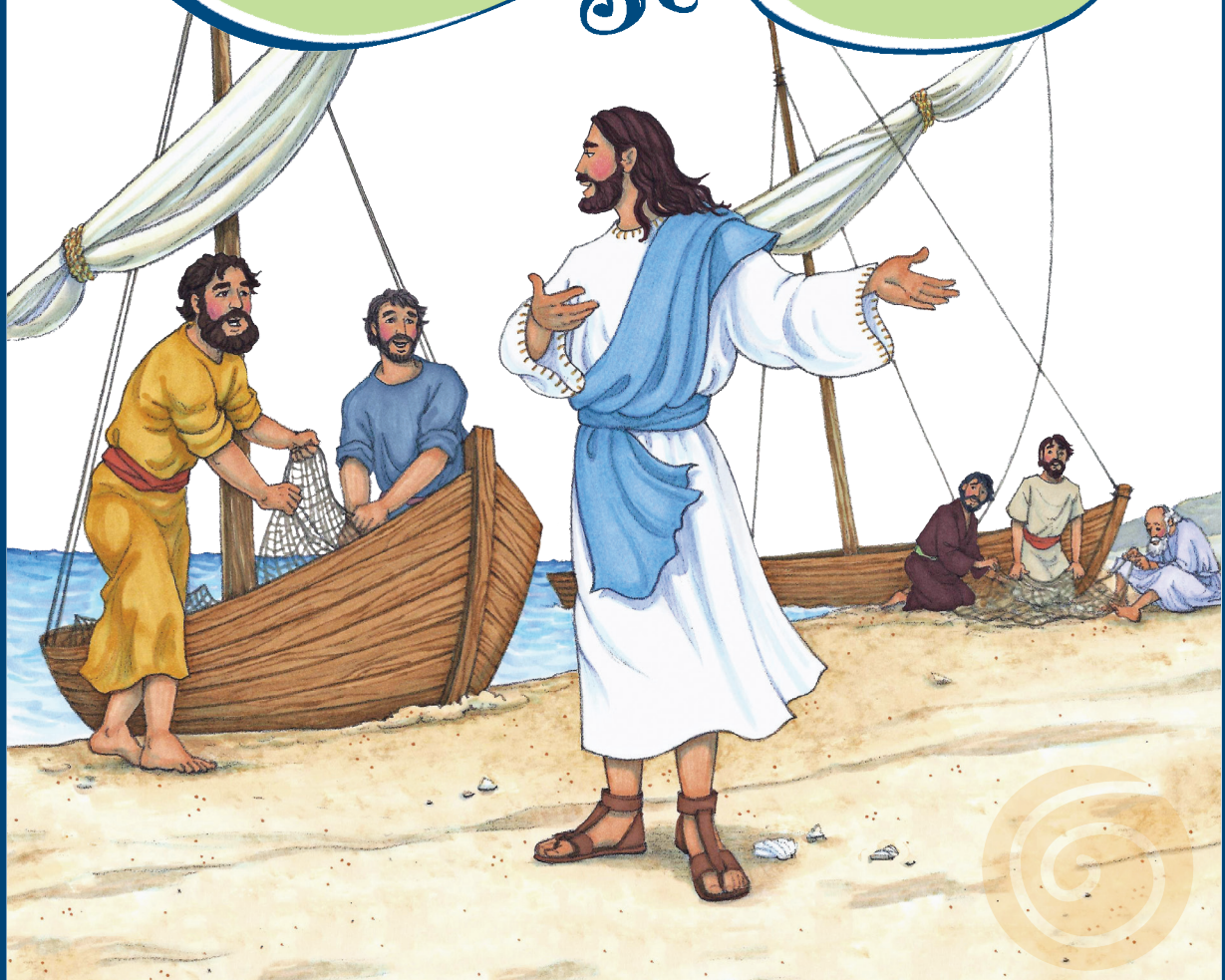


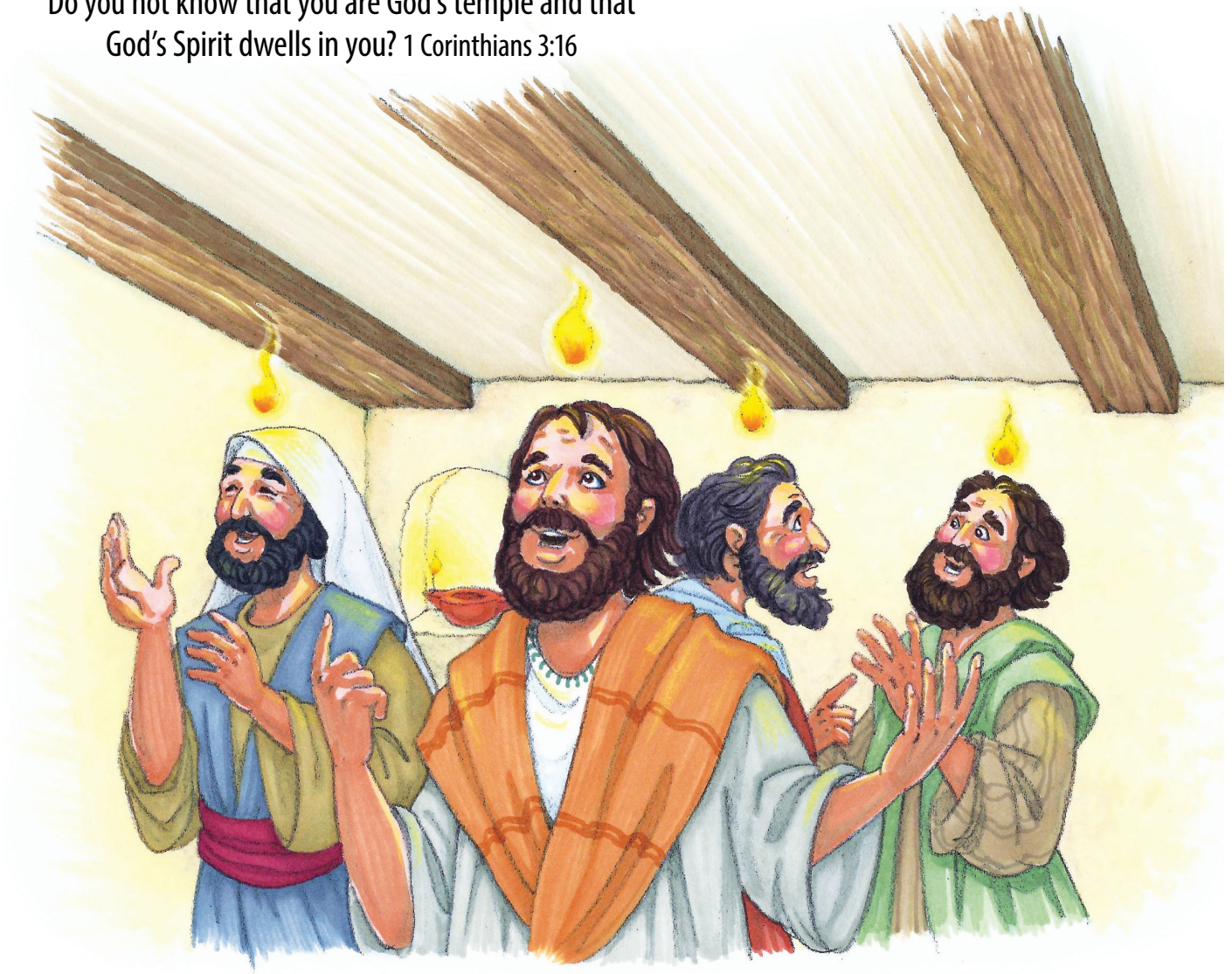
MAY EDITION

FamilyTime



A Collection of 98
Bible Stories and Devotions

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that
God's Spirit dwells in you? 1 Corinthians 3:16



The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost | Acts 2

God the Father is God; Jesus is God; and the Holy Spirit is God. God is triune—three in one—the Trinity—one true God. The Holy Spirit came in a powerful way to God's people at Pentecost, just ten days after Jesus, in His body, rose up into the air to go to heaven. Jesus had told His followers to go to Jerusalem and wait for the Spirit.

When the Holy Spirit came, Jesus' followers heard a strong wind and saw what looked like flames hovering over their heads. What happened next was even more surprising. They began speaking in different languages. They had not

learned to speak those languages, but now they could speak them because of a miracle of God. People from other countries could understand what they were saying. Now Jesus' followers could tell everyone about Jesus!

A crowd of people gathered outside the house. Peter spoke to them about Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Many people believed Peter. About three thousand people were baptized that day. That special day was called Pentecost. The people continued each day to worship God and learn more about forgiveness and salvation.

Who is the Holy Spirit and how do we know He is God?

The work of the Holy Spirit is giving people faith. The Holy Spirit works faith through God's Word as it is read or heard or received in Baptism or the Lord's Supper. The Holy Spirit also brings people together, uniting them in one large and powerful group, known as the Church.

The Work of the Holy Spirit / Acts 2:1–4

Many people enjoy watching the Olympic Games. The games alternate from a winter to a summer version. Several months before the opening ceremony of the Olympics, a torch is lit. It is always lit in Athens, Greece, where the Olympics began, using the sun's rays and a mirror.

From one to another, athletes pass the torch, carrying it throughout the continents. Finally, on the day of the opening ceremony, the torch enters the Olympic stadium. With this signal, the games begin.

The torch represents the unity and the peace of the Olympic Games. It is a visual way of showing that, at least for a few

weeks, the competing countries unite for a common purpose.

Pentecost is a special day in the life of the Christian Church. In fact, it is the beginning of the Christian Church. On Pentecost, we thank God that He sent the Holy Spirit to His Church.

On that first Pentecost, the followers of Jesus gathered in Jerusalem. Suddenly, they heard a sound like a strong wind. The sound filled the whole house. Tongues of fire came to rest on each of them. The Holy Spirit filled them, and they began to speak about Jesus in other languages.

Although the Olympic torch represents unity and peace among the nations involved,

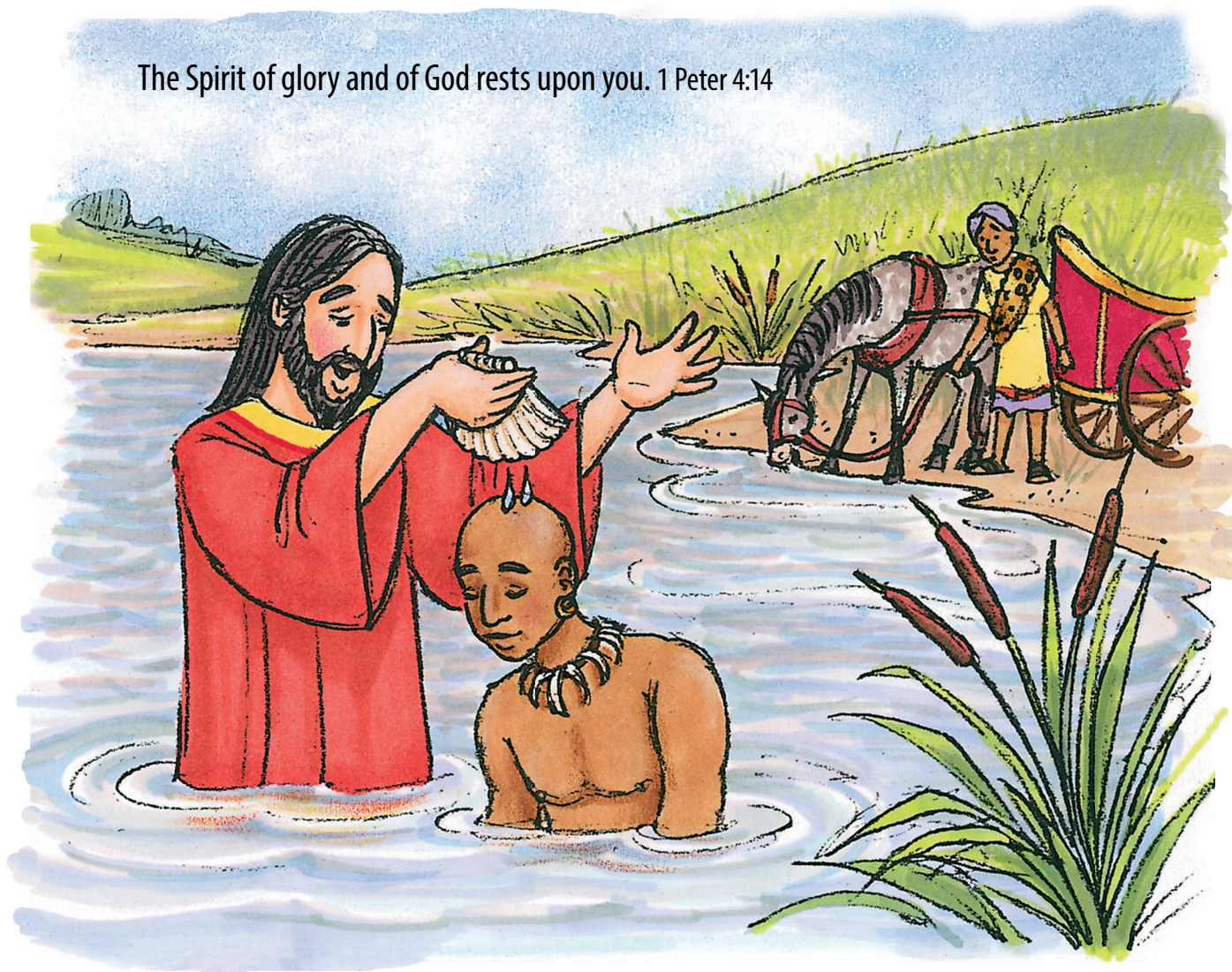
that peace and unity do not last. Disputes break out, and arguments arise. Family and friends, neighborhoods and cities don't have peace, either.

On Pentecost, when God's Spirit arrived, the message of what Jesus had done on Calvary's cross brought true unity and peace. The Holy Spirit makes people holy and brings them to faith in Christ. The Holy Spirit brings God's peace because by nature we are enemies of God. We can trust, rejoice, and find comfort in Him—the one who brings unity and peace.

Talk about it: When did the Holy Spirit bring you to faith in Jesus?

*Prayer: Holy Spirit, thank You for making me holy by bringing me to faith in Christ so that I might be saved.
In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

The Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. 1 Peter 4:14



Philip and the Ethiopian

Acts 8:26–40

Philip was a special helper in the Church. One day, an angel told Philip to start walking down a road through the desert. Philip walked and walked. A man riding in a chariot went by. He was reading from the Bible. The man was from Africa. He worked for the queen of Ethiopia.

The Holy Spirit told Philip to catch up with the chariot. Philip ran and ran. He came alongside the chariot. Philip asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” The man said, “I’m reading from the Bible book written by Isaiah. I don’t understand it at all. Can you tell me what it means?”

Philip had Good News for the man. He said, “The words of the prophet Isaiah have been

fulfilled by Jesus Christ. Jesus died to take your sins away. Then He rose from the dead. Now He lives in heaven. Jesus did all this to take away our sins and to give us the promise of eternal life.”

The man believed. He asked Philip to baptize him. They stopped by some water. Philip baptized the man from Africa. Then the man climbed into his chariot. He went on his way rejoicing. He wanted to go home and tell everyone the Good News. The Holy Spirit took Philip to another place to tell people there about Jesus.

This story tells us about the work of God’s Spirit. God’s Spirit brings people to faith in Jesus through the Word. He welcomes us into God’s kingdom through Baptism. And He brings us the joy of knowing that Christ Jesus has saved us.

This story also tells us about good works. Good works are the things God's people do because God's Spirit is at work in them. When Philip told the Ethiopian about Jesus, he was doing a good

work. But there are many other types of good works as well. Whenever God's Spirit helps us serve God and others, He helps us to do a good work as forgiven and redeemed people of God.

Good Works by the Holy Spirit / John 15:5

Albert lived an unusual life. By the time he was thirty, Albert had already written three books and become a pastor. Later, he became a professor and was known throughout the world as a talented organist and music scholar.

But Albert was troubled. While he excelled in music and enjoyed studying and teaching God's word in Europe, he learned that people in Africa were suffering from disease and starvation. Albert's heart ached when he thought about the pain and hardships of the African people. He longed to help. The world-famous teacher and musician decided to become a doctor. After studying medicine, Albert and his wife moved to Africa to build a hospital.

Some people called Albert Schweitzer foolish. A man with

so many talents, they said, should not hide away in a far-off land. Just think how wealthy he would be if he stayed in Europe!

Albert had a different idea. He kept writing books and taking trips abroad. Albert continued to work with people in Africa; he believed that God wanted him to take care of others.

We don't all have to become doctors and move to Africa in order to please God. A good work in God's sight is anything that a person does, speaks, or thinks to the glory of God or to benefit another person.

As sinners, though, we can't possibly do good works on our own. The Holy Spirit creates faith within us, and through that faith He renews our life so that we strive to do good.

Albert was moved by the Holy

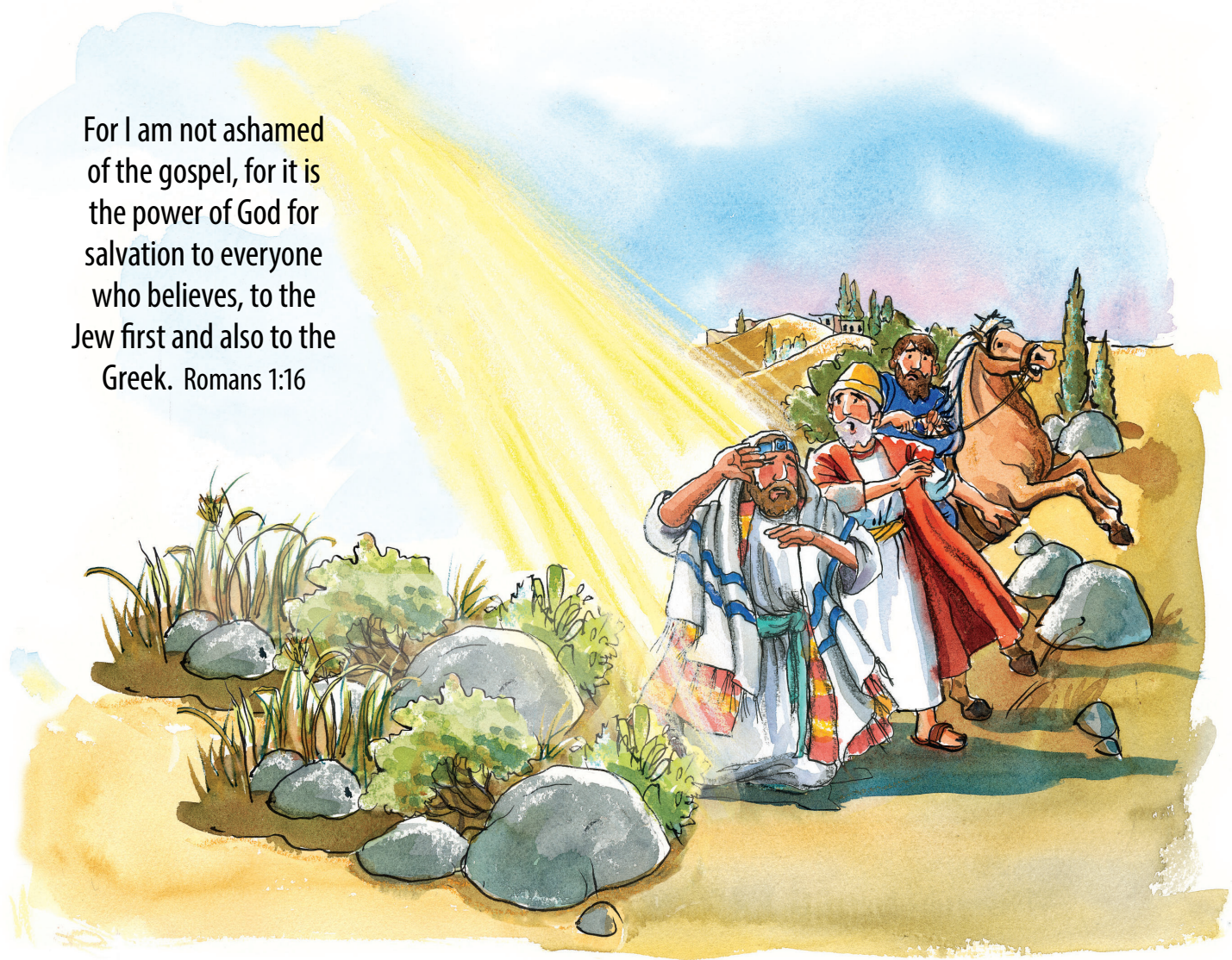
Spirit to help ease the suffering in Africa; each of us are moved by the Holy Spirit when we help others. Apart from the Holy Spirit, humans can do no good.

Although good works please God, they certainly are not enough to get us to heaven. Thankfully, Jesus gave up His life for us on the cross. In Baptism, we receive God's forgiveness, salvation, and the Holy Spirit. As God's forgiven and free children, we can use our gifts to glorify God and to help other people. The Holy Spirit gives us the ability to live as God's children.

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**Talk about it:** What special talents has God given you that you can use to glorify God or help others?

*Prayer: Thank You, heavenly Father, for making us Your children through Baptism. Thank You for Your Holy Spirit and the good works He moves us to do. We praise You in Jesus' name. Amen.*

For I am not ashamed  
of the gospel, for it is  
the power of God for  
salvation to everyone  
who believes, to the  
Jew first and also to the  
Greek. Romans 1:16



## Jesus Changes Saul (aka Paul) | Acts 9:1–28

**A**fter the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the early Christian Church began to grow rapidly. But there were also people who opposed the Christians. Saul, an enemy of the followers of Jesus, was authorized to find and arrest Christians in Damascus.

As he traveled to that city, suddenly a bright light from heaven shined on him. Falling to the ground, Saul heard a voice say, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”

Saul asked, “Who are You, Lord?”

And the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” Jesus told Saul to go to the city, where he would be told what to do. When Saul got up, he was unable to see. Those who were with him had to lead him into the city.

Meanwhile, Jesus spoke to a disciple named Ananias, who lived in Damascus. He told Ananias to go to Saul and help him. Ananias didn’t want to go. He had heard that Saul hated Christians. Jesus said, “Go. Saul will tell many people about Me.” So Ananias went with a message from Jesus. Saul’s sight was restored, and he was baptized.

Then Saul began to preach the Good News of Jesus in Damascus. Now his former friends were his enemies. They were angry that he had changed. They wanted to capture him. So his new Christian friends let Saul down over the wall of the city in a basket to escape. Saul, also known as Paul, went to Jerusalem and spoke boldly of the Lord Jesus.



Jesus changed Paul. Paul was once a man who hated those who believed in Jesus. Now, he was a missionary. As a missionary, Paul would tell people all over the world the Good News about Jesus. The Good News about Jesus is called the Gospel. Writing to believers in the city of Rome, Paul talked about the Gospel. The Gospel tells us that Jesus lived, died, and rose again to earn

forgiveness of sins and home in heaven for all people.

Paul writes, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." The power of the Gospel brings people to faith. The power of the Gospel takes away our sins, even as it gives us the power to also forgive those who sin against us.

## Hallway Trouble / 2 Corinthians 5:17

Rebecca's first day of school meant that she could finally wear her new purple shirt! She liked it because the words "Jesus Is Lord" were written across the front and the bright color made Rebecca smile—purple was her favorite. It looked great with her new jeans too. Rebecca was very excited for her first day!

As Rebecca walked through the door of her classroom, she saw her least-favorite person—Jennifer. She was standing with some other girls and giggled when she saw Rebecca. "Look at Becca. Thinks she's so cool with her bad hair and no-name jeans," said Jennifer.

Rebecca's cheeks burned hot, and she ran down the hall. She was in such a hurry that she ran right into Jason. Her books slipped from her arms and slammed to the ground.

"I heard Jennifer," Jason said, picking up her books. "That was really rotten of her. Want me to help you get even?"

Rebecca wiped her eyes and thought: *Get even! Oh, yes! Wouldn't it be great to get back at Jennifer with one of Jason's pranks?* But she knew it wasn't right.

"No, I'll get over it," she said after a minute. "Let's just go to class."

God doesn't "get even" with us when we sin. Through Jesus Christ, God gives us forgiveness, faith, and life. We call this great news "the Gospel." Because Jesus died for our sins and gave us forgiveness, we are able to forgive others just as Rebecca forgave Jennifer. Because Rebecca gave Jennifer forgiveness, Jason saw God at work.

"Wow, you really do believe it!" Jason said.

"Believe what?" asked Rebecca.

"The words on your shirt."

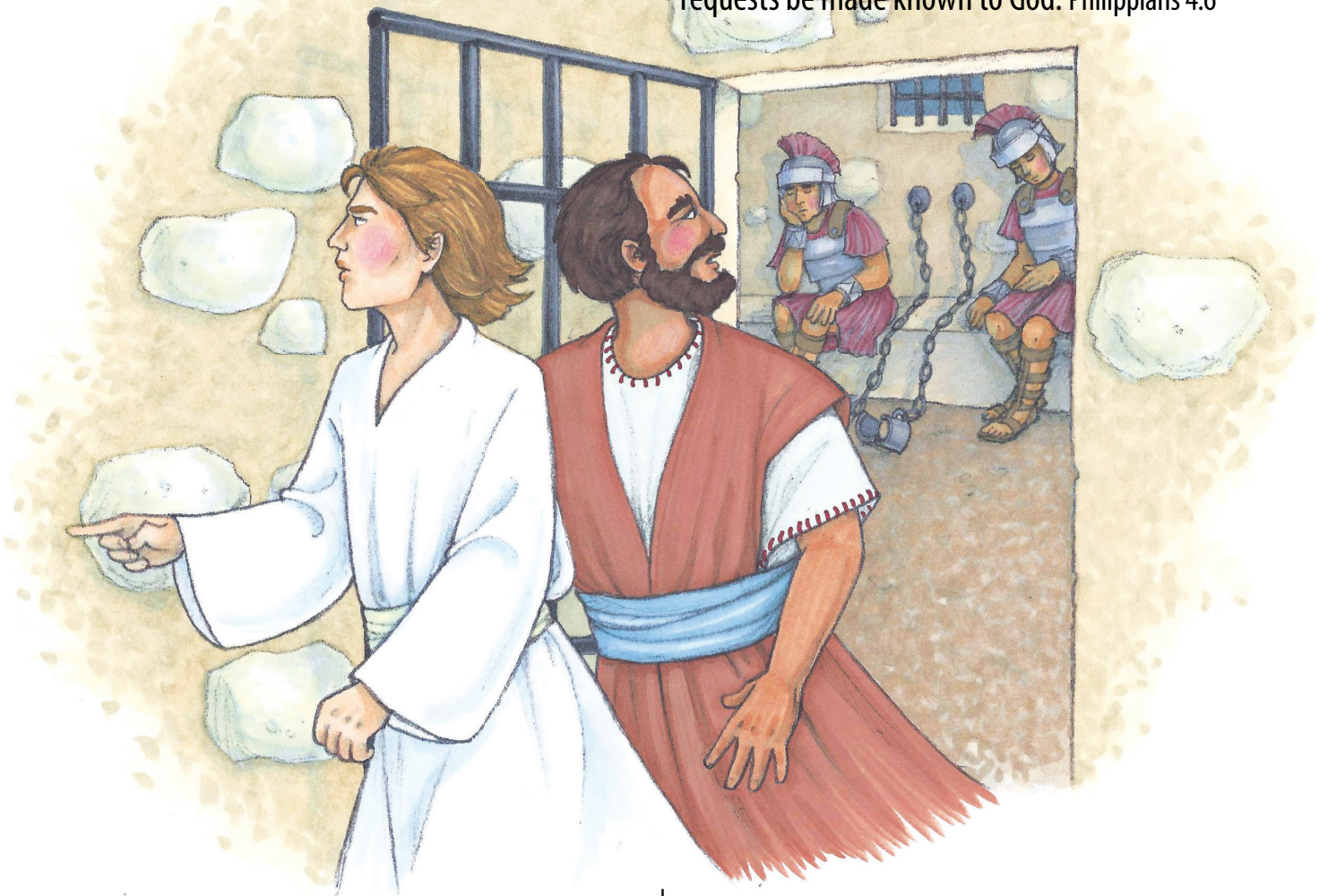
"You're right," she said, smiling.

Talk about it: Read John 3:16 aloud. What is the good news that this verse talks about? Why is it important for us as sinners?

*Prayer: Loving Father, thank You so much for the Gospel! Please give us patience and endurance when problems come so that we might reflect God's love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*



Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. Philippians 4:6



## Peter Freed from Prison

Acts 12:1–19

**P**eter was in danger. Wicked King Herod had put him in prison. Herod was about to send for him. Perhaps Peter's days on earth were coming to an end.

But the Christians prayed for Peter without stopping. God heard and answered their prayers. The night before Herod would have sent for him, Peter was tied in chains, sleeping between two soldiers. Guards stood before the door of the prison. Suddenly, an angel from the Lord came to Peter, shining a light on him, nudging him, and saying, "Get up quickly."

Peter's chains fell from his hands, and Peter followed the angel from the prison. At first, Peter thought he was seeing a vision. When they came

to the iron gate leading to the city, it opened for them by itself. They were walking on a city street when suddenly the angel left Peter.

When Peter realized what had happened, he said, "Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent His angel to deliver me from the hand of Herod and from my enemies." Peter came to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many believers had gathered to pray. Peter's knock was answered by a young woman named Rhoda. When she heard Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she forgot to open the door to let Peter in. Instead, she ran and told everyone that Peter stood outside the door.



Those inside refused to believe Rhoda, but she insisted that Peter was outside. Meanwhile, Peter continued to knock at the door. When they opened the door and saw him, they were amazed. Asking them to listen, Peter proceeded to tell the assembly how the Lord had answered their prayers. God had sent His angel and brought Peter

out of prison. Peter said, “Go and tell these things to James and to the other brothers.” Then Peter left.

This story reminds us that when we pray to God, God hears our prayers. And God answers them!

### **Expect an Answer / Acts 12:13–17**

**D**avid had plans to build a hutch for Chester, his rabbit. But he couldn’t do the project by himself. He needed his dad’s help. David knew that his dad was a busy man, so he didn’t really expect his dad to help, even though he had asked him to.

On his own, David got wood, tools, and carpentry plans. But the directions were hard to understand. Was he even holding the paper in the right direction? He was becoming more and more confused and frustrated. But then something unexpected happened. David’s dad joined him! His dad had been planning to help David

all along. Together, they built a beautiful hutch in no time.

Long ago, the apostle Peter had been thrown in jail, and King Herod was probably planning to put him to death. Peter’s friends were gathered that night to pray for him. They spoke to God with their words and in their thoughts. While they prayed, something unexpected happened! An angel came and miraculously released Peter from jail.

When Peter joined his praying friends, they couldn’t believe he was at the door. They even thought Rhoda, who heard him knock, was out of her mind!

They really didn’t expect God to answer their prayers.

Do we sometimes act as though we don’t expect our heavenly Father to answer our prayers? Maybe we talk to God about something, but then we keep worrying as though we don’t think God will help us. But God promises to hear our prayers for Jesus’ sake. He promises to answer them in the time and way that are best for us. We can speak to God through prayer and expect an answer!

**Talk about it:** What are some things you can pray for every morning when you wake up?

*Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, thank You for giving me a way to talk to You. Thank You for hearing my prayers. Help me to always expect an answer from You, trusting that You know what and when it’s best for me. I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.*



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