

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!



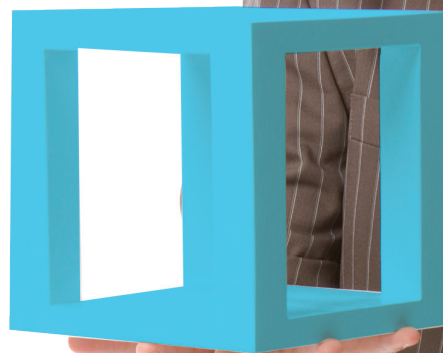
Heart

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.



Optional Bible Story materials listed on page 37.

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:

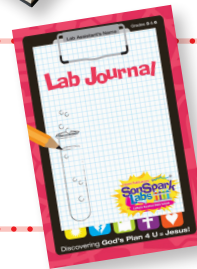
- What did you learn this week? What do you think the kids learned this week?
- Thank God for the things that happened this week—the best, the worst, the strangest and the most laughable!
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you and your children show God's love to others every day.

Materials

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



Session 5
Grades 5 and 6

Tell the Bible Story

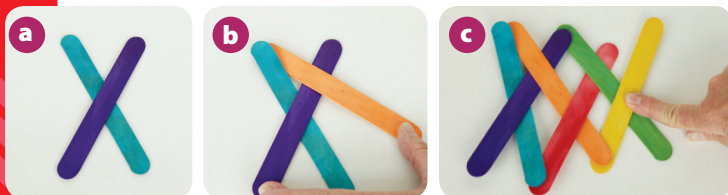
Preparation: If Bibles are not available for all students, use Post-it Notes to mark Mark 16, Acts 2 and Acts 4 in your Bible, and ask volunteers to read verses as indicated in the story.

Place a table 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 a 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 today, 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. Preteens examine the craft-stick chain—but make sure they don’t move the brick! **It’s likely that you noticed the brick. Why do you think there is a brick sitting on this craft-stick design? Let’s move it to find out!**

Lift brick to set off the chain reaction—craft sticks will fly up, one at a time. Ask preteens to help you gather the craft sticks.

Wow! 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.

In today’s Bible story, we’ll hear how Jesus started a chain reaction. As we research this account, consider the following: What kind of chain reaction did Jesus start? How can you keep the chain reaction going? It’s an infinite reaction—one 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

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.



did! Everything began with God and His great love for us. **Instruct children to staple their “God” strip into a circle, making the first link in a chain. (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. **Children place “Jesus” strip through “God” link, making another link.**

But that wasn’t the only reason Jesus came to Earth. Jesus came to complete the most important part of God’s plan. **What did Jesus do to complete the most important part of God’s plan?** Jesus came to die on the cross and rise from the dead so that our sins could be forgiven.

Jesus Returns to Heaven

Yesterday we talked about Jesus’ death on the cross and 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 to Emmaus had amazing stories to tell!

Over the next 40 days, Jesus spent time with 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 tell what they had seen and heard so that other people could become part of God’s family, too. He promised always to be with them, loving and helping them, no matter where they went or what happened to them.

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.

Suddenly, there were two men dressed in white clothing standing next to them. The men asked them why they were standing there, staring at the sky. Before Jesus’ friends could even answer, the men said, “Jesus has been taken away to heaven! But He will

Bring the Bible Story to Life!

Before session begins, cut construction paper of various colors into strips, at least five strips for each child. Make additional strips for visitors. Provide markers and staplers. Preteens write on each strip one of the following words or phrases: “God,” “Jesus,” “Jesus’ friends,” “Believers in Jerusalem” and the name of your parish. Preteens staple strips into personal chains or staple all the chains together to create a really long “chain reaction.”



come back the same way you saw Him go.” **How do you think Jesus’ friends felt after they heard that?**

Jesus’ Friends Tell the Good News

The disciples returned to Jerusalem. And then—on the 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, just 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! **Children add “Jesus’ friends” strip to chain.**

The Church in Jerusalem Grows

Three THOUSAND people believed the good news about Jesus that day and were Baptized! They began to meet together to learn more about Jesus and how

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*.

Growing Pains

THAT caused a BIG problem. Many of the new believers were just visiting Jerusalem for the Pentecost feast. 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 Jesus, too.

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 buy what was needed. **Children add "Believers in Jerusalem" strip to chain.** These believers in Jerusalem did their part in God's awesome plan by showing God's love both to people who were not part of God's family and to those who were!

The Sharing Continues

Soon, Jesus' enemies began to cause trouble for Jesus' followers. Many 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 MORE new members in God's family! Churches started in MANY different places.

Almost 2,000 years have passed since those days,

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

baptized, they wanted to know how to live as God's children. And the Bible says that every day, more and MORE people were baptized and became a part of the Church.

and the good news of what Jesus has done for us has spread all OVER the world—all 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. Children add "name of your parish" strip to the chain.

Today we're looking at "God's Plan: 2 LOVE Us 4-Ever!" God loves you! He wants to share that love with you forever—so that you can then share it with others!

Our Scripture verse is Ephesians 5:2. It 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 be full of His amazing love and share it with everyone we meet.

What are ways you can show your love for God by loving others? After volunteers respond, distribute two paper strips to each preteen. On one strip, preteens write their own name and on the other, they write the name of someone with whom they can share God's love. Preteens then staple these strips to their chains.



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 thing 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 take a moment to thank God for His love. Preteens pray silently, thanking God for His love for them and asking His help to love the person named on their last link. Conclude, Thank You, God, that You promise to love us forever. Thank You for helping us show Your love every day. Help us remember we can ask for Your help! 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).**

Apply the Bible Story

Bible Story Review

To review the Bible Story, lead preteens to complete “So...Now what Do I Do?” activity on page 18 of the *Lab Journal*. As they 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 join God’s family.)
- **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

Preteens stand in line to play Pass It! The first player passes an object over head. The next player passes object between legs, continuing in over-and-under fashion (last one running to front of line) until you call time. Preteen holding the item answers, or chooses a volunteer to answer, one of the questions above. Repeat until all questions are answered or as time permits.

Today’s Q&A question 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 has someone done something kind for you? How did it make you feel? Volunteers respond. 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. That fills us up with God’s love and joy—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 that He gave up His life! He died to take the punishment for our sin! But Jesus didn’t stay dead. He rose again!**

Preteens complete “God’s Plan In Motion” activity on page 19 of the *Lab Journal*. Ask questions such as the following:

- **What do you think it means to “lead a life of love”?** (Act in loving ways. Smile. Be kind. Think about what others need. Think of ways to help others. Tell people about Jesus’ love for them.)
- **What are some of the ways Jesus showed love to others?** (Died on the cross and rose again so our sins could be forgiven. Healed people who were sick. Fed people who were hungry. Taught people about God.)
- **What are some ways you can show God’s love to someone today?** (Let someone else go first. Share toys with brothers and sisters. Do a chore without being asked. Pray for a sick friend.)

What part of God’s plan are we talking about today? Pause for preteens to respond, “2 LOVE Us 4-Ever!” Hold up Session 5 Daily Plan Pennant. **The heart we see today is a whole heart, not a broken heart! It can remind us that God loves us and will help us show His love to others. When we do, God’s love goes on and on and on FOREVER!**

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