



Lesson #7

Spotlight on the Local Church



Scripture Reference: Matthew 18:20



Goal: Our local church has a history!

While children do have memories of particular happenings when they were younger and may dream of what they'll be when they are grown, for the most part, children tend to live for the present. This concept carries over to their view of the local church. They see it only as it exists now. This lesson is designed to help the children become aware of their local church's history. By taking part in the interactive activities listed, the students will also have an opportunity to add their own perceptions to that history.



Opening Activity:

(For this activity, you will need one copy of the attached interview/memory form for each child in your class, pencils, a scrapbook or magnetic-style photo album, and an instant camera such as a Polaroid or I-Zone.)

Ahead of time, make arrangements for your students to visit an older adult Sunday School class during the beginning of the Sunday School hour. Also make a title page for the Memory Album, such as "Memories from Harrisburg First Church of God.")

At the beginning of class time, explain to the children that they will be visiting an adult Sunday School classroom to interview the people in that class. Show them the interview form and go over the questions they will be asking. Emphasize that before they begin the interview, they should first introduce themselves to the people. Make sure they are equipped with interview forms and pencils, then proceed to the adult class. Five to ten minutes should be sufficient time to conduct the interviews without taking too much time away from the adults' lesson. As the children are conducting the interviews, take a snapshot of each child with the adult being interviewed.

Back in your classroom, attach the photographs to the appropriate interviews. You may want to write the name of the child and adult beneath the picture. Allow the children a few minutes to tell the group about the memories the people shared with them. When finished, collect the interview forms and explain that they will be put into a Memory Album for the church. Say: **A few weeks ago, we learned about the history of our denomination, how it started and grew over the years. This week we'll learn about the history of our own church. The memories we just heard are a part of our church's history.**



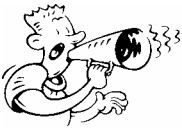
Bible Experience:

(For this activity, you will need Bibles and the *Time Capsule* described in the next paragraph.

This lesson will require a bit of research on your part. Ahead of time, talk to the pastor and some older members about the history of your local church. Gather together as many little mementos – postcards, photos, an old hymnal, any types of items indicative of major historical events such as a war that your church has weathered, etc. – as possible. Put these into a container to represent a pretend *Time Capsule* from your church's past. Also put into this container a slip of paper bearing the reference Matthew 18:20.)

Gather the children in a circle on the floor or around a table. Say: **We're going to use our imaginations this morning and pretend our town just experienced an earthquake. It wasn't a big earthquake, so there wasn't much damage. However, one thing the quake managed to do was to unearth this Time Capsule from our church's past. Let's open it and see what kind of things we can learn about the history of our church.**

Pull the different items out of the capsule and talk about them in their historical order. Last of all, pull out the slip of paper bearing the reference Matthew 18:20. Say: **I wonder why this slip of paper is in the Time Capsule? It must be a pretty important Bible verse to be included. Maybe we should look it up to see what it says.** Have the children do so, then ask: **Why do you think the people included this verse in their Time Capsule? What important message does it have for us today? God has been with our church since its very beginning, and He continues to be with us even now and into the future.**



Life Application:

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

If we decided to re-bury this Time Capsule, only we wanted to add a few more things to it to show people in the future what our church and the world were like in the year we're living in now, what would you add? Why would you choose those items? List suggestions on the blackboard. Is there an important Bible verse or message you would want to include?

I think it might be nice to include our Memory Album we worked on earlier, but before we do that, we need to put in some more recent memories, some of our memories.



Closing Activity:

(For this activity, you will need another copy of the attached interview/memory form for each child in your class, pencils, crayons or markers, blank white paper, and the Memory Album from the Opening Activity.)

Have each child complete a memory form about his or herself, then illustrate that memory on a separate piece of paper. When finished, have the children share their memories and pictures with the group. Collect these to also be added to the Memory Album. Say: **Today we've learned much about our church, what it was like in the past and even a little bit of what it's like now.**

Most importantly, we learned that “where two of three come together in my name, there I am with them.” (Matt. 18:20 NIV)

Keep the Memory Album on display in the classroom where the children can look through it or place it in the vestibule or fellowship area where the whole church may have access to it. You may even want to present the album as a gift to the church during a morning worship service.

Interview/Memory Form

What is your name?

How long have you been attending this church?

How did you begin coming to this church?

What is one special or humorous memory you have from this church?