



## Lesson #1

# What (who) is the Church?



**Scripture Reference:** Acts 1-2



**Goal: We are the Church!**

Usually when children think of the word *church*, they equate it with a building made up of a combination of wood, bricks, stone, mortar and concrete. This lesson is designed to help them recognize that the church is actually made up, not of man-made materials, but rather of the people themselves. By taking part in the interactive activities listed, the students will also acknowledge that they are an important part of the church.



**Opening Activity:**

(For this activity, you will need a large container of Legos, Duplo Blocks, or some other type of building blocks.)

Have the students work together to construct a church out of the blocks. Allow them approximately 10-15 minutes to complete their project. When the allotted time has expired or the building is finished, say: **Usually when we think of the church, we think of a building where we go to learn about God. But in our lesson today, we'll find out that the church is much more than just a building.**



## **Bible Experience:**

(For this activity, you will need a Bible, yarn, tape, a marker, a cardboard box or a 10 gallon plastic storage container filled with sand, and the following items to bury in the sand: a small cross, a round stone, a cotton ball, a match, a small replica of a house, and a dollar bill.

Ahead of time, cut lengths of yarn and tape them across the top of the sand container [one lengthwise, two widthwise] to form a grid with six spaces. Use the marker to label the areas with #1-6. Bury the six items listed above in the given order, one item per space.)

Gather the children in front of you on the floor with the container of sand between you and them. Lay the Bible beside you. Say: **Today we're going to imagine that we are on an archeological expedition to learn more about the beginning of the very first church. What do you do on an archeological expedition? That's right – you dig! We can learn about the first church by digging into God's Word and reading Acts 1-2.** Open the Bible to the Scripture reference to show the children where it is located. **But today we're also going to learn by digging in sand. We will take turns digging to see what kind of artifacts we may unearth.**

Choose children to dig up the various items, one at a time, explaining the significance of the artifacts as listed below.

**CROSS – The church finds its beginning with the cross. Jesus died on the cross for our sins. We all have sin inside of us. Sin is ugly and bad, and as long as it is inside us, we can't go to God's perfect heaven. So Jesus died on the cross to take away our sin.**

**STONE – After Jesus died, they took His body off the cross and placed it in a tomb. In Bible times, a tomb was actually a small cave. A large stone was rolled in front of the cave to seal it. But on the third day, some women found the stone had been rolled away from Jesus' tomb. His body was gone! He had come back to life just as He said He would.**

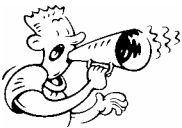
**COTTON BALL – For forty days after He came back to life, Jesus walked on the earth, appearing at times to His disciples. Finally, it was time for Him to return to Heaven. He told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for something special that was going**

to happen. When that something special did happen, they were to go around the world telling others about Him. Then Jesus was taken up into the sky and a soft, fluffy cloud (kind of like this cotton ball) hid Him from their sight. He returned to Heaven.

**MATCH** – After Jesus went back to Heaven, the disciples returned to the house where they were staying in Jerusalem. A few days later, as they were gathered in an upstairs room, a mighty wind blew into the house. What looked like little flames of fire appeared over each of their heads. (At this point, you may light the match if you want.) All at once, the disciples began speaking in languages they had never spoken before. They went outside and began telling people about Jesus. The people were from many different countries, and they were amazed to hear the disciples talking in their languages! About three thousand people chose to believe in Jesus that day!

**HOUSE** – As more and more people chose to believe in Jesus, they started meeting together. This way the disciples could teach them how to live for Jesus. They prayed together, ate together, and praised God together. However, there weren't any church buildings for them to meet in, so they met in homes.

**MONEY** – Another thing the new believers did was to share everything they had with each other. They often sold their belongings and gave the money to people who didn't have any. They looked out for each other and took care of each other. It was as if they were one big family – the family of God. They were the church. Now we are the church.



### **Life Application:**

(For this activity, you will need a blackboard, chalk, and an eraser.)

On the blackboard, draw two intersecting circles. Label the one circle "First Church" and the other circle "Our Church".

**In what ways is our church different from the first church?** Record these responses in the non-intersecting portions of the corresponding circles. **In what ways are we alike?** Record responses on the intersecting portion of the circles. After the children give their responses, add "one big family" to this

portion also. **How was the first church like one big family? How is our church like one big family? What are some things we can do to show we care for each other?**

**In our next activity, you'll have the opportunity to show each other how much you care by helping one another with an art project.**



### **Closing Activity:**

(For this activity, you'll need a large bulletin board or wall space on which to create a bulletin board, background paper for the bulletin board, black permanent marker, one 12"x18" piece of black construction paper per child, white chalk, scotch or masking tape, scissors, and one or more lamps.

Ahead of time, trace the outline of a church onto the bulletin board paper. Write the caption, "*I am the church... You are the church...*" somewhere on the board. Make sure that the church outline is large enough to contain a silhouette of each child in your class.)

Pair the children up for this activity. Have one child sit sideways in a chair close to the wall. Place a lamp on the floor or a table on the opposite side of the child from the wall. Adjust the lamp (without the shade) to cast a life-size shadow of the child's head on the wall. Have the child's partner tape a piece of black construction on the wall where the shadow is cast, then trace the shadow onto the paper with white chalk. Have the children switch places and repeat the process. They can then cut out their silhouettes while other children trace their shadows. It will go faster if you set up more than one tracing area. As the children finish cutting, have them write their names on the silhouettes with chalk and tape or staple them inside the church outline on the bulletin board. Say: **God's church is more than just a building. It's the people who fill up that building. It's you, and it's me.**