

LESSON 1

PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Works Through the Holy Spirit

SCRIPTURE: Acts 16

GOD'S BIG STORY: After Jesus goes to heaven, God sends the Holy Spirit to be our helper. God works through the Holy Spirit to lead Paul on missionary journeys to spread the good news.

WORD OF WONDER: Those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. —Romans 8:14

CURIOSITY

BELIEF

FAITH

- Welcome Question: If you were moving somewhere on the other side of the world and could only bring one suitcase, what would you bring?
- Curiosity Questions
- Word of Wonder: Romans 8:14
- Word of Wonder Activity
- Discussion Questions for Younger and Older Kids
- Small Group Prayer Time
- LARGE GROUP
- Responding in Worship: Watercolor Map Painting



[Holy Spirit Our Helper Spotify playlist](#)

INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

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WONDER TRUTH: God Works Through the Holy Spirit

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We love to go hiking as a family. My kids are young and have logged more hiking miles than many adults! One thing that's important while hiking is following the signs. Signs saying go this way or that way. Signs saying how far you must go before reaching your destination. Signs saying you're here—you made it! It gives us comfort to have guidance when we're walking through the wilderness. Take a moment to read Acts 16:6–15 and remember that Paul and his companions are taking the gospel into unfamiliar territory. It'd be nice to have some guidance along the way.

What did you notice? Paul and his buddies had something better than hiking trail signs—they had the Holy Spirit. The Spirit guided them from place to place, saying, “Take the gospel here, not there,” or “You made it. This is the place.” We all want clear signs from the Holy Spirit to guide us, but those signs aren't always easy to recognize.

Like hiking, we must stay on the path to see the signs. What's important is that we continue to follow the path God has laid before us, trusting He is working through the Spirit to guide us when we need it. Sometimes that means we need a very clear sign from the Spirit, and other times it means we just stay on the path in obedience and trust that God knows what we need.

—Kramer Mize

Ministry Volunteer

Contributor to Wonder Ink

LESSON 1 **FOR LEADERS**
PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

Paul, also called Saul, was a Jewish man from Tarsus. He was a Pharisee who persecuted the early church but became a follower of Jesus after encountering Christ on the road to Damascus. Paul proclaimed Jesus to the Gentiles (non-Jews) and endured much persecution himself.

WHAT?

While traveling with his companions, Paul was prevented by the Holy Spirit from entering Asia Minor or Bithynia (by-thin-EE-uh). The Spirit instead led him to Macedonia, where Paul preached to a woman named Lydia. The Lord opened her heart to accept the good news of Jesus.

WHERE?

Paul and his companions set out from Troas, a coastal city in present-day Turkey. They crossed the Aegean Sea and landed in Neapolis before heading to Philippi. These cities were part of Macedonia, which was located north of Achaia (uh-KAY-uh) in present-day Greece.

WHEN?

Acts tells the story of the growth of the early church after Jesus ascended into heaven. This story recounts part of what is known as Paul's Second Missionary Journey, taking place around AD 50. This was several years after Paul's conversion and well into his ministry.

CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY

God promised Abraham that all peoples would be blessed through Abraham's family. Jesus, a descendant of Abraham, makes the way for all people to be part of God's kingdom. In Acts, the Holy Spirit empowers Jesus' followers to spread this news to the nations.

Small Group

Spark curiosity, encourage exploration, and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

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Pre-Service Connection (15–20 min)

RESOURCES: **Coloring Page**, whiteboard, poster paper, or butcher paper, writing utensils

Small group leaders should be seated in place in their small groups 20 minutes prior to service time. Have play stations with various board games, activities, or use games from the extra Games & Activities Guide to keep children occupied and engaged WITH you. This time is important to build relationships, welcome new kids, and keep structure in the room - you should be an active participant with them!

Learn the kids names, and make sure they all know yours too!

Warmly welcome new friends, and introduce them to your group. *Allow quieter kids who don't engage with the board games to color. Involve them in the curiosity questions.*

As kids arrive..

Invite them to write/draw the answer to the Welcome Question: on the designated board:

“If you were moving somewhere on the other side of the world and could only bring one suitcase, what would you bring?” Set out sheets of paper and colored pencils.

While kids are playing in their opening activity groups..

Pose the following “I’m curious” questions. Say “I’m curious...” before each question and give kids a chance to think about and answer each one. After each question, consider having kids share their ideas with a neighbor before you call on one or two of them to share with the group.

- **Do you know anyone who is a missionary?** (Explain that a missionary is a person who spreads the good news of Jesus, often traveling to do so.)
- **What do you think would be the hardest part of being a missionary?**

Small Group Begins

After the Opening Activity, Large Group Leader will begin small group time by reading the Welcome Question aloud and inviting everyone to open their Bibles and begin.

WORD OF WONDER

Those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

—Romans 8:14 (NirV)

Word of Wonder

SUPPLIES: Bibles (1 per kid); **Word of Wonder Poster (1/SG)**

"The Word of Wonder for the Holy Spirit Our Helper series is Romans 8:14. Today we've seen how God's Holy Spirit led Paul to people like Lydia who needed to know about Jesus. This verse tells us who has access to the Holy Spirit. Let's read the Word of Wonder together!"

Invite a kid to open the Bible to Romans 8:14. Have them read the verse aloud to the kids. Read yourself for younger kids. Then invite a couple volunteers to read it aloud. After you've read it aloud a few times, encourage everyone to read the verse aloud together in their best baby voices, explaining that when we follow Jesus, we're children of God!

Talk about these questions:



Leader Tip: For some kids, this might be the first time they hear that they can be children of God. Explain that anyone who chooses to follow Jesus and accept God's gift of forgiveness and salvation is a child of God!

- **Who are the children of God?**
- **Why do you think God wants to lead His children by the Holy Spirit?**

Word of Wonder Activity

Since the focus of this series is the truth that the Spirit is our helper, ask the kids for help reading the verse. Say it several times, each time inserting a goofy word into the sentence. Pretend to be confused, and ask the kids to help you get it right.

For example: **Those who are SAT ON by the Spirit of God are children of God.** Pause to allow kids to point out your error. **Wait, what? He doesn't sit on us? Can you help me say it right?**

Continue with a few more silly word swaps. You can use words like *cheesy puffs* and *pickles* or anything the kids think is funny. After saying each verse incorrectly, pause to let the kids help you get it right.

Notes! Invite kids to write/copy the Word of Wonder on their note page each week to practice!

Small Group Discussion: Younger Kids

SUPPLIES: Bibles (1 per kid); Bible Story Picture (1/SG)

Help kids use the table of contents in their Bibles to find Acts. As kids find the passage, explain that today's reading comes from the book of Acts, which tells the true story of what happened to Jesus' followers after He went back to heaven. Invite them to turn to Acts 16. Tell kids to give a "thumbs up" each time they hear the word Holy Spirit, God, or Jesus and to point to the Bible story picture when they hear the name of a place.

Read Acts 16:6–15 aloud. Then discuss the following:

Notes! Have kids turn to the Notes Pages on the back of the Coloring Sheet and write the Scripture and any words that stand out to them.

- **Who sent the Holy Spirit?** (God the Father)
- **Who does the Holy Spirit help?** (God's children—anyone who trusts in Jesus)
- **What did Paul see in a vision (a special picture from God)?** (Paul saw a man from Macedonia begging him to come there and help them.)
- **The Holy Spirit showed Paul where to go next through a vision! What do you think this shows us about God?**
- **What are some ways the Holy Spirit helps you?**
- **How do you need the Holy Spirit to help you this week?** (Kids might give suggestions such as "with my math homework," but consider guiding them to character-based responses such as "being kind to my sibling" or "being gentle with my pet.")

"God sent the Holy Spirit to help all His children, including you and me. The Holy Spirit wants to help us tell others about Jesus, but He also wants to help us become more loving, joyful, and peaceful. He also helps us be kind, gentle, and self-controlled. Let's take some time to pray together, asking the Holy Spirit to work through us."

Prayer Time: Younger Kids

Invite kids to share some of their prayer requests with the group. Take time to pray together, allowing kids to pray aloud for one another. Close in prayer by thanking God for working through the Holy Spirit to help us.

Leader Tip: For Younger Kids: Younger kids might not know how to pray for someone else. Give them a structure for what to say by starting with a very simple prayer. For example: **Jesus, thank You for my friend. Please help her be more patient. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Small Group Discussion: Older Kids

SUPPLIES: Bibles (1 per kid), **Bible Story Picture (1/SG)**, **Paul's Journey Map (1 for every 2 kids)**

Help kids use the table of contents in their Bibles to find Acts. As kids find the passage, explain that today's reading comes from the book of Acts, which tells the true story of what happened to Jesus' followers after He went back to heaven. Invite them to turn to Acts 16. Split kids into pairs and give each group a map. Read the story once through first, then on the second reading, kids will find the name of each location on the map and number them as you read. After you finish, kids can draw a line connecting the numbers. Encourage kids to use a colored marker for this part.

Turn to Page 3 of this guide and help kids understand the context of this passage. Then discuss the following:

Notes! Have kids turn to the Notes Pages on the back of the Coloring Sheet and write the Scripture and any words that stand out to them.

- **What are some ways the Holy Spirit helped Paul?** (*changed his heart, guided him, gave him power to tell people about Jesus, showed him where to go, guided him to Lydia, opened Lydia's heart*)
- **How did the Holy Spirit help Paul know where to travel next?** (*through a vision—a special picture from God—that showed a man from Macedonia begging Paul to come there and help them*)
- **One way the Holy Spirit led Paul was through a vision. What are some ways the Holy Spirit might lead you?**
- **What are some ways the Holy Spirit helps you?**
- **How do you need the Holy Spirit to help you this week?** (*Kids might give suggestions such as "with my math homework," but consider guiding them to character-based responses such as "being kind to my sibling" or "being gentle with my pet."*)

"God works through the Holy Spirit to help all His children, including you and me. He wants to help us tell others about Jesus, but He also wants to help us grow in the fruit of the Spirit (see Galatians 5:22–23). This means the Holy Spirit helps us be full of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Let's pray together, asking the Holy Spirit to work in us and through us."

Prayer Time: Older Kids

Invite kids to share some of their prayer requests with the group. Take time to pray together, allowing kids to pray aloud for one another. Close in prayer by thanking God for working through the Holy Spirit to help us.

Leader Tip: For Older Kids: Kids might be nervous to pray out loud. Give them a structure for what to say by starting with a very simple prayer, and encourage them to try a short prayer out loud. For example: **God, thank You for my friend. Please help her show kindness to her little brother. In Jesus' name, Amen.** Even if a child's out-loud prayer is rough, always affirm them for praying and never criticize their attempt!

PAUSE for Large Group time, then continue...

Responding in Worship: Watercolor Map Painting

SUPPLIES: cardstock, dry watercolor paints (1 set per 3–4 kids), paintbrushes (1 per kid), cups of water (1 per 3–4 kids)

RESOURCES: blank piece of cardstock (1 per kid), [Holy Spirit Our Helper Elementary Spotify playlist](#)

Only set out the dry watercolor paints and paintbrushes (not the cups of water). Hold up a copy of Paul's Journeys Map Sheet. Refer to the map from SG Discussion.

"This map shows the part of the world where Paul traveled as he told people about Jesus. Let's paint something from our story together! You can recreate the map, a picture of a flame, or any part of today's story on your paper!"

Allow the kids to notice they can't paint the map with the supplies in front of them.

Wow, I guess we need something else to help us paint. What do we need? Pause for answers. **Yes, we need water! Now let's imagine that we are like these watercolor paints.** Hold up a set of dry watercolor paints. **How might the Holy Spirit be like the water?** Hold up a cup of water. Then allow kids to think and share their ideas.

Good thoughts! Yes, just like we need water to paint effectively, we need the Holy Spirit's help to effectively be who God made us to be and do what He has for us to do! We cannot use watercolor paints without water, and we cannot live the good life God has for us without help from the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit helped Paul do what God asked him to do, and the Holy Spirit helps us live our daily lives as well."

Set out the cups of water and allow kids to paint however they like. As they work, play music from the [Holy Spirit Our Helper Elementary Spotify playlist](#) and encourage kids to think about how God might work through the Holy Spirit in their lives. If kids are curious about the order of Paul's journey, refer back to Acts 16:6–15 and help them draw arrows from place to place on their maps.

Leader Tip: For Older Kids. If you paint an area with water then add watercolors while it's still wet, the color fills up the entire watery area. Show kids this art technique, then remind them that Paul was able to preach to Lydia because she was already praying at the river with friends. The Holy Spirit helps us connect with what He's already doing, making us more effective.