



GOALS

Through this session students will...

- Track how well the apostles understood and applied Jesus' teachings
- Consider their own level of understanding of Jesus' teaching
- Begin to understand the importance of the Spirit's work in the lives of Jesus' followers

MATERIALS: Group

- Whiteboard and markers
- Scripture/emoji "stickers"
- "Tracking the Apostles" diagram

MATERIALS: Each Student

- Student journal pages for Session 5
- Session 5 Scripture sheets
- A Bible and pen (Students should bring their own Bibles. You can decide if you would like them to use a physical Bible or a Bible app like, "YouVersion.")
- Colored pencils/highlighters

Leading Up to the Session:

As you lead middle school students, you may often find yourself asking "Do they even get it? Are they even hearing what I am saying?" If you've asked these and similar questions, this session is for you! In fact, you'll be hitting this question head on, challenging students to begin asking themselves the same question you've been asking for some time... "Do (I, we, they) get it?"

Keep your prayer team up to speed on your group's progress. Since this session is the halfway point, make sure you let them know how much you appreciate their commitment and dedication to your group, and share any spiritual victories you have experienced.

Prayer

Begin your time with prayer. Consider involving a few of your students, giving them some specific topics to pray for such as, your group's mission, God's guidance for your group, struggles that members of your group may be facing, and for the power that comes through God's Holy Spirit.

Review

As always, start with a review regarding the previous sessions.

- How did the apostles respond when Jesus asked them to follow Him?
- What were the excuses of the "prospective followers"?
- What were some of the excuses we use today when hesitating to follow Jesus?

DIGGING IN

Share in your own words:

Now that we've learned the origins of the apostles, we're going to track their walk with Christ just as we tracked Israel's relationship with God in Session 3. As we read through some Scriptures today we will be watching to see how well the Apostles "got it" when it came to Jesus' teachings.

Prior to this exercise you'll want to do the following prep:

1. Print out and cut up the Scripture passages (student sheet entitled The Disciples' "Get It" Factor) to distribute as circles/slips of paper with the Scripture on one side and the reverse side blank.

2. Create a graph chart, either on your whiteboard, a piece of poster board, or wall-sized sheet of butcher paper.
3. Collect a few Sharpie pens and tape.

Divvy out the circles/slips of Scripture passages, dividing them as equally as possible among your group. Give students a few minutes to read their passages and then use a Sharpie pen to draw on the reverse side of the paper an emoji that represents whether the apostles “got it” or not regarding Jesus’ mission. Below are simple suggestions for emojis but you may want to invite students to be more creative.

Don’t get it: frowney 😞

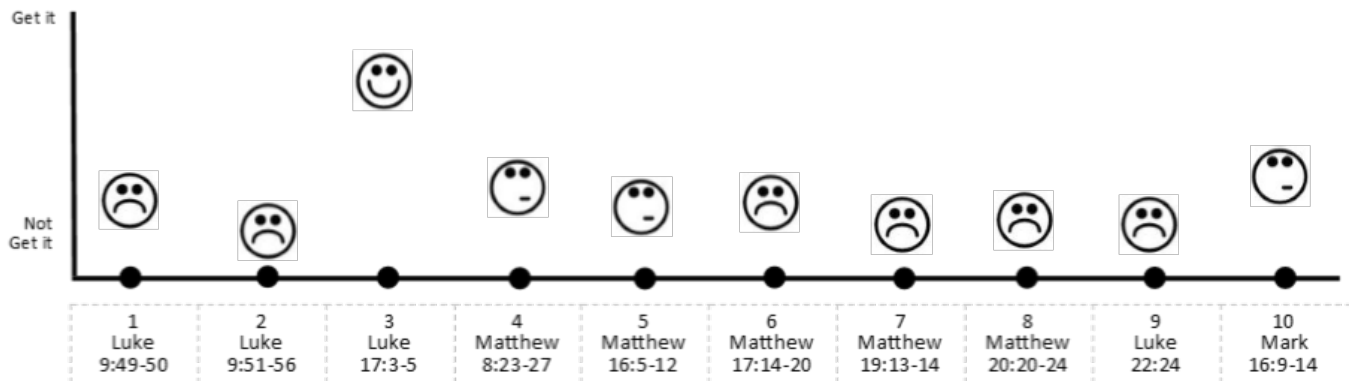
Confused/perplexed: confused 😐

Got it: smiley emoji 😊

After a few minutes, start with the Scripture labeled “1” and proceed in numeric order, asking students to give a 30-second summary of their passage. Then have them affix their emoji in the appropriate place on the chart. As emojis are affixed, invite students to use the chart on their journal pages to track the journey of the disciples.

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Luke 9:49-50 | 6. Matthew 17:14-20 |
| 2. Luke 9:51-56 | 7. Matthew 19:13-14 |
| 3. Luke 17:3-5 | 8. Matthew 20:20-24 |
| 4. Matthew 8:23-27 | 9. Luke 22:24 |
| 5. Matthew 16:5-12 | 10. Mark 16:9-14 |

Your chart may look something like this:



TAKING IT INWARD

After you have completed the above exercise, take some time to discuss the questions below. Reinforce the point that, although the descriptions don’t sound too positive, the apostles struggled with many of the same things we all do. Remind your group that we have been entrusted by Jesus with the same mission that He entrusted to the Apostles.

When you take a test in school, you usually receive a grade based upon how well you understood the material you are tested on. Thinking about the disciples’ level of understanding of Jesus’ and His teachings, what grade would you give them and why?

You’ll see a list of descriptions on your journal page under Digging In. Choose a word from the list that best describes the apostle’s understanding of Jesus’ teaching/mission according to the verses we just read.

What do you think kept Jesus from giving up on them at times like this?


How would you compare our group to the apostles with regard to understanding the gospel and the mission of Jesus?

DIGGING DEEPER

Share in your own words:

Imagine that you were going away for a long time. When you're saying your good-byes to the people closest to you (family, friends, significant other), what types of things would you share with them? Would you discuss important things, or things like the weather, sports scores, and gossip?

Share that when we know we are about to leave someone we care about for a long time, we discuss important things. In a similar way Jesus took the opportunity to have a lengthy discussion with His disciples in the week before His death; this conversation revealed a great deal about the confidence that He had in those men. Obviously Jesus' confidence wasn't in the fact that He had assembled an all-star team of followers, but rather, His confidence was in the fact that the "gift" His Father was about to send (The Holy Spirit) would change these men in ways they couldn't have imagined.

Ask your group to think of a symbol they can use to denote the Holy Spirit (e.g., a bird/dove, fire, ghost). Invite volunteers to draw their suggestions on your board. Here's an example for a simple bird/dove: 

After deciding on a symbol, instruct your group to read through the passages noted on their journal pages under Digging Deeper. Invite students to draw the symbol over any references to the Holy Spirit in these passages, including any pronouns and any titles.

You know best how your group might want to experience these passages. If you feel like your middle school students are capable of working individually, invite them to move to a place of solitude. Or maybe small, adult-led groups work better. Or you may want to work as a group.

After a few minutes of exploring the passages, ask students to look at what they marked and tell you two types of information:

- 1. What titles did you find for the Holy Spirit?**
- 2. What are the top two actions of the Holy Spirit you'd like in your life?**

Write their responses on your board and invite students to write them in the space provided on their journal pages. Your chart will look similar to below, but don't worry if it's not as detailed.

The Holy Spirit

Scripture	Titles/Descriptions
John 14:15-17	-TITLE: Advocate TITLE: Spirit of Truth <i>-help you</i> <i>-be with you forever</i> <i>-He lives with you</i> <i>-will be in you</i>
John 14:25-26	<i>TITLE: Advocate</i> <i>TITLE: Holy Spirit</i> <i>-Father will send</i> <i>-will teach</i> <i>-will remind you</i>
Acts 1:4-8	<i>-Gift the Father has promised</i> <i>-Will baptize</i> <i>-Will give power</i> <i>-Will come on them</i>

TAKING IT INWARD

Help students understand what these actions of the Holy Spirit might look like when applied to our own lives. For instance, what are some ways the Holy Spirit might work to guide us to truth in our own lives? How would our lives be different if we lived in the power promised in Acts 1?

The questions below are noted on students' journal pages. Invite students to answer each question (or choose one or two for them to answer) and then discuss as a group.

What do the titles tell you about the Holy Spirit?

Do you think about the role of the Holy Spirit in your life? If not, do you view The Spirit as more of a "silent partner" in the Trinity?

How can the Holy Spirit help our group accomplish the mission that God has called us to?

Thinking back to the characteristics of the Holy Spirit that we just discussed, can you think of any that might be able to help you through a struggle you are having right now? How so?

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

Reinforce the things you have discussed with your group by closing with the following questions:

Based upon what you have learned about the Holy Spirit from Jesus in this session...

What is one thing that you need from the Holy Spirit to help you accomplish what God has called you to do?

What is one thing that our group needs from the Holy Spirit to help us accomplish the mission God has called us to?

After you have allowed time for your group to work through their responses to these questions, challenge students to commit to praying for the Holy Spirit to work through the group and empower you with the abilities and skills necessary to accomplish the mission that God has called you to. Since prayer is the conduit for the Holy Spirit's work in our lives, encourage students to pray daily throughout the week. Below are a few ideas that you can implement to remind students to pray. Suggest any of these but also be sure to tap into the creativity of your students. They may have better ideas. And be sure to share them with us at facebook.com/InWordResources.

- **Decide on a specific time each day for everyone to pray. Make it easy to remember like 4:04 p.m. (encourage students to set alarms on their cell phones).**
- **Send out a group text reminding students to pray. There are a host of apps that can assist you in this, and can even become part of your youth ministry toolbox. (Apps like GroupMe can make this type of communication easy).**
- **Give students a sticker they can affix to their cell phone. Each time they look at their phones they will be reminded to pray.**
- **Encourage your students to meet together a couple minutes before school begins each day and pray together.**
- **Give students a prayer journal (or create one) and ask them to record their prayers for an entire week. (This could be the beginning of a spiritual discipline that they carry with them for a lifetime.)**

After choosing an idea (or ideas) to implement, invite students to write the plan on their journal pages under Putting Into Practice.

Close out your time together by reminding students of the power of prayer. Remind them that no great spiritual movement or mission has ever succeeded without people surrounding it in prayer. Encourage them to see how important prayer is to the mission that God has called your group to.

Kick off a week of prayer by asking students to pray as you end your time together. If time allows you can encourage each student to say a prayer, even if it is only a few words. Remind them that prayer doesn't have to be eloquent to be effective. Sometimes the simplest prayers can be the most meaningful and effective!