had said He would. He was taken up into the clouds and disappeared from their sight.

### Jesus' Friends Begin to Tell the Good News

The disciples returned to Jerusalem. And then—on a very special feast day called Pentecost, when the city was overflowing with visitors from all over the world—an amazing thing happened! God's Holy Spirit came to Jesus' friends, as Jesus had promised. He gave the disciples the power to speak in many different languages. The disciples began to tell everyone the good news that Jesus had died for their sins to bring them to God! They were carrying out the next part of God's awesome plan! **Volunteer with "Jesus' friends" strip adds it to chain.**

### The Church in Jerusalem Grows

Three THOUSAND people believed the good news about Jesus that day! They began to meet together

to learn more about Jesus and how they could follow Him. But they didn't have church buildings like ours. **Where did they meet? Read**

**Acts 2:46 to find out.** These new

believers met in one another's homes. They prayed together; they ate together. They talked about Jesus and tried to learn everything they could about Him. Now that they were members of God's family, they wanted to know how to live as God's children. And the Bible says that every day, more and

MORE people believed the good news and became a part of the Church.

## Growing Pains

THAT caused a really BIG problem. Many of those new believers were just visiting Jerusalem for the feast days. They didn't have places to stay. They hadn't brought enough food and clothing. But they didn't want to go back home! Now that they believed in Jesus, they wanted to stay with others who loved and followed Him.

The believers who lived in Jerusalem knew that God wanted them to show His love. **Read Acts 4:32 to find out how they showed God's love.** They shared their homes, their food, their clothes—everything they had—with the new believers, especially those who were poor. Some even sold their houses and land and gave the money to the apostles to buy what was needed. **Volunteer with "believers in Jerusalem" strip adds it to chain.** These believers in Jerusalem did their part in God's awesome plan by showing God's love to others.

## The Sharing Continues

Soon, Jesus' enemies began to cause trouble for Jesus' followers. Many of the believers HAD to leave Jerusalem. Some returned home; some traveled to other towns and faraway countries. But, wherever they went, they shared the good news about Jesus. Soon there were lots of new believers and churches in many different places.

Almost 2,000 years have passed since those days, and the good news of what Jesus has done for us has spread all OVER the world because people have shared God's love with those around them.

## Conclusion

**Look at this chain reaction! You are here today because someone shared God's love with you. This church has helped you know about God's amazing plan in YOUR life. Volunteer with "name of your parish" strip adds it to the chain.**

**Today's Daily Plan is "God's Plan: 2 LOVE Us 4-Ever!" God loves you! And He wants to share that love with you forever—so that you can then share it with others!**

**Our Scripture verse for today, Ephesians 5:2, says, "[...] live in love, as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us as a sacrificial offering to God for a fragrant aroma." God made us and He loves us! God wants us to know and love His Son, Jesus. And God wants us to share that amazing love with everyone we meet. Now that you know God loves you, what can you do to show your love for Him? As volunteers respond, distribute two paper strips and a marker to each child. Children write their names on one of the strips and the name of someone with whom they can share God's love on the other. Children add their strips to the chain and tell what they will do to share God's love with others.**



St. Thérèse of Lisieux became a Carmelite nun when she was only 15 because she loved Jesus so much. Thérèse did little things, like chores, around the convent to show she loved God and her sisters. Thérèse became very sick, but still tried to do little things to share God's love. Let's share God's love today by doing little things like giving someone a smile or hug or doing an extra chore. Just like St. Thérèse! (adapted from *Thérèse of Lisieux: Little Flower of Love* by Barbara Yoffie © 2014 Liguori Publications).

## Prayer

**Let's thank God for His love.** Lead children in repeating prayer after you, one phrase at a time. **Thank You, God, that You promise to love us forever. Help us show Your love to others every day. We love You! In Jesus' name, amen.**

**Catechetical Connection:** The best way to grow closer to God is by caring about other people. You can donate old toys or clothes to those in need, give a hug to someone who is sad, or do a chore you don't have to. Go out and share God's love today! (Adapted from *Handbook for Today's Catholic Children* by Francine O'Conner © Liguori Publications).

## Skit Option

As a fun alternative or supplement to this Bible story, ask leaders, youth helpers or other volunteers to perform "The Story Continues" Bible story skit in *ShowTime! Assemblies*.



# Apply the Bible Story

## Bible Story Review

To review the Bible Story, lead children to complete “So...Now What Do I Do?” activity on page 18 of the *Lab Journal*. As children work, ask these questions to guide conversation:

- **Before He went to heaven, what did Jesus tell His friends to do?** (Tell what they had heard and seen so that others would follow Jesus.)
- **What was church like for Jesus’ followers?** (Met in one another’s homes. Ate together. Prayed together. Shared everything they had.)
- **What happened when Jesus’ followers had to leave Jerusalem?** (They went all over the world, sharing God’s love and telling about Jesus.)

## Active Review

Children sit in a circle to play Hot Potato. Play songs from *Music & More CD*. As music plays, children pass brick (from Story Starter) or other small object (like a heart-shaped pillow) around the circle. After a few moments, stop the music. The child holding the brick answers, or chooses a volunteer to answer, one of the questions above. Repeat until all questions are answered or as time permits.

The question in today’s Q&A is “So . . . now what do I do?” After hearing our story, how would you answer that question? Volunteers respond. The Q&A answer is that “You can live as God’s child and show His love to others.” Showing God’s love is a lot like a chain reaction—it can go on and on and on! When we show love to others, they might show love to someone else. That’s a big part of God’s plan. But the best part of God’s plan is that when we believe in His Son, Jesus, and accept His forgiveness, we are given a wonderful gift—the gift of eternal life. We can be with God, and He will help us share His love forever!

## God’s Plan for Me

### (Life Application)

**Today’s Scripture verse is Ephesians 5:2.** Volunteer reads verse aloud from Bible. **What does this verse tell us to do?** (Lead a life of love as Jesus did.) **Jesus loves us so much, He gave up His life and died for us! But Jesus didn’t stay dead. He rose again so we can live as members of God’s family.**

Children complete “Water Ripples” activity on page 19 of the *Lab Journal*. Ask children questions such as these:

- **What does it mean to “lead a life of love”?** (Show God’s love to others. Be kind and caring. Think about what others need instead of just what we want. Be like Jesus.)
- **How does it make you feel when someone shows God’s love to you?**
- **What are some of the ways Jesus showed love to others?** (Died on the cross and rose again. Healed people who were sick. Taught people about God.)
- **What are some ways you can show God’s love to someone today?** (Let someone else have the first turn playing games. Share toys with brothers and sisters. Help set the table for dinner. Pray for sick friends. Tell friends the good news about Jesus’ love.)

**What part of God’s plan are we talking about today?** Pause for children to respond, “2 LOVE Us 4-Ever!” **All week we’ve been learning about God’s awesome plan for our lives. Today we heard how after Jesus died, people spread the news about God’s plan. In spite of dangers, they told about Jesus and began to live as He did—sharing what they had and showing love to everyone.**

Hold up Session 5 Daily Plan Pennant. **The heart we see today can remind us to show God’s love to others and that God’s love goes on FOREVER!**

**I hope you had a great time at SonSpark Labs, discovering God’s plan is all about Jesus—GP4U = J!**

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