

Celebrating Women's  
Leadership in the Church

# EQUALLY CALLED

## CHILDREN'S CURRICULUM

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# BAPTIST WOMEN IN MINISTRY

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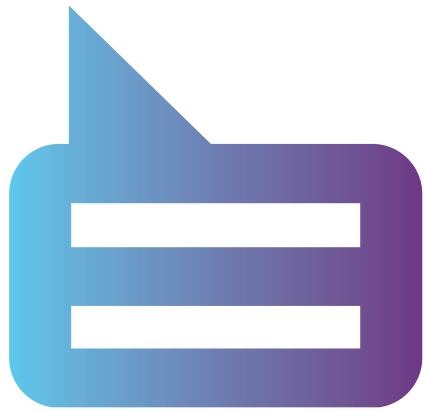
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## Celebrating Women's Leadership in the Church

# EQUALLY CALLED

## SESSION 1 Made in God's Image

### SCRIPTURE

Genesis 1:26-31

### CENTRAL MESSAGE

What does it mean to be made in God's image?  
We are all equally created in God's image, but  
sometimes we do not treat one another that way.

### MATERIALS

Person Outline sheets, a few mirrors (*size does not  
matter*)

### EARLY ARRIVER ACTIVITY

As children arrive, hand them a sheet of paper  
with an outline of a person on it. (See attached  
resource at end of lesson.) Tell them to fill the  
person with words and pictures that describe  
themselves: what they are good at, how other  
people would describe them, their hobbies/  
talents, etc. You will reference these sheets in the  
gathering time, but it is not essential that every  
child have completed one. Have one of the adults  
fill one out as well as an example.

### GATHERING TIME

Begin your Gathering Time by asking for "highs and lows." This simply means that each person should share one high point from their week that made them happy and one low point from their week that made them sad/hurt/angry. Explain that we share our highs and lows with one another so that we can better care for one another, celebrate each other's successes, and know how to pray for each other.

After sharing highs and lows, have a short time to take prayer requests. Explain that a prayer request can be about a celebration or a sadness since we can bring everything in our lives to God and to our friends. Encourage children to voice prayer requests for one another based on the highs and lows that were just shared.

Invite someone to pray for the group. If children are hesitant, remind them that there is no right or wrong way to pray. They do not have to list every prayer request mentioned, as God has already heard them all before we even spoke them aloud. If no one volunteers, an adult can pray for the group.

It is now time to use the drawings. Ask for volunteers to read some of the things they wrote about themselves. When several children have shared, ask them **WHY** they think they are good at those particular things. (This can be anything from being good at baseball to being kind.) Is it because they have practiced a lot? Is it something that just comes naturally to them? Have the adult who filled out a sheet go first to serve as an example.

**Some of the following is written in a script-like form, but does NOT have to be used as such. In fact, try your best not to use it as a script, but to take the general idea and tailor it to your group. This will make it seem more like a conversation the children are a part of rather than strictly a lesson they are receiving.**

Today, we are going to talk about what it means to be made in God's image. Has anyone ever told you that you are made in God's image? There are no right or wrong answers, but what do you think it means to say that every single person is made in God's image?

*Before you explain what you mean by this, ask children what they think you mean. Their creativity and intelligence may surprise you!*

*Pass out mirrors for children to hold. Or if your mirrors are larger, have children take turns standing in front of the mirror.*

**Ask:** When you look in a mirror, what do you see?"  
(Allow time for answers.)

**Say:** You see your reflection! Every person who looks in this mirror sees something different, because God created each of us to be different. Now let's go back to that question I asked earlier about being made "in God's image." We don't know what God looks like, do we? But being made in God's image means we are all reflections of God. How in the world is that possible if we don't know what God looks like?

Well, here's the thing. We aren't a reflection of what *God looks like*. We are a reflection of *who God is*. We are a reflection of God's love, God's kindness, God's patience, God's forgiveness, God's patience.

And each of us reflect God a little differently, right? But one reflection is not better than another. We need *all of us* reflecting God into the world with our words and actions, we can't do it alone.

In our world, sometimes certain groups have believed that they are better than others—that they are closer to God, more important to God, or better reflections of God's image. One place we can see this is between men and women, or boys and girls. Raise your hand if you have ever heard someone say, "You throw/run/play like a girl."

What do people mean when they say that? It's not a compliment, is it? Why do you think they say that? Even once you are a grown-up, some people believe that there are things that only boys can do, or that the things boys do are the most important. Do you think that is the way God wanted things to be when he created Adam and Eve in the creation story?

We are now going to break up into small groups and rotate through our different stations. In these stations, we are going to do some activities to help us understand why this division between men and women is not what God wanted; God wanted all of our reflections to be equally good.

*Use your best judgment to decide how to break children into small groups for rotations based on the age range and number of children. I recommend groups of six to eight children. Since you will need one adult to facilitate each rotation, this may determine how many groups you will have rotating at a time. If you have a very small group, you can rotate through all the stations together.*

*As you set up your groups, make sure there is at least one boy and one girl in each group, if possible.*

## ROTATION STATIONS

### Rotation 1: Bible Explorers

Divide students into pairs. Give each pair a different translation of Genesis 1:26-31. If you have several different translations, you can give them the Bibles and have them find the verse themselves. Make sure to choose at least two translations that have different wording in verse 27; some translations use the word mankind (NIV); some

use humanity (CEB); others use human beings (NIRV); and still others use humankind (NRSV).

Have the children read each of their translations out loud to one another, and ask them if they notice any differences. Then have them place the translations right next to each other and circle the differences (if the Scriptures are printed on sheets of paper).

Ask them if they think any of the differences matter. Do any of the word differences change the meaning of what the Scripture says?

If they haven't already done so, point out the different ways that "humankind" is worded in verse 27 in each translation.

Some people think that when the word "mankind" is used, that it is mainly talking about men. Remember though, the first Old Testament was written in Hebrew, a different language. So ALL these translations come from one Hebrew word, *adam*. This was not the same as the name "Adam" that God gave the man he created. (Look up the pronunciation of the Hebrew word so that children can practice saying and hearing the difference.)

When this word is used, whom is God creating? You can look at the end of verse 27 for the answer—*male and female*. And in verses 26, 28 and 29, whom does it sound like God is talking about when God gives dominion over all the animals on the Earth? (It is both *men and women*.)

What we want you to remember from this exercise is this: The words we use matter. When we say things like, "you run like a girl," we are implying that ALL girls are not as fast as ALL boys, which just isn't true. We each run like...ourselves!

Let's say a prayer together thanking God for how we are each made different, but all equally in God's image.

## Rotation 2: How did you do it?

(Materials: Several bags of marshmallows in different sizes and a few boxes of uncooked spaghetti noodles.)

Give them this task: Build the coolest structure you can using only spaghetti noodles and marshmallows. Provide each child with a handful of uncooked noodles and allow them to choose 10-15 marshmallows of varying sizes.

Give them a time limit and when time is up, allow them to walk around and look at one another's structures. Have children share what they think is cool or special about each different creation.

Then ask children what strategy or approach they took to building their structure. Why did they use small or large marshmallows? What did they do to make sure their structure wouldn't fall?

Ask the following questions:

- Do you think one structure is better than another because a boy who built it, or because a girl built it?
- Did being a boy make you any better at this project?
- Did being a girl make you better?

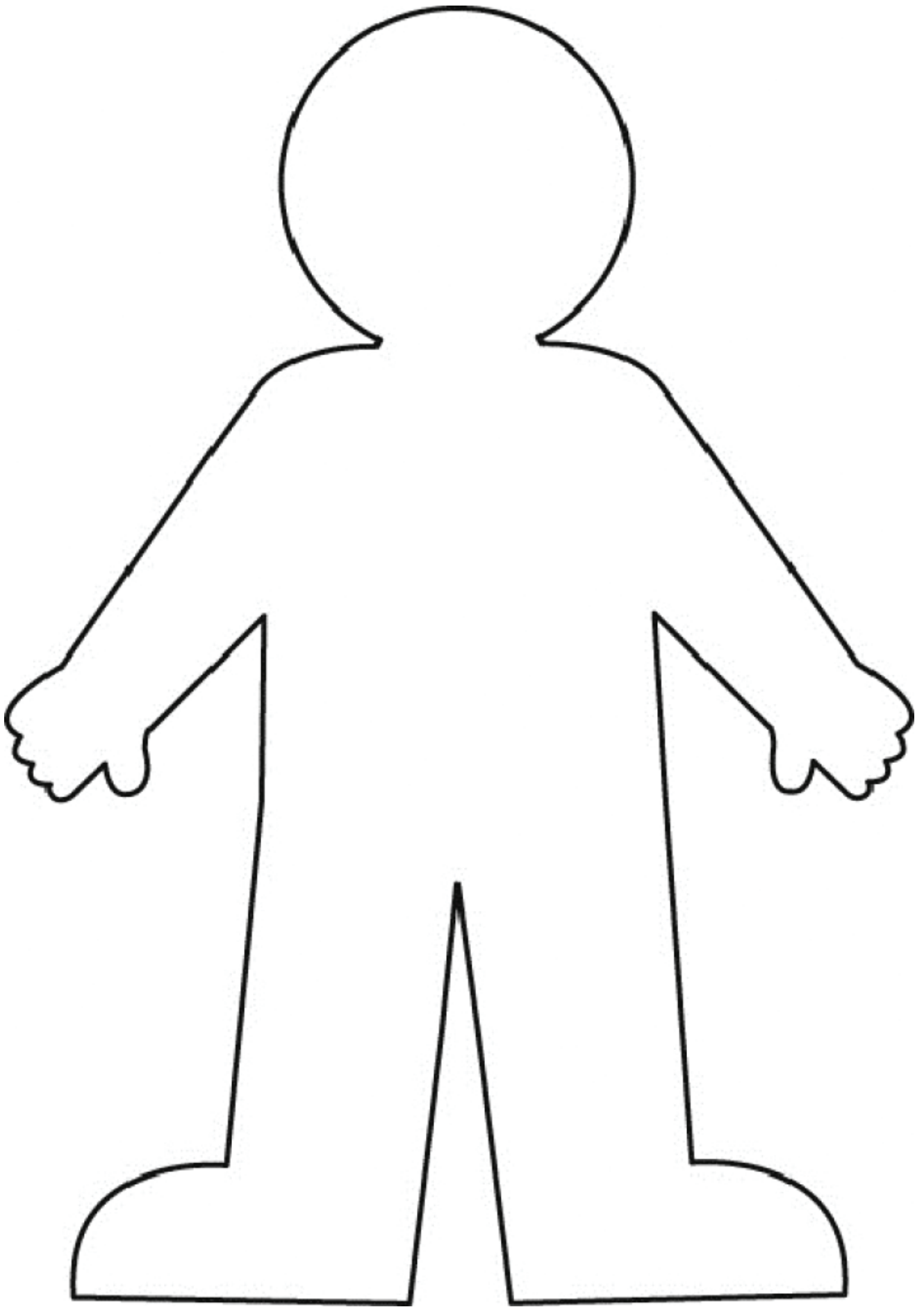
NO! Remember at the beginning of our time together, we mentioned that some people believe that boys are made more in the image of God than girls are. But we know that's not true. We are ALL made in God's image; but that does not mean we are all the same. We do things differently not because we are a boy or a girl, but because each of our minds is special, because God made us that way!

## CLOSING

Before parents arrive, ask someone to close your time in prayer. If children are reluctant to pray, write this simple prayer on a dry erase board, and say it aloud together:

*God, thank you for making us all in Your image, no one better than another. Help us remember to always treat one another that way.*

*Amen.*



# SESSION 2

## Important Women, Then and Now

### SCRIPTURE

John 20:1-18

### CENTRAL MESSAGE

There are many things in the world that girls are told they “can’t” do. In our Scripture passage, we see that Mary was a very important person who was given a very important job. It shows us that God uses everyone, no matter their gender, to carry out God’s work.

### MATERIALS

Person Outline sheets, a few mirrors (*size does not matter*)

### EARLY ARRIVER ACTIVITY

As children arrive, hand them a sheet of paper and pencil and tell them to write down ALL the people in the Bible they can think of from any story in the Old or New Testament. These lists will be used in the Gathering Time.

### GATHERING TIME

Begin your Gathering Time by asking for “highs and lows.” This simply means that each person should share one high from their week that made them happy and one low from their week that made them sad/hurt/angry. Explain that we share our highs and lows with one another so that we can better care for one another, celebrate each other’s successes, and know how to pray for each other.

After sharing highs and lows, have a short time to take prayer requests. Explain that a prayer request can be a celebration or a sadness, because we can bring everything in our lives to God and to our friends. Encourage children to voice prayer requests for one another based on the highs and lows that were just shared.

Invite someone to pray for the group. If children are hesitant, remind them that there is no right or wrong way to pray. They do not have to list every prayer request mentioned, as God has already heard them all before we even spoke them aloud. If no one volunteers, an adult can pray for the group.

It is now time to use the lists that were made in the Early Arriver time. Ask for volunteers to give one or two names they wrote on their lists. Children who did not have time to make a list can also contribute. More than likely, most of the list will be men. Ask the children what they notice about the list. What do most of these people have in common? See if you can get them to notice that most of them are men.

**Some of the following is written in a script-like form, but does NOT have to be used as such. In fact, try your best not to use it as a script, but to take the general idea and tailor it to your group. This will make it seem more like a conversation the children are a part of rather than strictly a lesson they are receiving.**

In the time when Jesus was alive and walking here on Earth with his disciples, men were considered to be more important than women. As a result, some of our Bible stories focus more on men than they do on women. But that does not mean there were not many important women in the Bible! Help me think of some women in the Bible.

Examples:

- Eve
- Mary, mother of Jesus
- Mary and Martha
- Esther
- Deborah
- Miriam
- Sarah
- Elizabeth
- Priscilla

*You may have to give some context of the role these women played in the Bible. In fact, you yourself may have to look it up in order to remember!*

We are now going to break into small groups and rotate through our different stations. In these stations, we are going to do some activities to help us learn about the importance of women in the Bible.

*Use your best judgment to decide how to break children into small groups for rotations based on your age range and number of children. I recommend groups of six to eight children. Since you will need one adult to facilitate each rotation, this may determine how many groups you will have rotating at a time. If you have a very small group, you can rotate through all the stations together.*

*As you set up your groups, make sure there is at least one boy and one girl in each group, if possible.*

## ROTATION STATIONS

### Rotation 1: Bible Explorers

*Today's Scripture passage is John 20: 1-18.*

Since this is such a long passage, let children take turns reading it in chunks of two to three verses. When you are through reading, have discussion around these "I Wonder" questions:

- I wonder how Mary felt when she saw the stone had been moved and Jesus was not there?
- I wonder if the disciples believed Mary when she told them she had seen Jesus. Would you have believed her? Why or why not?
- I wonder why Jesus decided to appear only to Mary first, instead of to his other disciples?

*(These questions phrased as "I wonder..." invite children to imagine themselves into the story, and use a method of teaching that encourages children to value their own answers in addition to the content you are teaching.)*

This passage is one where we see God using a woman to do something very important!

Now that we have studied our Scripture for today, I want us to imagine that we are Mary and we have just realized that it is the resurrected Jesus we are talking to. Find a partner and come up with five questions you would want to ask Jesus if you were Mary in this story.

*(Allow time for them to come up with questions and share them with the group.)*

Let's say a prayer together thanking God for Mary Magdalene and the important job God gave her.

### Rotation 2: Women of the Bible Matching Game or Hunt and Match

*Materials: Index cards, pens*

*Bible Matching Game:* Using index cards, write down 10 names of women in the Bible and their role/importance in a particular Bible story. Divide children up into teams and have them play a matching game, attempting to match the women with their roles.

*Hunt and Match:* This is the same concept as above, but with a game twist. Hide the index cards around the room and allow all children to go on a hunt to find them. Once they are all found, see if they can match the pairs together.

Some examples are provided below, but feel free to add your own! Avoid having the matching card only say something like "blank was the wife



of blank.” While family information can be helpful, it is not the only role these women have. Plus, it can often be a give-away in this game where that may be the only information they know about the woman!

*Eve:* Made by God on the sixth day of Creation

*Mary of Nazareth:* An angel told her she would give birth to a son, and she had faith even though she was afraid. She gave birth to a baby boy in the town of Bethlehem.

*Mary Magdalene:* A faithful follower of Jesus; the first to witness the empty tomb and risen Christ.

*Esther:* Ruled Israel as a Jewish queen and helped make sure that Jews could worship safely, which led to Jesus’ ministry being able to flourish.

*Deborah:* The only named female judge, she helped Israel turn back to worship of the one true God when they were struggling to stay faithful.

*Miriam:* A prophetess who bravely helped save Moses when he was placed in a basket in the river as a baby.

*Sarah:* Received an extraordinary honor from God when she became pregnant at the age of 90. Her offspring became the nation of Israel, which eventually led to the birth of Jesus!

*Priscilla:* A powerful church leader in the book of Acts who helped the Early Church to succeed.

*Jochebed:* When the Egyptians began killing the male babies of Hebrew slaves, this woman trusted God and placed her baby in a basket on the Nile River, having faith that he would be safe.

A fun way to make this game more personal is to add the names of women in your own church. Write their name on one index card and a little bit about them on the other; maybe they are a Sunday school teacher, a minister or perhaps they sing in the choir or play the piano. This can be a fun way for children to realize how much the women in their own church do!

### Rotation 3: Thanking the Women

*Materials:* Construction paper, stickers, markers, crayons or colored pencils

- How many times do you think you say “thank you” in a year?
- Can you think of any times/situations where you ALWAYS say thank you?
- How does it feel when someone thanks you?

Sometimes we forget to thank people. We don’t do this on purpose or because we aren’t grateful for them; we might just forget—especially if it is for something they do all the time that we have just come to expect.

Since we have been talking about women in the Bible and how their importance is often forgotten, we are going to make thank-you notes for some women in our church who do important things to help our church succeed.

*You can have a pre-made list ready, and you can also ask for contributions from children as they think about women in the church who make a difference.*

### CLOSING

Our closing prayer is going to be a little different than how we usually pray. Since we have talked about women in the Bible and women in our church tonight, I am going to say each of their names aloud, one after the other. While I do this, I want you to silently thank God for each of these women I name, whether they are people from the Bible you never met or people you know here at church. Are there any other women in your life you would like to add to our list before we pray?

# SESSION 3

## The Early Church and the Church Now

### SCRIPTURE

Galatians 3:26-28

### CENTRAL MESSAGE

As children of God, we are called to do all sorts of things. God gives us special gifts and talents that make us a good fit for our jobs when we grow up. These aren't based on whether we are male or female, and God wouldn't want us to limit one another based on that.

### EARLY ARRIVER ACTIVITY

As children arrive, hand them a piece of Play-Doh and have them "build" their response to this question: When you hear the word "church," what comes to mind?

### GATHERING TIME

Begin your Gathering Time by asking for "highs and lows." This simply means that each person should share one high point from their week that made them happy and one low point from their week that made them sad/hurt/angry. Explain that we share our highs and lows with one another so that we can better care for one another, celebrate each other's successes and know how to pray for each other.

After sharing highs and lows, have a short time to take prayer requests. Explain that a prayer request can be about a celebration or a sadness since we can bring everything in our lives to God and to our friends. Encourage children to voice prayer requests for one another based on the highs and lows that were just shared.

Invite someone to pray for the group. If children are hesitant, remind them that there is no right or wrong way to pray. They do not have to list every prayer request mentioned, as God has already heard them all before we even spoke them aloud. If no one volunteers, an adult can pray for the group.

Invite children to share what they made with their Play-Doh, and why it is the thing they think of when they hear the word "church." Ask children some of the following questions about church:

- Why do we have church?
- What makes church different from all the other places we go during the week?
- Who helps to make our church a special place?
- What is your favorite thing we do at church?

Transition to talking about the ministers at your church. Ask the children what each of them does in their role. Help them out if they aren't sure.

We are now going to break into our rotations to learn more about the church—when it was just beginning and how it is different from the church we know now!

*Use your best judgment to decide how to break children into small groups for rotations based on your age range and number of children. I recommend groups of six to eight children. Since you will need one adult to facilitate each rotation, this may determine how many groups you will have rotating at a time. If you have a very small group, you can rotate through all the stations together.*

*As you divide your groups, make sure there is at least one boy and one girl in each group, if possible.*

## ROTATIONS

### Rotation 1: Bible Explorers

Print out today's Scripture on a piece of paper and have several copies available. Cut each sheet of paper into decent-sized triangles or other shapes, creating a puzzle. Break children into pairs and allow them time to put the puzzle together. Have each pair read the Scripture out loud together.

Invite children to think about what this passage is saying with the following "I Wonder" questions:

- I wonder what it means to be children of God?
- I wonder why Paul says that when we believers of Christ, there is "neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, slave nor free"?

Back in the time of Paul, people were just beginning to gather together as believers of Jesus and have something like the "church" we have today. But it was very different! There was not always a special building; there was no Sunday school or choir; and they didn't always dress up to come to church.

Church has looked different over the past hundreds of years, and it has faced many problems. One of those problems is the question of who can be a leader or minister/pastor in the church. What do you think a church leader should be like?

*Allow time for answers.*

Some people thought that church leaders should be only men. What do you think about that?

In fact, some people still think that! There are churches that allow only men to be ministers or leaders. How do you think this makes women feel?

Let's read our Scripture together again. It seems that what Paul is saying is that when we are believers in Christ, all those differences between us are no more, because we are "all one in Christ Jesus." What does this mean about who should be allowed to be a minister in the church?

Let's pray together and thank God that anyone can be called to be a leader in our church because we know that we are all one in Christ.

### Rotation 2: When I Grow Up

*Materials: Index cards with different professions written on them, blank index cards, pens.*

#### Game #1: Pick a Job

Place all the index cards with different professions on them into a bag. Have children grab a card without looking and hold it to their chest so they can't see what it says. When everyone has chosen a card, tell them to turn over their cards.

*Say:* The job you have chosen is now what you have to be when you grow up! How do you feel about that?

Why is this not the way we choose jobs in real life? What helps you decide what job you should have when you grow up?

#### Game #2

Okay. Now, write down what you actually want to be when you grow up on a blank index card. Once you've written it down, put it in the bag.

Have children repeat the process of drawing a card from the bag without looking to see what they get.

When they look at their card, ask, "Would you like to have a different job that one of your friends got?"

Choose one child who did not get the job they wanted. Ask who they want to swap with, and then tell them that they can't have that job for an arbitrary reason. Make the reason be something that they cannot control.

For example:

- Oh, you want to be a firefighter? Sorry, firefighters have to have brown hair and you have red hair.
- You can't be a teacher, only people without freckles can be teachers.
- Darn! You have to be at least six-and-a-half feet tall to be a chef.

Ask children if this seems like a fair way to decide who should get what job. Why or why not?

That frustration you felt when someone told you what you could or couldn't be or do is what women feel a lot of the time when they are told they can't do something just because they are a girl. There are still lots of jobs that some people think should be done only by men: pastors, football players, firefighters, police officers, construction workers, even doctors and lawyers. (Add to this list as you see fit.) But God calls all kinds of people to do all kinds of things, not because they are a boy or a girl, but because they have special gifts and talents that will make them good at their job.

If you have extra time, allow children to share why they think they would be good at the job they want when they grow up. What gifts or interests did God give them that make them a good fit for the job they want?

## CLOSING

*Materials: Pipe cleaners*

Today's prayer is a sensory prayer. That means I am going to have you do something with your hands while I pray. I am going to pray for all the women in the world who have been told they can't do or be something just because they are female. As I pray, shape your pipe cleaner into a heart. When we leave, take that pipe cleaner with you as a reminder that we can all be whatever God calls us to be.

# SESSION 4

## The Holy Spirit in Us

### SCRIPTURE

Acts 2:1-12

### CENTRAL MESSAGE

The Holy Spirit is within us all and empowers us to do what God calls us to do. God can call anyone to do anything through the Holy Spirit.

### EARLY ARRIVER ACTIVITY

As children arrive, ask them if they know any words in another language. If they do, have them share it with you and write it on a whiteboard if available. If they don't know any, teach them a few words in another language that you have prepared ahead of time. For example, translate the words *men*, *women*, and *church* into a few different languages, and practice pronouncing them with the children.

### GATHERING TIME

Begin your Gathering Time by asking for “highs and lows.” This simply means that each person should share one high point from their week that made them happy and one low point from their week that made them sad/hurt/angry. Explain that we share our highs and lows with one another so that we can better care for one another, celebrate each other's successes, and know how to pray for each other.

After sharing highs and lows, have a short time to take prayer requests. Explain that a prayer request can be about a celebration or a sadness since we can bring everything in our lives to God and to our friends. Encourage children to voice prayer requests for one another based on the highs and lows that were just shared.

Invite someone to pray for the group. If children are hesitant, remind them that there is no right or wrong way to pray. They do not have to list every prayer request mentioned, as God has already heard them all before we even spoke them aloud. If no one volunteers, an adult can pray for the group.

Today we are going to talk about a special day called Pentecost. On Pentecost, God sent the Holy Spirit to be with us, and the Spirit is still with us today! Although we can't see the Holy Spirit, it is God's presence with each of us.

Can you think of anything else we believe in even though we can't see it with our own eyes?

One of those things is the wind, right? We can't actually see the wind, but how do we know it's there?

Because we can see what it does! It can blow out a candle flame, shake the leaves in the trees, make our hair fly all over the place. Really strong wind can even knock trees over or make things fly in the air, right?

We can't see the Holy Spirit, but we can see the work of the Spirit in each of our lives. When we try to live our lives like Jesus would want us to, the Holy Spirit helps us to do it! What do you think the Holy Spirit helps you do in your life?

Let's read our Scripture to learn more about the special day of Pentecost and what the Holy Spirit being with us means.

*Today's activities are best done as one large group. Do Rotation 1 first, followed by Rotation 2, which will take you outdoors.*

# ROTATIONS

## Rotation 1: Bible Explorers

Have each child pick a number one to 12. When they choose a number, give them a post-it note with their number on it so they don't forget.

Provide a Bible for each child in the group, and help them find the Scripture for today which is Acts 2:1-12. Tell children that they will read whatever verse number is the same number they have. Children will have to pay close attention to make sure they don't miss their verse. Any numbers that were not chosen if you have a smaller group can be read by the leaders.

Ask these "I wonder" questions about the passage:

- I wonder how you would have felt if you had been there that day?
- I wonder what it would be like to be able to speak multiple languages? What language would you want to speak?
- I wonder why God decided to send the Holy Spirit to be with us?

Pentecost happened after Jesus died, was resurrected and had gone to heaven to be with God. It was a sign that even though Jesus was no longer with the people, they were not alone. The Holy Spirit was inside each of them because they were made in the image of God just like we talked about a few weeks ago. Even though we do not have tongues of flame on our heads and we can't all speak multiple languages, the Holy Spirit is with us, too.

## Rotation 2: Chalk the Church

*Materials: Chalk*

Take the group outside to a safe place to draw with chalk (sidewalk, parking lot, side of a brick building, etc).

Over the past few weeks, we have been learning about how we are all made in God's image equally. We have realized that in our world, not all people are treated the same. Specifically, we have focused on men and women, and the ways they are treated differently. We have studied women in the Bible that

God called to do big things, and we thought about women in our own church who make it a better place.

Today, we learned the story of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came down from heaven to be with every single one of us, no matter who we are. When we say "God is with us," part of what we mean is that we have the Holy Spirit guiding our lives.

So, as we finish up our lesson today, I want us to make our church beautiful. God wants church to be a safe, loving place where everyone feels welcome and is invited to show up and be exactly who they are. Churches aren't quite there yet; we have some work to do to be the church God wants us to be. But church is a beautiful place, so today we are going to honor that beauty.

Use your chalk to make the church beautiful in whatever way you would like. Give these ideas as a starting place:

- Color the bricks.
- Draw a rainbow.
- Make tongues of flame from our story today.
- Write the names of the women we learned about in the Bible, or the names of the women in our church we talked about.

Allow children to draw for a while.

## CLOSING

When you have a few minutes left, introduce this final activity: Have children find a place that hasn't yet been drawn on and have a friend outline his or her body with chalk. *Say:* "We are doing this because YOU are a part of what makes this church what God wants it to be. You aren't limited by your age, your size, your hair color, your weight, whether you are a boy or a girl. You are made in God's image to be YOU, exactly as you are."

Close in prayer, thanking God for each child by name. Have them stand in their body outline while you pray.