

SUBTOPIC THEME:
Belonging to the Church

LESSON OBJECTIVE:

To investigate in more depth the way each of us are designed to belong to the Church by exploring the topic of spiritual gifts. In order to bring a deeper understanding of our calling here on earth, we want to dialogue with students about what it means to belong, how to find their place in the body of Christ, and why this is important.

By discussing the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives and the unique way God created each of us, we hope to inspire the students to seek after developing their own gifts and experiencing the fellowship of believers.



Set Up Info:

Supplies Needed:

1. Copies of the Student Response sheet (printed below)
2. Bibles so you can look up the Scripture story (or copy the ones below)
3. A passion to see students' hearts transformed!

Instructive Prep:

Belonging to the church can stir up a lot of different feelings among believers and nonbelievers. Some have good or bad experiences in their past, others have preconceived ideas about what the church is, while still others have really never thought about it and have no real grasp of what distinguishes the church from some other community. Regardless of where a kid is coming from, discussing the purpose and benefits of the church with honesty and openness is important in their spiritual development.

Many military teens, even followers of Christ, may ever have experienced the body of Christ. Since chapel services are normally divided by protestant and catholic and it lacks the usual structure and development of civilian churches, it is important not to assume they have any frame of reference for what church community might look like in the states. Rather than focus on that, center your descriptions and examples around the biblical church, Jesus' original design, and what it means to be a part of the global body of Christ.

The progression of these studies is four-fold: learn, feel, do and what next. The goals are for students to (1) learn something new, (2) connect at an emotional level to some degree, and (3) participate in doing something during the study (like writing a resolution or making a list of goals). Finally, (4) the what next focuses on a change in attitude and/or behavior, which you will find in the challenge of the Life Application section. Remember, we are moving towards spiritual and emotional transformation in kids' lives, so the application section based on God's truth is really the crux of the time together! Have fun and lead well.

INTRO:

Have you ever been a part of a team or group that was working together for a common goal? Maybe you play soccer or are in plays. Perhaps you have been on the prom committee or model United Nations before. Whatever your experience, it's more than likely that you worked hard to find a way to contribute and help those around you. When we come together in the church it is a lot like that. Belonging to the body of Christ means committing yourself to this group, investing in your fellow believers, and seeking after your common goal - which is to bring God's message of love and forgiveness to the world. One of the main ways that you as an individual accomplishes this is to discover and understand the specific spiritual gifts given to you by the Holy Spirit and constantly work to nurture and develop these gifts in order to better follow Jesus' example.

INTRO STORY:

Maybe this is the first you are hearing about spiritual gifts, or you have heard of them but don't really understand how they fit into your life. That's why for this small group we are going to go back to the origins. After Jesus was crucified, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, there came pentecost, a day that marks when the Holy Spirit came down upon the apostles. This was so powerful and life-altering that it's known by many believers as the "birthday of the church." So read the story for yourself and find out how each of us receives our spiritual gifts.

Acts 2

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

When the day of Pentecost came, all the believers were gathered together in one place.² Suddenly there was a noise from the sky which sounded like a strong wind blowing, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.³ Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire which spread out and touched each person there.⁴ They were all filled

with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

⁵ There were Jews living in Jerusalem, religious people who had come from every country in the world. ⁶ When they heard this noise, a large crowd gathered. They were all excited, because all of them heard the believers talking in their own languages. ⁷ In amazement and wonder they exclaimed, “These people who are talking like this are Galileans! ⁸ How is it, then, that all of us hear them speaking in our own native languages? ⁹ We are from Parthia, Media, and Elam; from Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia; from Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ from Phrygia and Pamphylia, from Egypt and the regions of Libya near Cyrene. Some of us are from Rome, ¹¹ both Jews and Gentiles converted to Judaism, and some of us are from Crete and Arabia—yet all of us hear them speaking in our own languages about the great things that God has done!” ¹² Amazed and confused, they kept asking each other, “What does this mean?”

¹³ But others made fun of the believers, saying, “These people are drunk!”

Peter's Message

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the other eleven apostles and in a loud voice began to speak to the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, listen to me and let me tell you what this means. ¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as you suppose; it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶ Instead, this is what the prophet Joel spoke about:

¹⁷ ‘This is what I will do in the last days, God says:

I will pour out my Spirit on everyone.

Your sons and daughters will proclaim my message;

your young men will see visions,

and your old men will have dreams.

¹⁸ Yes, even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days,

and they will proclaim my message.

¹⁹ I will perform miracles in the sky above

and wonders on the earth below.

There will be blood, fire, and thick smoke;

²⁰ the sun will be darkened,

and the moon will turn red as blood,
before the great and glorious Day of the Lord comes.

²¹ And then, whoever calls out to the Lord for help will be saved.’

²² “Listen to these words, fellow Israelites! Jesus of Nazareth was a man whose divine authority was clearly proven to you by all the miracles and wonders which God performed through him. You yourselves know this, for it happened here among you. ²³ In accordance with his own plan God had already decided that Jesus would be handed over to you; and you killed him by letting sinful men crucify him. ²⁴ But God raised him from death, setting him free from its power, because it was impossible that death should hold him prisoner. ²⁵ For David said about him,

‘I saw the Lord before me at all times;
he is near me, and I will not be troubled.

²⁶ And so I am filled with gladness,
and my words are full of joy.

And I, mortal though I am,
will rest assured in hope,

²⁷ because you will not abandon me in the world of the dead;
you will not allow your faithful servant to rot in the grave.

²⁸ You have shown me the paths that lead to life,
and your presence will fill me with joy.’

²⁹ “My friends, I must speak to you plainly about our famous ancestor King David. He died and was buried, and his grave is here with us to this very day. ³⁰ He was a prophet, and he knew what God had promised him: God had made a vow that he would make one of David's descendants a king, just as David was. ³¹ David saw what God was going to do in the future, and so he spoke about the resurrection of the Messiah when he said,
‘He was not abandoned in the world of the dead;

his body did not rot in the grave.’

³² God has raised this very Jesus from death, and we are all witnesses to this fact. ³³ He has been raised to the right side of God, his Father, and has received from him the Holy Spirit, as he had promised. What you now see and hear is his gift that he has poured out on us. ³⁴ For it was not David who went up into heaven; rather he said,

‘The Lord said to my Lord:

Sit here at my right side

³⁵ until I put your enemies as a footstool under your feet.’

³⁶ “All the people of Israel, then, are to know for sure that this Jesus, whom you crucified, is the one that God has made Lord and Messiah!”

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were deeply troubled and said to Peter and the other apostles, “What shall we do, brothers?”

³⁸ Peter said to them, “Each one of you must turn away from your sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven; and you will receive God's gift, the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For God's promise was made to you and your children, and to all who are far away—all whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

⁴⁰ Peter made his appeal to them and with many other words he urged them, saying, “Save yourselves from the punishment coming on this wicked people!” ⁴¹ Many of them believed his message and were baptized, and about three thousand people were added to the group that day. ⁴² They spent their time in learning from the apostles, taking part in the fellowship, and sharing in the fellowship meals and the prayers.

Life Among the Believers

⁴³ Many miracles and wonders were being done through the apostles, and everyone was filled with awe. ⁴⁴ All the believers continued together in close fellowship and shared their belongings with one another. ⁴⁵ They would sell their property and possessions, and distribute the money among all, according to what each one needed. ⁴⁶ Day after day they met as a group in the Temple, and they had their meals together in their homes, eating with glad and humble hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God, and enjoying the good will of all the people. And every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.

INTRO QUESTIONS:

1. What was the first spiritual gift the believers experienced? Why do you think that is?
2. What was the first act of the church? What does that tell us about the promptings of the Holy Spirit?

CENTRAL BIBLE PASSAGES

The fact is when we feel anger surge through us, we have a choice to make. We have to choose how we are going to handle this very tricky emotion. Jesus had some pretty important things to say about our choice to follow him and in turn help others come to know him. You see, it's not only possible for you to receive the Lord's grace and mercy, but for other's to experience it through you! It's pretty amazing when you think about how much ability God gives us to speak his love into the lives of those around us. So even when Jesus asks you to turn the other cheek and not seek vengeance that the World would say you deserve, stand firm and strive to live a life dedicated to God's purpose. It will be life that is fulfilled in the power and peace of God's love for you. Use these passages from Scripture to help you understand what Jesus asks us to do.

John 15:1-10, 26&27

Jesus the Real Vine

15 "I am the real vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He breaks off every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and he prunes every branch that does bear fruit, so that it will be clean and bear more fruit. ³ You have been made clean already by the teaching I have given you. ⁴ Remain united to me, and I will remain united to you. A branch cannot bear fruit by itself; it can do so only if it remains in the vine. In the same way you cannot bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵ "I am the vine, and you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will bear much fruit; for you can do nothing without me. ⁶ Those who do not remain in me are thrown out like a branch and dry up; such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire, where they are burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, then you will ask for anything you wish, and you shall have it. ⁸ My Father's glory is shown by your bearing much fruit; and in this way you become my disciples. ⁹ I love you just as the Father loves me; remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

[...]

²⁶ "The Helper will come—the Spirit, who reveals the truth about God and who comes from the Father. I will send him to you from the Father, and he will speak about me. ²⁷ And you, too, will speak about me, because you have been with me from the very beginning.

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

To determine in what order you should answer, go from oldest to youngest.

1. Which of the spiritual gifts stood out to you the most? Do you know any other scriptures that describe gifts from the Holy Spirit?

2. What do you think of the reward and punishment for believers outlined in John? (use student response sheet)
3. Have you ever explored your own spiritual gifts? What happened? (use student response sheet)
4. Have you ever experienced or witnessed another believers spiritual gift? What did you think? (use student response sheet)
5. Why do you think God decided to send the Holy Spirit to give us these gifts? Do you think it's necessary?

LIFE APPLICATION:

1. Choose 3 spiritual gifts and write down a way that they may impact the person who has them, other believers, and the world. If you know a spiritual gift you have been given, use that as your third one and try to be as in depth as possible in the ways your gift may affect yourself and others. (use student response sheet)
2. Together pinpoint some scripture and possibly an outside source that will help you learn more about the gifts of the Holy Spirit in general and how to discover and develop your own specifically. Resolve to spend time each day this coming week studying the material, talking with fellow believers, and seeking God's wisdom and guidance. Write out a plan as detailed as possible and help each other follow through! (use Student response sheet)

STUDENT RESPONSES:

1. WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE REWARD AND PUNISHMENT FOR BELIEVERS OUTLINED IN JOHN?

5. TOGETHER PINPOINT SOME SCRIPTURE AND POSSIBLY AN OUTSIDE SOURCE THAT WILL HELP YOU LEARN MORE ABOUT THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN GENERAL, AND HOW TO DISCOVER AND DEVELOP YOUR OWN SPECIFICALLY. RESOLVE TO SPEND TIME EACH DAY THIS COMING WEEK STUDYING THE MATERIAL, TALKING WITH FELLOW BELIEVERS, AND SEEKING GOD'S WISDOM AND GUIDANCE. WRITE OUT A PLAN AS DETAILED AS YOU CAN AND HELP EACH OTHER FOLLOW THROUGH!