Dove Lesson

Starting Line
The dove has been a symbol synonymous with Christianity for centuries in two forms. To most Christians the dove has always been a symbol of peace and love. It has even been recognized as such by many secular religions, including worshippers of the Greek goddess of love, Venus. This lesson will focus on the other form: the dove as a symbol of the Holy Spirit and the affirmation given by God that He was well-pleased in His son Jesus Christ, as we will see in Luke 3:22 after the baptism of Jesus.

Finish Line
Teaching children, and even adults, about the Holy Spirit can be very challenging, but just because it is difficult does not mean we should not try to teach it. The capacity of children to understand the things of God is not determined by our teaching, but by the revelation of the Lord to them. We will touch on this, as well as spend some time dwelling on the Father’s affirmation to His son Jesus, as He communicates to Him that He is well-pleased with Him. This cannot be overstated: Children need to understand that in Christ Jesus, Father God is well-pleased with them. He is not angry with them or holding them at arm's length. Our goal is to introduce students to the Holy Spirit through scripture, and, just as importantly, help them begin to understand that God is fully pleased with them if they are in Christ Jesus.

Whistle Stops – Vocabulary
- descended
- well-pleased
- religious
- baptized
- proclaim
- Trinity
- purposes

The Right Track – Developing the Lesson through Scripture
The text for this lesson is found in Luke 3:21–22, with our main focus being v. 22. Please read both verses for your own preparation. I have presented v. 22 in two ways in the hope that children who are in various stages of learning and spiritual development will understand it. This is a tough one.

1. The Holy Spirit descended upon Him [Jesus] in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.” (NAS Bible)
2. A dove came down and landed on Jesus. The dove represented the Holy Spirit. Then suddenly a loud voice from heaven said, “Jesus, you are my son and I am so pleased with you.” (paraphrase)

All Aboard! – Main Lesson
My mom had a lot of jewelry when I was young, or at least, it seemed like she did to me. She had a particular ring she wore on her pinky finger that always confused me. It had a dove on it, of all things! I remember thinking, “Why would she wear a ring with a bird on it? I am not sure she even likes birds.” Later, I learned that the dove is a symbol that represents several religious
ideas, with two meanings in Christianity. First, it represents both peace and love. Second, the dove represents the Holy Spirit. In Luke, chapter 3, after Jesus was baptized, a dove came down and landed on Jesus. The dove represented the Holy Spirit. Instantly a voice came down from heaven and proclaimed that Jesus was the Son of God and God was “well-pleased” with His son. In this lesson, we will focus on this second meaning. It is very important that you and I have an understanding of the Holy Spirit, and that when we are in Christ, God is very pleased with us. Are you ready?

**Discussion Depot – Developing the Lesson through Questions**

Please read aloud Luke 3:21–22 to students. (For a little more background on the roles of the Holy Spirit, I encourage you to read John 15:5–16 for yourself.) It is important to remember, as well, that the Holy Spirit is fully God, one with Jesus and Father God. I have presented the passage in three ways in the hope that children who are in various stages of learning and spiritual development will understand it.

1. In Luke 3:21, when the Holy Spirit comes down on Jesus, what bird does it come down as? Do you know what a dove represents? *(love and peace)* Why is this important? Can you think of another time we see a dove in the Bible? Think about a big boat built by a guy whose name rhymes with Moah in Genesis 8. That’s right! Noah!
2. Has anyone heard of the Trinity? *(Father, Son and Holy Spirit)* Is the Holy Spirit also God? Jesus is God, the Father in Heaven is God, and the Holy Spirit is also God. They are all the same, but they have different purposes. Where is Jesus now? *(at the right hand of the Father)* If Jesus is in heaven with the Father, who comes to live in us when we accept Jesus as our savior? *(The Holy Spirit)* Does the Holy Spirit bring us peace like He did for Jesus?  
3. In Luke 3:21, God says something about Jesus. What did He say? *(This is my Son in whom I am well-pleased.)* When we accept Jesus as our savior and the Holy Spirit comes to live in us, is God also well-pleased with us? If we do not accept Jesus, is God pleased with us? *(No, He is not. Like Peter in The Little Engine That Could Not, we cannot be a part of God’s family unless we give ourselves to Jesus.)*

**Cross Ties – Developing the Lesson through Activities**

For all age levels:

Click below to download a printable coloring page that features the dove symbol. Display the page, and ask children to find the dove symbol hidden in one of the illustrations from *The Little Engine That Could Not*. *(Hint: Have students look in the trees on page 9.)*

Give each student a copy of the dove symbol coloring page. Have students color and cut out their dove. Help students to think of the different gifts the Holy Spirit gives to us (e.g., peace, joy, comfort, wisdom, understanding), and then help them write one of these things on their dove. Display the doves in your classroom as a reminder of the good gifts we receive through the Holy Spirit when we are in Christ.

Climbing Higher Activity

Have students look for the dove symbol in the illustrations for *The Little Engine That Could Not*. *(Have them look at pp. 8–9 if they need help.)* Then ask a student to read the first paragraph on p. 29 to the class. Ask students to identify the two things Peter is filled with which he immediately recognizes are gifts from the Holy Spirit to him after He asked Joshua to be his conductor. *(peace and power)*
This small-group activity will be a lot of fun! In our family, we listen to a lot of Christian rap music. In this activity, students will write a rap song or songs about the Holy Spirit. The only rule is that the lines of the song have to rhyme. Students can break into groups to write their songs, or do what I call “popcorn rapping,” with each student adding a line until all the students have taken a turn. You may even want to try your hand at it, or step in to help if a student gets stuck adding a line. Here are some ideas that we relate to the Holy Spirit. You may want to display this list for students to inspire them as they write their songs:

- Lives inside us
- Peace and power
- Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23)
- Comforter
- Helper
- Friend
- Strong
- Kind

Here are the first two lines of the song to help you get started:

**The Holy Spirit Rap**
The Holy Spirit like a dove
Came as God to teach us about love.

**Keep on Rolling – Developing the Lesson through Daily Application**
For a take-home activity, have students create an acrostic poem using the words HOLY SPIRIT. You may prepare this activity in advance or ask students to write the letters vertically on a sheet of paper. Tell students to finish their acrostic poem at home by thinking of roles and gifts of the Holy Spirit that begin with each letter of the words. Encourage students to use their acrostic poem during their quiet time, thanking the Holy Spirit for all of the gifts He brings when He comes to live in us.

H elper
O
L
Y
S
P
I
R
I
T