

YEAR A | QUARTER 2

5

Strangers Among Us

Community
We experience God's love in our church.

POWER TEXT

"No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are" (Acts 15:11).

KEY REFERENCES

- Acts 15:1-19
- *The Acts of the Apostles*, chap. 19, pp. 188-200
- *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 10, pp. 76-78
- Student story on page 62 of this guide

OUR BELIEFS

- No. 5, The Holy Spirit
- No. 12, The Church
- No. 14, Unity in the Body of Christ

OBJECTIVES

The students will:

- **Know** that they can help others know about God who loves everyone, regardless of cultural differences.
- **Feel** led by God to be accepting of others.
- **Respond** by loving and accepting others the way God loves and accepts them.

POWERPOINT

We follow Jesus' example when we love and accept others.

The Bible Lesson at a Glance

As Paul works with new believers every day he realizes that the church often asks converts to adopt cultural differences before they can accept spiritual truths. Paul feels led by God to accept people within the context of their culture, and he knows that God's love is the most important thing he can share with them.

The Holy Spirit leads the Jerusalem Council to accept Paul's new approach to evangelism.

This is a lesson about community.

To reach others, we must accept and love them as they are, where they are, and lead them from there to Jesus. Paul's approach to evangelism establishes a successful evangelistic strategy for us today. Accepting and loving others is a part of honoring God.

Teacher Enrichment

"The Jewish converts generally were not inclined to move as rapidly as the providence of God opened the way. From the result of the apostles' labors among the Gentiles it was evident that the converts among the latter people would far exceed the Jewish converts in number. The Jews feared that if the restrictions and ceremonies of their law were not made obligatory upon the Gentiles as a condition of church fellowship, the national peculiarities of the Jews, which had hitherto kept them distinct from all other people, would finally disappear from among those who received the gospel message" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 189).

With whom in my life have I experienced the tension of cultural differences? What are some ways I can learn to accept those differences? How can I meet people where they are without compromising what I believe?

Welcome

Welcome students at the door and direct them to their seats. Ask them how their week has been. Encourage learners to study their Sabbath School lesson regularly, and use several minutes to debrief students on the previous week's lesson. Ask: **What was the most interesting part of the Bible story? What activity did you find the most helpful? Which activity was the most fun?** Invite students to share their experiences and/or the handiworks they created for Sabbath School during the week. (The leader should be familiar with the previous lesson to be able to direct the discussion.) This is also a good time to have students recite the power text.

Have students begin the Readiness Activity of your choice.

Program notes

LESSON SECTION	MINUTES	ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS NEEDED
Welcome	Ongoing	Greet students at the door. Ask about their week.	
1 Readiness	10-15	A. Musical Nationalities B. Walk a Mile in My Shoes	Christian music from one or two different cultures, paper, pencils, world map (optional) paper, pen
* Prayer & Praise	15-20	See page 57. Prayer & Praise may be used at any time during the program.	songbooks, world map, pushpins, gift box with slit, colored strips of paper, glue/tape/staples, pens/pencils/markers
2 Bible Lesson	15-20	Introducing the Bible Story Experiencing the Story Exploring the Bible	six copies of *Net Kids* script (p. 150) Bibles Bibles, white/chalkboard, markers/chalk
3 Applying the Lesson	10-15	*Scenarios*	
4 Sharing the Lesson	10-15	*Where They Are*	activity sheet (p. 151), pens/pencils
* Closing		A. Prayer and closing comments B. Reminder to parents C. Coming up next week	

1

READINESS ACTIVITIES

Select the activity or activities that are most appropriate for your situation.

A

YOU NEED:

- ☐ Christian music from one or two different cultures
- ☐ paper
- ☐ pencils
- ☐ optional: world map

Musical Nationalities

Divide the students into small groups. Have each group appoint a scribe. Give the scribes a pencil and paper.

Say: **There are many different kinds of people in the world. I am going to play some Christian (or other appropriate) music from a different culture, and while it is playing, your scribe is to write down as many nationalities as your group can think of. When the music stops, you must stop.**

Start the music and let students begin their lists. (i.e., Nigerian, Irish, Japanese, Spanish, Australian.)

After you stop the music, have the students tally their lists. Check which group has the longest list of nationalities. Ask that group to listen as each of the other groups reads their list. Ask them to add to their original list any new nationalities that they hear read. (Students may enjoy finding on a world map where each of the nationalities originates.)

Debriefing

Ask: **How do you feel about music that is different from what your family plays, sings, or listens to? How many people whose nationalities are on the list do you know personally? How does their culture differ from yours? What are the similarities between their culture and yours? What is the good news about how God treats people regardless of their nationality? Is one nationality more ready to be saved than another? Let's say together our power text, Acts 15:11,**

"No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are" (Acts 15:11).

Say: **Our power point this week is:**

We follow Jesus' example when we love and accept others.

Accommodations for students with special needs

Allow students who experience difficulty with writing and spelling to answer orally, while another group member records their answers in writing.

B

YOU NEED:

- ☐ paper
- ☐ pen

Walk a Mile in My Shoes

Write types of people on slips of paper (for example: women, single mothers, elderly, housewives, businesspeople, teens, homeless people/beggars, movie stars, kindergartners, university students, disabled people, sports stars, musicians). Divide the students into groups of four to six. Distribute the slips to the groups. Ask them to role-play, in pairs within their groups, the attitudes society has toward these people, how others treat them (good and bad). In each group have the students choose one role play to present to the entire group. Bring students back together to present the role plays.

Debriefing

Ask: **How did it feel to be someone everyone loves? How did it feel to be someone everyone ignores, avoids, or hates? Let's read 1 Samuel 16:7 together. When we allow the Holy Spirit to change our hearts, we will be able to love and accept those who are different from us. Let's say together our power text, Acts 15:11,**

"No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are" (Acts 15:11).

Say: **Our power point this week is:**

We follow Jesus' example when we love and accept others.

Prayer & Praise

Notes

Fellowship

Report the students' joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). If they have given you permission, share one or two special items from students' Bible study during the week. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special, warm greeting to all visitors.

Suggested Songs

"Pass It On" (*He Is Our Song*, no. 130)
"Love, Love" (*He Is Our Song*, no. 132)

Mission

YOU NEED:
- ☐ world map
- ☐ pushpins

Use Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults (go to www.juniorpowerpoints.org and click on MISSION) or another mission report available to you. Using a world map, have the students identify and mark with pushpins the location where the mission story is taking place.

Offering

YOU NEED:
- ☐ gift box with slit

Allow students to collect the money using a gift box.

Say: **God wants us to have a heart that accepts other people as He has accepted us. Let's sing "Love, Love"** (*He Is Our Song*, p. 132) **again as the gift box is passed around and the offering is collected.**

Prayer

YOU NEED:
- ☐ colored strips of paper
- ☐ glue, tape, OR staples
- ☐ pens, pencils, OR markers

Invite students to voice prayer requests, answers to prayer, and praises. Record their answers on colored strips of papers and add them to the prayer chain if you already have one in the Sabbath School class. Otherwise, start making a prayer chain. Ask a student volunteer to pray over the requests, answers to prayer, and praises that are listed on the prayer chain. Close by praying for the students' joys and sorrows, for the birthday and other special event celebrants, as well as for the visitors.

2

BIBLE LESSON

YOU NEED:

- ☐ six copies of *Net Kids* script (p. 150)

Introducing the Bible Story

***The* Net Kids**

The *Net Kids* are an imaginative way to introduce the Bible story. If you prefer not to use this imaginary element, read over the script yourself and introduce the lesson concept in your own words. (Refer to Lesson 1 for background and setup information.)

Make six copies of the *Net Kids* script found on page 150 of this guide. Distribute to the students you have selected as early as possible. Allow practice time before using this activity. Present the skit.

Debriefing

Say: **Today we are studying about disputes that arose between different groups of people in the early church. It is the Holy Spirit who empowers us to love and accept those who are different from us.**

Our power point is:

We follow Jesus' example when we love and accept others.

YOU NEED:

- ☐ Bibles

Experiencing the Story

Have student volunteers each read aloud a few verses of Acts 15:1-19.

Ask: **What were the early Christians having conflicts about?** (Whether the new non-Jewish converts to Christianity had to become Jews before they were able to become Christians.) **Do we have similar conflicts today? What are some examples?**

Say: **Get into groups of four to six and reenact this scene using a situation in our lives today** (with an adult facilitator, if possible). **This can be something happening in your home or school, in our city, state, province, region, or country.** (If students still don't understand what you're talking about, give them the following examples: immigration policies, equal pay, women in nontraditional jobs, discrimination against minorities, etc.) **Get one to three people to strongly oppose change and the others to defend it. When you are finished, be prepared to present your reenactment to the class.** (Give the students several minutes to prepare, then allow them to present their scenes.)

Debriefing

Ask: **How did it feel to be on the side opposed to changing things, to opening them up to everyone? How did it feel to be the person who was going to be shut out from having the same advantages as everyone else? Who in our city or world today is often shut out from things? How could we as a church or Sabbath School class help such people?**

Say: **Our power point this week is:**

We follow Jesus' example when we love and accept others.

3

APPLYING THE LESSON

YOU NEED:
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ chalk/markers, board

Exploring the Bible

Have the students read aloud: Exodus 22:21 ("do not mistreat . . . a foreigner"); Leviticus 19:10, 33, 34 (provide for the foreigner, "love them as yourself"); Leviticus 24:22 (have the same laws for foreigners); Psalm 146:9 ("the LORD watches over the foreigner"). List the main points of each text where all can see.

Debriefing

Ask: **What is a stranger/foreigner? What's another word for stranger?** (foreigner, different) **What special instructions did God give the Israelites about strangers? Why do you think He gave those instructions to them? Which of these instructions still apply to us? Who are strangers/foreigners in our community? How does it make you feel knowing that God loves and accepts everyone? How will knowing this change the way you treat your classmates, neighbors, and others who are different from you? Let's say together our power text, Acts 15:11:**

"No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are" (Acts 15:11).

Let's repeat the power point:

We follow Jesus' example when we love and accept others.

Accommodations for students with special needs

Have students with visual impairments sit close to the board for this activity. Alternatively, have a handout for them with the list of Bible references and the main points of the texts.

Scenarios

Read the following scenarios aloud to your students:

Jacinth is a new student at your school. She is from another country. She does not bring the same type of lunch as everyone else in your class. Some of the foods she brings do not smell like any food you are used to. You do not like the smell. Your friends also make fun of her clothes, which are a little different too.

Jacinth makes good grades and tries to be friendly, but she is left out of a lot of things because she just doesn't understand a lot about your culture and the things you and your friends have in common. You would like to get to know her, but your friends have told you that she should find friends among people like herself. They say she will never fit in with the rest of the class.

Jacinth stops you after school and tells you that her mother would like to have you and your family over for Sabbath dinner.

Debriefing

Ask: **What would you do?** (Encourage a variety of responses.) **How do you think it would feel to be a person who is different from most of those around them? How do you think it would feel to be the person who befriends that person? Have you ever known people in either of these situations? What could you do if you were faced with a similar situation to the one we just read? Let's repeat our power point:**

We follow Jesus' example when we love and accept others.

4

SHARING THE LESSON

YOU NEED:
- ☐ activity sheet (p. 151)
- ☐ pens/pencils

Where They Are

Invite students to share if they had the opportunity during the past week to interact with someone of a different nationality or someone who was different from them. Ask: **How did you interact with those who were different from you? What did you do to better understand them? How did you treat those who behaved, spoke, or believed differently than you do? What did you do to befriend them in spite of the differences among you? How did you share Jesus with them?**

Divide students into groups of four. Give each group an activity sheet (p. 151) and pencil.

Say: **When we share the good news of God's love with others, we need to try to understand and respond to their needs in culturally appropriate ways. In your groups, circle one of the characters at the top of the sheet that your group will represent. Designate one person in your group to act that way. Choose another person in your group to be the scribe (writer), one to be the reporter, and one to be the Bible researcher.**

Work together in your group to choose one verse, character, or story from Scripture that would be especially meaningful to your character and tell why you chose it. Then fill in the portion of your activity sheet, telling what kinds of Bible study would be most interesting to your character.

When the groups have finished their work, have the reporter for each group introduce their character and tell about their Bible favorites.

Debriefing

Ask: **What just happened?** (We tried to help someone learn about God's love in a way they would understand and relate to.) **How did it feel to befriend someone this way?** (We had to place ourselves in their situation; we had to accept who they were; we had to understand that God loves people who are different from us.) The Holy Spirit can enable us to accept those you are different from us.

Remember:

We follow Jesus' example when we love and accept others.

Closing

Prayer and closing comments:

Say: **Dear Lord, open our eyes to see those who are different from us. Open our hands to accept them. Open our hearts to love them as You love each one of us. Amen.**

Reminder to parents:

Say: **Check out the student Bible study guide to find Parents' Pages for your use in family worship, or however you wish to use them to spiritually guide your children. You may listen to the podcast of the lesson online at www.juniorpowerpoints.org/podcast.php?channel=1.**

Coming up next week:

Say: **We enjoy an abundant life when we surrender to Jesus. We serve others by sharing what Jesus has done for us.**

Notes

Student lesson

Strangers Among Us

Do you keep a journal? Many believe that Luke kept one. Like any good journalist, he would have interviewed lots of people. Let's imagine what Luke might have heard from a person who served Paul.

I couldn't understand why they were arguing. I thought anyone could accept and follow Jesus. Paul's servant explained that the Jews thought that the new converts had to become Jews first and follow their customs.

I strained to hear the conversation. It sounded as if they were finally agreeing on something.

"I think Paul and Barnabas should go to Jerusalem and talk to the apostles there," someone said. "Let's find out what their opinion is about this."

"That's a good idea, but some local elders should go as well," another replied.

"Good, we'll leave as soon as possible," Paul said. "We need to get this straightened out quickly."

We traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria so Paul could encourage Christians along the way. In Jerusalem the believers met us at the city gate. When Paul told them the reason for our visit, everyone agreed that a special meeting needed to be called. They set the time for several days later.

I was surprised at how many people had come to hear Paul and Barnabas. But I also knew that there were lots of people with their own ideas about Gentiles accepting Christ. They would all want to have their own say during the meeting.

Paul and Barnabas opened the meeting by telling of their first missionary journey. They told about some of the miraculous things God had done. Paul saved the most important information for last—the large number of Gentiles who were eager to listen to the gospel message and accept Jesus as their personal Savior.

"A group that came to Antioch from Jerusalem has begun to cause some problems," Paul reported. "They have started to teach and demand that our Gentile Christian brothers must first become Jews. However, such teaching is not in harmony with the gospel of Jesus."

Just as I thought it would, murmuring arose from the group.

"How can you take that kind of position?" demanded one of the leaders. "These Gentiles must submit to becoming Jews and promise they'll obey the laws of Moses before they can follow Jesus."

"Yes, he's right," a number of other voices chorused.

"We disagree," another said. "God accepts everyone who receives Jesus, His Son. The important thing is that the Gentiles hear and accept the good news about Jesus." The discussion went back and forth for a long time.

Finally, motioning for silence, Peter, one of the apostles, stood up.

"Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are" (Acts 15:7-11).

When Peter finished speaking, no one had anything more to say. Everyone listened as Paul and Barnabas told the rest of the miraculous and exciting things God had done among the Gentiles during their journeys.

Finally James rose to speak. "Brothers, listen to me," he began. "[Peter] has described to us how God first intervened to choose a people for his name from the Gentiles. The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written:

'After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things'—things known from long ago.

"It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath" (verses 13-21).

The argument was over. The Holy Spirit had brought everyone to agreement. The next step, they decided, was to elect people to take the good news back to the Gentile believers.

KEY REFERENCES

- Acts 15:1-19
- *The Acts of the Apostles*, chap. 19, pp. 188-200
- *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 10, pp. 76-78
- Our Beliefs nos. 5, 12, 14

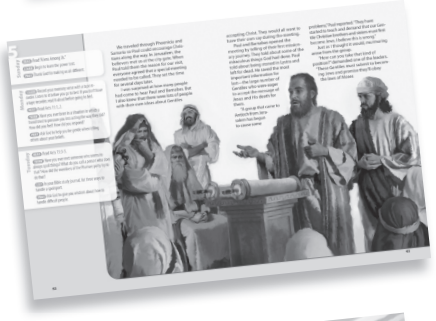
POWER TEXT

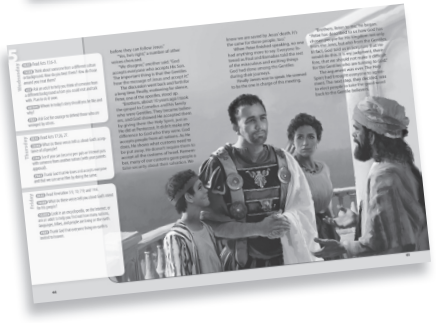
"No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are" (Acts 15:11).

POWER POINT

We follow Jesus' example when we love and accept others.







Sabbath

DO Do the activity on page 46.

Sunday

READ Read Acts 15:1, 2 and this week's lesson, "Strangers Among Us."

PRAY Thank God for creating us unique and diverse.

Monday

READ Read Acts 15:3.

THINK Why is it encouraging to share with people your conversion experience or that of others? How could telling others about how you have accepted Jesus help someone who is thinking about making that decision?

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask God to help you be gentle when telling others about your beliefs.

Tuesday

READ Read Acts 15:4.

THINK Like in the early Christian church, you are welcome in any Adventist church you may be visiting. How does that make you feel?

PLAN Plan how you will welcome visitors coming to your church when you have the opportunity.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask God to help you extend a warm welcome to all visitors who are coming to your church.

Wednesday

READ Read Acts 15:5-9.

THINK Think about someone from a different culture or background. How do you treat them? How do those around you treat them?

ASK Ask an adult to tell you of someone from a different background who is in need of help. Think about ways you could reach out to that person. Do it soon.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask God for courage to defend those who are wronged by others.

Thursday

READ Read Acts 17:26, 27.

THINK What do these verses tell us about God's acceptance of all people?

BEFRIEND Try to become friends or pen pals with someone from another culture or nation.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Thank God that He loves and accepts everyone and that we can serve Him by doing the same.

Friday

READ Read Revelation 5:9, 10; 7:9; and 14:6.

THINK What do these verses tell you about God's plans for His people from every nation?

SEARCH Look in an encyclopedia or ask an adult to help you find out how many nations, languages, tribes, and people are living on the earth.

SAY Repeat the power text from memory.

PRAY Thank God that through Jesus every human being is welcome into God's Kingdom in heaven as long as they accept God's grace and the invitation to be saved.