



2.20.11/Acts 11:19-26

Materials

String

- One long piece (long enough for each child to grab on to)
- Several smaller pieces (long enough for two to three children to grab on to)

Opening Activity

Have the kids stand in a circle. Allow each child in the circle to grab onto the long string. Explain to the children that the church is much like the circle and that Jesus represents the string that binds them together as one. Next have them try to “scatter” around the room and still hold onto the string. They will find that they are not able to “scatter” and still hold onto the same string. Explain to them that this is what happened to the church in Syria. Now give every third child a smaller piece of string. Have the children that are near them grab onto a smaller piece of string that is near them. Now the children should be in groups of two to three children. Explain to the children that even though they are scattered they are still connected by the string that represents Jesus.

Discussion

Read Acts 11: 19-26. Explain to the children that the church in Syria “scattered” because of a “persecution.” The disciples were “persecuted” because they believed that Jesus Christ was God’s son. They were also going to different towns and telling people about Jesus. There were leaders of these towns that did not believe what they were saying was true. So the leaders were very mean to the disciples. One man named Stephen was killed because he preached to people that Jesus was God’s son. Even though the disciples scattered they did not stop telling people about how Jesus died for everyone’s sins. Acts 11:21 says, “The power of the Lord was upon them, and large numbers of the Gentiles believed and turned to the Lord.” The power of the Lord is like the string you held onto even though you had been scattered. Their faith allowed them to continue telling others about Jesus even though they had been persecuted and scattered.

In Acts 11:24 it tells us about a disciple named Barnabas that “was a good man, full of faith and the Spirit.” The Spirit is like also that string we held on to earlier. All the believers had the God’s Spirit living in them. Because Barnabas was full of faith and the Spirit the people he told about Jesus believed him and “great numbers were added daily” to the disciples. Now more people have Jesus’ Spirit living in them because of the disciples’ faith.

Application Questions / Prayer

Scripture Connection

- 1) How does it make you feel to know that disciples were persecuted for telling others about Jesus?
 - a. *Try to encourage the children to explain why they feel that way and what makes them feel that way. Then, explain how Jesus was persecuted on our behalf so that we could be saved and that when we follow Him, we will be in the same position, suffering so that someone else can know about Christ.*
- 2) Why do you think the disciples scattered?
 - a. *The disciples scattered because they were afraid for their safety. We can see that when they scattered they did not give up on telling people about Jesus. They continued telling the Gentiles about Jesus in the towns they scattered to. In Matthew 12:14-15 Jesus also left an area because the Pharisees were planning to kill him. Explain to the children that Jesus and the disciples did not leave an area because they were scared. Through faith and the Spirit the Lord actually used their leaving as a way to tell people about Jesus.*
- 3) What characteristics does Barnabas have that pleased God? How was he able to have these characteristics?



- a. *Acts 11:24 describes Barnabas as a "good man, full of faith and the Spirit." He had these characteristics because he followed Jesus, who gives us His Spirit when we believe that He is Lord and that God raised Him from the dead (Romans 10:9).*
- 4) How can your faith in God help you tell others about God's love?
 - a. *Hebrews 11:1-2 says that faith "is the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen. It is the evidence of things we cannot yet see. God gave his approval to people in days of old because of their faith."*
 - b. *Hebrews 11 gives several examples of people who lived by faith:*
 - i. *Noah – built an ark to save his family from a flood that had not yet happened. He was warned by God.*
 - ii. *Abraham – obeyed God and left his home to go to another land God had for him that he had not yet seen. He did not even know where he was going.*
 - iii. *Moses – chose to give up his easy life to lead the Jewish people out of Egypt to their freedom.*
 - iv. *You may want to have the children pretend they are one of these people in Hebrews 11 you have discussed. Have them describe how they feel and tell what they are thinking about.*
 - c. *It is the assurance that God's promises will come true and that we should not stop living our life for God just because of what the people of the world will think of us or do to us.*

Wrap Up

Remind the children that we must have faith in God regardless of our circumstances in life. We must remember the promise and truth from God. Close in prayer with a confession time (individually, or as a group, depending on everyone's comfort level). Acknowledge that on our own we will always fall short of God's standard of perfection. Thank God for His plan of redemption, and for His mercy that saves us from the judgment that we all deserve. If someone in the group would like to know more about what it means to believe that Jesus is Lord and that He came back to life to save us, encourage them to ask their parents to tell them more about this!