

Paul Teaches in Athens



Acts 17:16-31



Worship Theme:



God is alive.

Weaving Faith Into Life:



Children will worship God because he is alive in their lives.

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
<p>1 Let's Praise God! (up to 25 minutes)</p>	<p>Sing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "You Gave" (John 14:19b) • "Power Shuffle" • "My Hope Is in the Lord" • "This Little Light of Mine" • "I Have Been Crucified" (Galatians 2:20) • "Be Strong in the Lord" (Ephesians 6:10) 	<p>KidsOwn Worship Kit: KidsOwn Worship DVD</p> <p>Classroom Supplies: Video equipment, rock, "gold" item, piece of wood</p>

Preschool

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
<p>2 Let's Learn the Point! (up to 25 minutes)</p>	<p>The One and Only Use building blocks to understand the Bible story.</p>	<p>Classroom Supplies: Blocks</p>
	<p>* Lively Worship Use their bodies and voices to praise God because he is alive.</p>	
	<p>Celebration Snacks Make a snack that says thank you to God.</p>	<p>Classroom Supplies: Graham crackers, paper plates, frosting, craft sticks, napkins, small bowls with toppings and spoons, wet wipes or hand sanitizer</p>

Elementary

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
2 Let's Learn the Point! <i>(up to 25 minutes)</i>	* The Living God Learn how Paul helped the people of Athens abandon their idols and embrace the living God.	Classroom Supplies: Small paper sack, items to represent what people idolize (see Easy Prep for Leaders), books, 1 stone per child
	The Work of His Hands Create choreography to praise God.	KidsOwn Worship Kit: <i>KidsOwn Worship DVD</i> Classroom Supplies: Video equipment
	* Worship Mural Make a wall mural as they worship God for being alive.	KidsOwn Worship Kit: <i>KidsOwn Worship DVD</i> Classroom Supplies: Bible, newsprint, tape, markers, video equipment

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
3 Let's Pray! <i>(up to 10 minutes)</i>	The Offering Offer their gifts to God.	Classroom Supplies: Offering bowls
	Sticker Prayers Add decorative stickers to the Worship Mural as they praise God because he's alive.	Classroom Supplies: Stickers, mural from "Worship Mural" activity
	Good News Sing a prayer song to God.	KidsOwn Worship Kit: <i>KidsOwn Worship DVD</i> Classroom Supplies: Video equipment

* Starred activities can be used successfully with preschool and elementary children together.

Customize your session to fit your needs. You can separate preschoolers and elementary children for Let's Learn the Point! Or, if you keep the children all together for the entire worship session, we suggest you choose from the starred activities.

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Again, a lot has happened since last week's lesson. Not long after Stephen's stoning, Jesus met Saul on the road to Damascus and Saul realized that, in his zealous spiritual fervor for his faith, he had been persecuting the followers of the very One his faith pointed him to. So Saul quickly became the outspoken follower of Jesus that we know today as the Apostle Paul. Some suggest that Saul was his Jewish name, but that after he became a Christian he changed his name to Paul. In reality, however, "Paul" is simply the Greek version of the name "Saul," and as Paul ministered among non-Jews, he was referred to by the Greek name.

Following Paul's conversion experience, he preached about Christ everywhere he went, and he traveled a lot! He was persecuted numerous times for his faith, even escaping from prison once. His missionary travels included trips with Barnabas, Silas, and Timothy, and he covered much of Greece and what is now Turkey.

Today's Bible passage finds Paul waiting for Silas and Timothy to join him in Athens. But rather than sit and relax, Paul toured the city and was troubled by the false worship he saw. So he chose to stay and discuss the truth of God with the religious philosophers.

The two types of philosophers Paul debated were almost exact opposites. The Epicureans taught that people couldn't connect with the gods at all and that, as a result, there was no reason to seek moral good. Instead their highest value was pleasure. This view resulted in an overemphasis on sensuality. The Stoics, on the other hand, saw God as the sum of everything important: logic and reason. But they saw God as distant—so that no one could have a personal relationship with him. Emotions were to be denied, and personal discipline and morality were highly valued.

In his speech, Paul connected with a fear the Greeks had: They didn't want to accidentally offend any god by failing to recognize and worship it. So they erected altars and sacrificed to the unknown god—among all their "known" gods—just to be sure that they weren't leaving any god out and bringing calamity upon themselves as a result. Paul addressed their unknown god by proclaiming the true God.

Paul didn't stop connecting with what the people knew after that. We see that he even quoted from two ancient poets of the region: Epimenides and Aratus (Acts 17:28). Paul quoted these poets in an effort to connect the true story of God with the stories the people already knew about their false gods. Paul was totally convinced that the God he served was the only true God, the creator of heaven and earth, the all-powerful One who needed nothing from humans but reached out and gave us what we needed: salvation through the death and resurrection of God's Son, Jesus Christ!

Devotion for Leaders

Friendship with Jesus is so wonderful that Jesus' friends were willing to take risks to invite others to share in that friendship. Our friendship with Jesus should drive us to take those risks as well.

Weaving Faith Into Your Life: Read through Acts 17:16-31. Keep an eye out for how each group of people was different from Paul. Why was he able to love people with different beliefs instead of being content to judge them? In your life, who lives according to values radically different from yours? How can you show Jesus' love to that person?

Why We Worship for Leaders

Our God is a real, living, personal God—not a human creation of wood or stone, not a metaphysical understanding or presence, not simply a power or a force. Our God is one who personally designs, controls, and interacts with the entire universe. He has proven himself through the life, death, and resurrection of his Son, Jesus. That is good news. It's good news because it's true! It's good news because God is alive and real.

Use this session to remind kids that God is real and alive and at work in their lives. Help them understand that there is no God like ours, who is without beginning and without end. Lead them in joyfully worshipping our Creator, our Savior, and our friend. He is worthy of it.

Easy Prep for Leaders

Let's Praise God!

- Make sure your video equipment is ready.
- Collect a rock, a piece of wood, and something that looks like gold or silver. Put the items in the worship area.

The Living God—Collect several small items that represent what people generally pay a lot of attention to, such as money, time, jewelry, and fame. You might use coins, dollar bills, pictures of famous people, and a watch. Add as many items as you'd like. Place all the items in a small lunch sack, and set the sack in the elementary area with a stack of books. Set up a pile of small stones. You'll need one stone for each child.

Worship Mural—Tape a large piece of newsprint or poster board to a wall. The paper needs to be large enough for all the children to draw or write on it. Set markers nearby. You'll need at least one marker per child.

Preschool Activities—Refer to the preschool pages for preparations.

1 Let's Praise God!

Play KidsOwn Worship music videos as children arrive. Designate greeters to welcome children at the entrance. Have the greeters shake hands with the children and greet each one by name. When everyone has arrived, gather children in your worship area to begin worship.


Say **Hello, everyone! Welcome! We're here today to celebrate that God sent Jesus for us!**

 Sing "You Gave" (John 14:19b).


Say **It's good news that Jesus was born, died on the cross, came back to life, and is coming again soon. It's good news because it's true! It's good news because God is alive and real. Some people think that God is just a nice idea or a good feeling. Some people think God is just a powerful force. They don't realize he is a real, live being.**

Ask • What are some things you've heard people say about who God is? (That God is an idea people made up; that God is just a force in the universe.)

Say Our God is the creator of the universe. That means he's big. But he cares about even the tiniest things! He cares about you and me and about the details of what happens to us every day. He's our Savior. He's our friend! That's because he is alive. Let's sing about the love and power of our Savior.

 Sing "Power Shuffle."

Say God cares about us every minute of our lives. If we ask, God will help us with everything we do. We can hope in him.

 Sing "My Hope Is in the Lord."

Say Right now, while we're worshipping, people are worshipping God in other churches and homes throughout the world. God is changing hearts and lives. That's because he is alive and involved with us. God isn't something we just make up. He's real! So let's shine his light.

 Sing "This Little Light of Mine."

Give the rock, wood, and gold or silver items to the children. Ask children to pass them around.

Say As you pass these items around, imagine making things out of them. Now imagine praying to whatever you made and worshipping it. Sound funny and unbelievable? People all over the world worship things made out of stone and metal. We're going to hear a Bible story today about people who worshipped idols. These idols were made out of materials like this rock, wood, and gold [or silver]. Collect the items and set them aside.

Ask • Do we ever worship things made out of stone, wood, or gold [or silver]? Explain. (No, we worship God; sometimes we worship things we can see that we want.)


Say Most of you would probably answer no to that question. But think about it this way: Is something in your life more important to you than God is? For some people that something is money, for others it's toys, and for others it's friends. That's what an idol is—anything that is more important than God.

Close your eyes for a moment. (Pause.) What's most important in your life? Is it a person? a thing? a pet? a place? Now ask yourself what's more important—whatever you thought of or God? Be honest before God. Only you and he need to know. Open your eyes now.

All people and things are created. We need to make sure we worship the Creator of everything, not the stuff that's been created. Only the living Creator will truly satisfy us. Let's come to Jesus now and let him fill us up.

 Sing "I Have Been Crucified" (Galatians 2:20).

Say ▶ **Our God is a good and loving God. He is alive and real! Let's worship him for choosing us to love. As we sing, worship him with your whole heart for being a strong God who helps us be strong.**

 Sing "Be Strong in the Lord" (Ephesians 6:10).

Pray ▶ **Lord God, you are worthy of our praise! You are a powerful Savior and an awesome God. We worship you and give you all of our hearts, souls, minds, and strength. Thank you for being alive and real. We love you, Lord. In Jesus' name, amen.**

2 Let's Learn the Point!

Preschool Activities, pages 157-158

At this time, have the preschool leader invite the preschoolers to go to their own room for this section of activities. Tear out the Preschool Activities page, and give it to the preschool leader. Have the preschool leader bring the preschoolers back to participate in Let's Pray! with the older children. If you prefer to keep all the children together, do the starred (*) activities. They will work well with both elementary and preschool children.

Elementary Activities

** The Living God*

Gather the children in a circle, and place the stack of books and the sack of items in front of you. Set the stones in a pile near you.

Say ▶ **In Bible days, Athens was a famous Greek city. The people of Athens loved to talk about religion and important ideas. Open one of the books and pretend to study it. Studying and learning were very important to them. They also made many idols and worshipped and prayed to those idols.**

Ask ▶

- **What are idols?** (Anything people worship that's not God; statues.)
- **Why do people worship idols, or false gods?** (They don't know about God; they look for something important.)

- **What are some idols people worship today?** (Money; movie stars; music; being popular.)

Help kids realize that worshipping an idol doesn't necessarily mean bowing down, singing, or praying to it. It means spending more time and paying more attention to created things rather than God, the creator.

Show kids your paper sack.

Say I brought some idols with me today. When I pull out an item, I want you to tell me how it might be an idol and why people might spend more time paying attention to that thing than to God. For example, if I pull out a dollar bill, you could say that it's an idol because people spend a lot of time trying to earn money instead of focusing on God because they rely on being rich.

Pull out the items one at a time, and give kids time to talk about each item.

- Ask**
- **What's wrong with worshipping idols?** (We would forget to worship God; idols can't really help anyone.)
 - **What do you think Paul did when he saw the idols the Athenians worshipped?** (He felt bad for people; he told the people not to worship them.)

Say The Bible says that the people even worshipped one object that said, "To an unknown god." When Paul traveled to Athens and saw all the idols, he was upset. When he saw the one to the unknown god, he knew that the unknown god was really the true, living God and that he was supposed to tell the Athenians about God.

- Ask**
- **What do we know about God that we could tell other people?** (God loves people; God made people; God forgives our sins.)

Say Paul told the people that God created the world and everything in it. He explained that God sent his Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for our sins. Paul explained that God proved he is God when he raised Jesus from the dead. He explained that God is not like silver or gold or stone—not an image made by man's design and skill. Paul told the Athenians that they needed to repent and believe in the true living God.

Many of the people listened to Paul and became Christians. But that meant getting rid of their idols. Put away all the items except the stones. Some were happy to do that; some were not.

But God is alive, and he is much better than any created thing.

Point out the stones.

Say During worship today, we closed our eyes and thought about whether or not there are things in our lives that are more important to us than God. Come and take a stone. Then find a place in the room to sit quietly and think some more about what's most important in your life. Wait while everyone takes a stone and moves to a private spot.

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Worship Theme:



God is alive.

Easy Prep for Leaders

Celebration Snacks—Gather graham crackers, paper plates, craft sticks or plastic knives, frosting, napkins, and a variety of toppings, such as mini M&M'S candies, grated coconut, and colored sprinkles. Put the toppings in separate small bowls with spoons.

Using Theo

Consider using Theophilus the FaithRetriever puppet today in these ways:

- Have Theo lead the preschoolers from the main worship area to the preschool room.
- Have Theo participate in the worship during “Lively Worship.”
- See the KidsOwn Worship Kit for a puppet skit written for today’s worship session.



The One and Only

Gather children in a circle in the story area. Put building blocks in the center, and instruct children to build something with the blocks. They can work individually or with one another. After about one minute, have everyone stop building.

Say Look at the cool stuff you made! Do you like the things you built? I do. Would you ever pray to them or talk to them? No, we wouldn’t do that!

But long ago, the Apostle Paul went to a city called Athens to tell the people about Jesus. He discovered something that made him sad. The people in Athens had built things out of stone, wood, and metal—and they were worshipping what they built! They thought the things they made were gods!

Let’s take our towers down to show that things we make are not God. Now let’s push them in a nice big pile in the middle of our circle and say, “There’s only one God.” (Pause.)

Paul told the people about the one true God. Take one block and set it in front of you to show there’s only one true God. (Pause.) Paul told people to be sorry for doing wrong things. Put a block on top of the first one to show that Paul told them to say they’re sorry. (Pause.) Then Paul told them that Jesus died and then came back to life. They didn’t know that! Put a third block on top of the others. Keep them in a nice straight line. (Pause.)

What shape does your tower make? It makes the number one, which stands for the one true God! Let’s clap and thank God for being the one true God! Let’s thank him because he is alive!

Lead the children in clapping and thanking God.

Preschool Activities

* Lively Worship

Say It's time to praise God because he is alive!

- Ask**
- What are some ways we can use our bodies to praise the Lord?
 - What are some ways we can use our voices to praise the Lord?

Say Let's try some of those right now!

Have volunteers lead everyone in worshipping God in the ways the children mentioned. If they need help, suggest things such as hopping and singing, "I love you, Lord!" or dancing and laughing and saying, "God is alive!" Encourage them to combine body and voice at the same time. Be sure to join in to help foster feelings of joy and love for the Lord.

Celebration Snacks

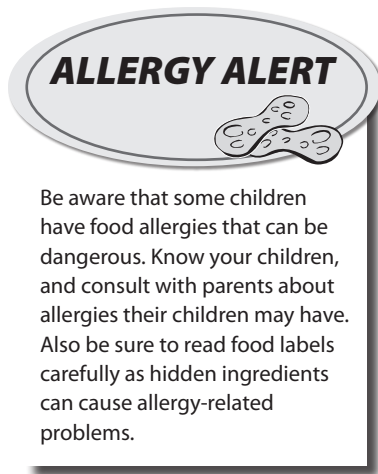
Have children wash their hands. Then give each child a napkin and a paper plate with one or two graham crackers, a spoonful of frosting, and a craft stick.

Say We've been celebrating today that God is alive. Snacks are a fun way to celebrate, so let's make a yummy snack to tell Jesus we love him.

Have children begin spreading frosting on their crackers as you begin the discussion.

Ask • How do you know God is alive?

If children need help answering, get them started by mentioning things in creation, such as the sun rising every morning, the stars shining at night, and our moms



ALLERGY ALERT

Be aware that some children have food allergies that can be dangerous. Know your children, and consult with parents about allergies their children may have. Also be sure to read food labels carefully as hidden ingredients can cause allergy-related problems.

and dads who love us. Also mention spiritual things, such as forgiveness, healing, and help in doing good.

Set the small bowls of toppings in the center of the table.

Say Those are great ways to know that God is alive! Now let's turn the things you said into thank-you prayers. Let's thank God for something, then we'll all add one topping. Then we'll thank him again and add some more! You could say, "Thank you, God, for being alive," "Thank you, God, for helping me," or "Thank you, God, for loving me." Let's begin.

Continue until the crackers are full, and then celebrate and eat!


(continued from page 156)

Say Close your eyes now and feel that stone in your hand. Think of whatever in your life is most important to you. The stone represents what you thought of. Now talk to God. Give him what you thought of, and make God number one in your life. If this is hard for you, tell God that it's hard and then ask him to help you. If God is already number one in your life, thank him for loving you and ask him to help you know him better.

Now let's bring the stones to the table and make one pile with them to signify that God is the one and only living God.

The Work of His Hands

Say God is alive, and he created everything around us. We don't need manmade gods because we have the true, eternal God living in us!

 Play "The Work of His Hands" (Psalm 19:1) and have kids follow the motions. Then play it again and have kids freestyle motions.

Say It's good to celebrate the fact that God is our creator. Let's learn why it's so important that we have a living God.

** Worship Mural*

Say What makes our God different from the gods of other religions is the fact that Jesus died for our sins and then came back to life. The Resurrection proves that God is alive.

Some people don't believe that Jesus actually came back to life. Some people who lived when Jesus was on earth thought the Resurrection was a hoax. They thought Jesus' friends stole his body. But Jesus appeared to his disciples several times after he rose from the dead. Those appearances prove that Jesus came back to life. Let's look at a Bible passage that also shows that Jesus really was alive again after he had died.

Have volunteers take turns reading 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 aloud.

Ask


- How does it help to know that all these people saw Jesus alive after he died on the cross? (We can know it's true.)
- Why is the Resurrection so important to Christianity? (It means Jesus has power over death; it means Jesus is alive to help us every day.)

Ask • **What is some evidence in your life that God is alive?** (Jesus helped me not be afraid when I started at a new school; Jesus answered my prayer when my dog was lost.)

Say **Because Jesus rose from the dead, we know he is God. God is alive! And he wants to be involved in your life and in mine. On the wall is the beginning of a worship mural. We'll use it to worship God because he is alive.** Give each child a marker, and have extra markers available at the mural.

Think of something that is evidence to you that God is alive. It could be spectacular, such as someone being healed or someone becoming a Christian. It might be something not as noticeable, such as a change in a bad attitude or choosing to obey our parents or an answered prayer. It could be something as simple as the sunrise at dawn or blustery storms in the spring. It could be something that you heard about in the news.

All those things are evidence that God is alive and working in our lives. When you think of something, come up to the mural and draw a picture or write words that describe what you're thinking of. As you work, thank God for being alive.

 Play "My Hope Is in the Lord" as kids work.

Say **After Jesus came back to life, his disciples risked their lives because they knew that God is alive. They knew it was OK to die for what they believed because they were absolutely sure that they would be with God in heaven.**

Hundreds of people joined them in starting the church. We're part of this church today because we believe in the living God. This is further evidence that God is alive!

Extra Impact

If preschoolers are not a part of the "Worship Mural" activity, "Sticker Prayers" would be a great time to ask them how they know God is alive. You'll be blessed by the answers they give! Allow the elementary kids to share, as well.

3 Let's Pray!

The Offering

Say **Another way to show that we're thankful that God is alive is to bring our offerings. Giving an offering is a way to acknowledge to God that all we have comes from him and that all we have belongs to him. When we give God some of our money, we're giving him something that's important to us. That honors God. As you bring your offering today, tell him you're glad he's alive.**

Take the offering.

Sticker Prayers


Gather children near the mural from the "Worship Mural" activity. Ask several of the kids to share about the things they drew or wrote on it. Then give each child one or two decorative stickers, such as stars, hearts, or smiley faces.

Say There are so many ways we can see God alive and at work in our lives every day. Be sure to look for others this week and then give praise to God. I'm going to choose someone to be the praise leader. When the praise leader taps you on the shoulder, say, "I praise you for..." and finish the sentence. Then put your sticker on the mural.

Choose a praise leader to tap children on the shoulder. To keep the activity moving, encourage the praise leader to tap another child as soon as one finishes praying. If the preschoolers had their own Let's Learn the Point! activities, prompt them to think of things they talked about in their discussion.

Good News

Say As we close our worship time, let's sing "The Work of His Hands" (Psalm 19:1). As we sing, try to sing the song as a prayer—as if you're talking to God.

 Sing "The Work of His Hands" (Psalm 19:1).

After the song, lead children in clapping and cheering to celebrate God.

Pray Thank you, Lord, because you're alive! We praise you today and thank you for being powerful and mighty. Thank you for being involved in our lives. You are the God who loves us and takes care of us! We love you, Lord. In Jesus' name, amen.