

GOD'S BIG PENTECOST STORY

A CELEBRATION FOR FAMILIES



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DEAR FAMILY

The story of Pentecost is an exciting one. It's the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to send his Spirit to be with all believers—including your kids! It also provides a great opportunity to grow in faith together as you celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit and the birthday of the church.

This resource provides your family with a simple, meaningful (and fun!) way to celebrate Pentecost at home. Along with a child-friendly devotional experience you'll find a variety of easy activity ideas to try. Choose the options that work best for your family!

What Is Pentecost?

What Christians know today as Pentecost (called *Shavu'ot* in Hebrew) was first of all a major Jewish festival held 50 days after the Feast of Passover. During Pentecost, thousands of people would travel to Jerusalem, bringing the firstfruits of their harvests to be dedicated in the temple.

During this festival Jesus' disciples were gathered in Jerusalem, obeying the instructions Jesus had given them to wait there for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). God chose to send the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost when the streets of Jerusalem overflowed with people. A sound like a violent wind and tongues of fire signaled the Spirit's arrival. As a crowd gathered, drawn by the sound of words spoken in their own languages, Peter shared the gospel message and invited everyone to repent, to be baptized in the name of Jesus, and to receive the Holy Spirit.

So, the church, through the power of the Holy Spirit equipping Jesus' followers, was born. On the 50th day (the seventh Sunday) after Easter, the Christian church celebrates that outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

“Until now, this has been the story of God coming to save his rebellious creation. But now, with the gift of the Spirit, it becomes our story. We live out the story in our lives as the Spirit moves us, inspires us, and empowers us to live toward the kingdom of God” (Wonder, Year 1, Unit 6, dwellcurriculum.org).

Setting the Stage for the Story

To provide some context for the events of Pentecost (and your celebration!), it can be helpful to spend time recalling the stories that led up to the events of that day. Some ideas for doing so:

- If you have a boxed set of *God's Big Story* cards at home, you might spend time prior to Pentecost reading the five stories covered on cards 135-139; beginning with the road to Emmaus and ending with the instructions Jesus gave to his followers before ascending to heaven. (*God's Big Story* cards are available from FaithAliveResources.org. If you don't already own a set and are looking for a fun way to have family devotions, check them out!)
- If you have a children's storybook Bible, page through the New Testament stories together. Note that the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in the form of a dove at the time of his baptism. Pay special attention also to the story of Jesus' ascension and his final words to the disciples—promising that he would always be with them, commissioning them to “go and tell” the world about him, and instructing them to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit's coming in power to help them do that work.
- If you've been reading New Testament stories from the Bible as part of your regular devotional practice, spend some time recalling the stories you've explored together. Begin by asking, “I wonder how many stories we can remember of Jesus' life on earth?” and see which stories bubble up. (You might be surprised by the answers!) End with a reading of the ascension story from Matthew 28:16-20 and Acts 1:8-11.

How to Use the Story Symbol

- Decorate copies of the symbols using flame-colored crayons, markers, or glued-on tissue paper; write each family member's name on one; and use them as placecards on your table at mealtimes on Pentecost Sunday.
- Make paper Pentecost headbands by attaching the decorated flame to a paper band sized to fit around your child's head. Invite your child to make one for you too!
- Make a dozen or so copies of the symbol, decorate them, and tape them to a long piece of yarn to use as a bunting to decorate a room in your home.

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FAMILY DEVOTIONS



BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: After Jesus went back to heaven, his disciples followed his instructions and gathered together in the city of Jerusalem to wait for the Holy Spirit. That's where today's story begins.

Read Acts 2:1-4 (with younger children) or Acts 2:1-41 (with older children).

As you tell the story, use your voices or nearby objects to make the following sounds from the story: rushing wind, crackling flames of fire, people speaking in different languages, pouring water as people are baptized, clapping hands to celebrate what happened.

WONDER:

I wonder how the disciples felt when the rushing wind began?

When you imagine the "tongues of fire," what do you picture in your mind?

I wonder why God chose to show people the Holy Spirit in that way?

Do you know some of the things the Holy Spirit helps us do? (Check out Galatians 5:22-23; perhaps asking a child to read it out loud. You might also name examples of ways in which you see the "fruit of the Spirit" from that list in each other.)

Which part of this story amazes you the most?

What do you wonder about this story?

PRAY: (Before you pray, teach kids the "Thank you, Lord!" response to use during the prayer)

For the Holy Spirit, whom you sent to be with us. *Thank you, Lord!*

For the Holy Spirit, who helps us believe in Jesus. *Thank you, Lord!*

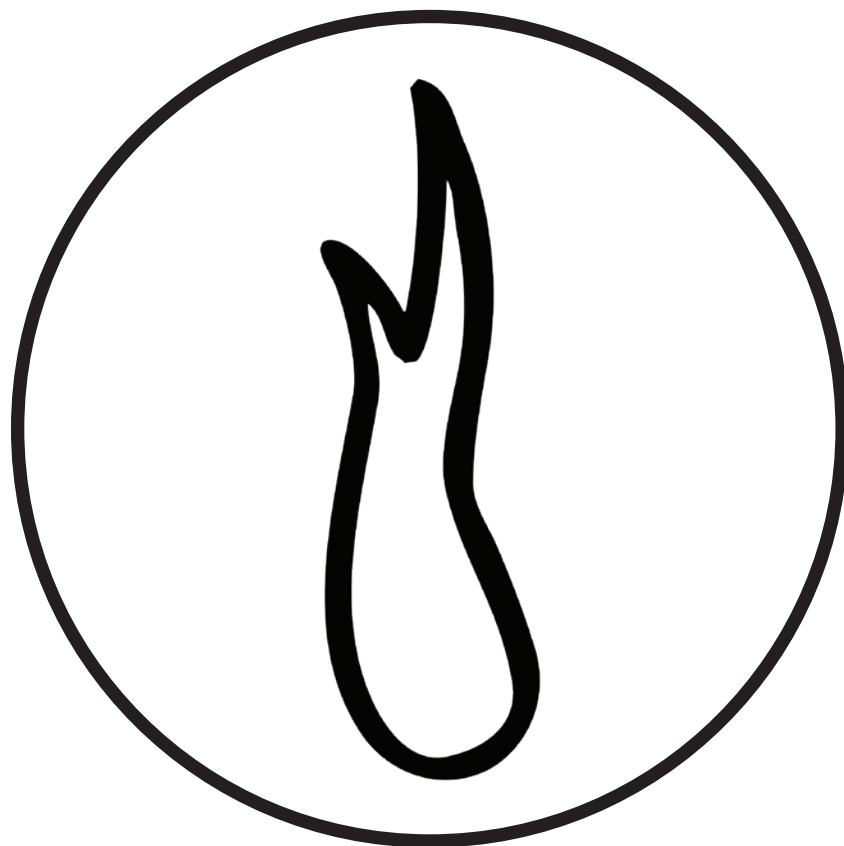
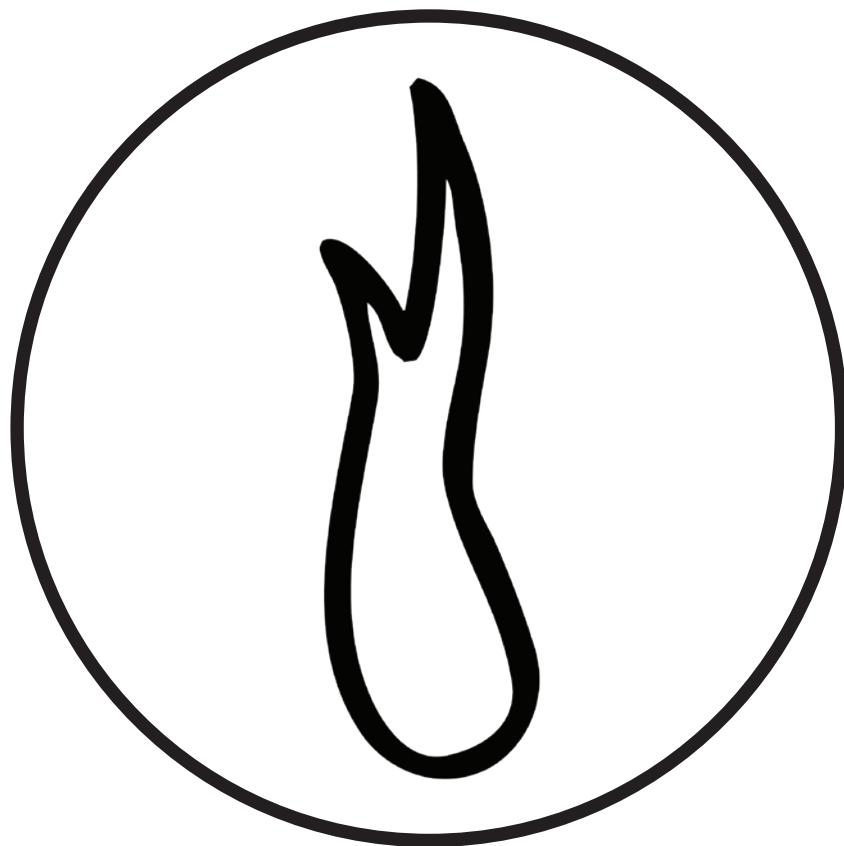
For the Holy Spirit, who helps us tell others about Jesus. *Thank you, Lord!*

For the Holy Spirit, who helps us know right from wrong. *Thank you, Lord!*

For the Holy Spirit, who helps us care for others. *Thank you, Lord!*

For the Holy Spirit, who helps us do what God wants us to do. *Thank you, Lord!*

(Pentecost prayer from Wonder, Year 1, Unit 6, Session 3, learner's resource, p. 4)



Easy Extras

Looking for other ways to add to your celebration of Pentecost? Check out these ideas:

- Create a sense of Pentecost surprise by decorating (without your kids knowing) the area in which you'll be telling the story. Or invite your kids to decorate an area of your home as part of your Pentecost celebration using flame-colored streamers, balloons, homemade paper flames, or whatever you have on hand.
- Cover your table with a bright orange or red tablecloth. A plastic cloth from a dollar store will work just fine; a scarf or wide strip of fabric would also work well. The main thing is to signal that something special is about to happen!
- Attach streamers, ribbons, or colorful scarves to wooden spoons. Invite your kids to wave them as you read about the rushing wind, parade around your home, or sing a celebratory song. **Tip:** Make streamers by cutting strips from a plastic tablecloth.
- Blow pinwheels (make them using instructions found online, or buy them at a dollar store) each time the words "wind" and "Spirit" are read during the story.
- Make a birthday cake or another sweet treat to enjoy together. Decorate with "flames" of colored icing or halved strawberries. Or decorate the treat with brightly colored sprinkles as a reminder that the church is a diverse family including more people than we can possibly count. Before you light the candles and sing "Happy Birthday, Dear Church" together, share with awe how amazing it is that followers of Jesus all across the world are also celebrating Pentecost and the birth of the church today.
- At Pentecost, thousands of people from different cultures became one because of the Holy Spirit of God. As a way to celebrate that the Spirit's power brought the good news of salvation through Jesus to people throughout the world, search online for versions of "Jesus Loves Me" sung in different languages, and learn one of those versions together. You might also search online for a reading of [God's Very Good Idea](#) by Trillia Newbell, a children's picture book about God's delightfully diverse family.
- Tell your kids about a person who has taught you about Jesus. Ask your kids to tell you about someone who has taught them about Jesus. Give thanks together for these people. Wonder together whom *you* might tell about Jesus.
- Enjoy each other's presence while coloring a jumbo-sized Pentecost poster together (purchase and download from illustratedministry.com or create your own).

We hope that celebrating God's big Pentecost story will become a beloved yearly ritual in your home. Let us know how it goes! You can reach us at info@dwellicurriculum.org to share your experiences or ask questions.