



Lesson #9

Why Do We Go to Church?



Scripture Reference: Psalm 117 and 119:11



Goal: We go to church to SHOUT, STUDY, SHARE, SPREAD, and SERVE.

Many children go to church simply because they enjoy it or because they have no choice. They don't realize the church has five definite elements it wants to instill in their lives, so they can impact the world for Christ. This lesson is designed to help the children to internalize these very elements or purposes. By taking part in the interactive activities listed, the children will SHOUT His praises, STUDY His Word, SHARE time with others (believers), and SPREAD His love. The fifth purpose, to SERVE with our gifts, will be addressed in the next lesson.

To further bring these five purposes home to the children, you may want to make a poster displaying them on the wall of your classroom (see below).

Why Do We Go to Church? To...

SHOUT His praises
STUDY His Word
SHARE time with others
SPREAD His love
SERVE with our gifts



Opening Activity:

(For this activity, you will need a bulletin board or wall space covered with light-colored paper, markers and a Bible.

Ahead of time, write the caption “Our ABC’s of Praise” at the top of the paper. In the center of the paper in large letters, write “God, You are...”)

Gather the children around the bulletin board or wall display and ask: **Why do we come to church?** After allowing for their responses, say: **Today we’re going to talk about five important reasons we come to church.** (At this point if you made a poster of these five purposes, you may wish to refer to it.) **One reason we come to church is to SHOUT His (God’s) praises. What does it mean to praise someone?** *Say nice things about them or to them.* **We’re going to take some time right now to praise God. We’re going to use the alphabet to help us. For example, let’s start with the letter A. Who can think of a word to describe God that begins with an A?** *Awesome, almighty, etc.* Write the first answer given on the bulletin board. Then continue through the alphabet until you have one word for each letter. For X, you may want to use X-cellent, X-citing, or such.

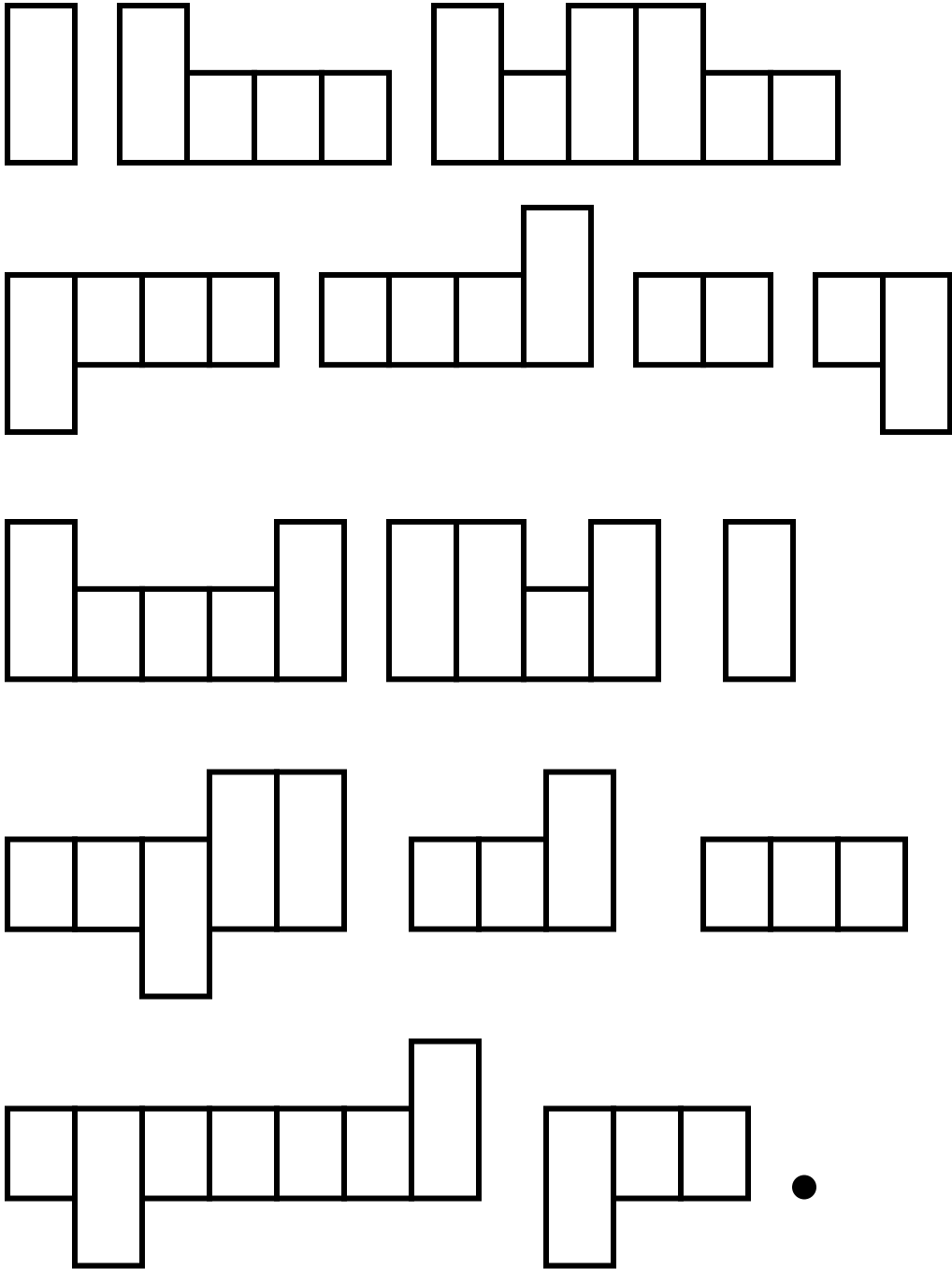
When finished, say: **The Bible tells us to...Read Psalm 117. Coming to church gives us an opportunity to do just that. But church isn’t the only place we can praise God. We can praise Him wherever we are. God loves to hear our praise. He also loves to see us study His Word, which brings us to the next reason we go to church.**



Bible Experience:

(For this activity, you will need 16 hearts cut from red construction paper, a pen, a blackboard, chalk, an eraser, and a Bible.

Ahead of time, write the following verse and reference on the paper hearts, one word per heart: “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” [Psalm 119:11] Hide the hearts around the classroom. Also draw the following configuration on the blackboard:

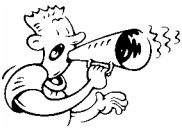


Say: **Another reason we go to church is to STUDY His (God's) Word. We're going to play a game now to help us learn a Bible verse that tells us why it is important to study God's Word. Hidden around the room are 16 paper hearts containing the words of that Bible verse. See if you can find them.**

After all the hearts are found, have the children take turns locating each word's position in the configuration on the blackboard. Write each word in its

place. When the configuration is complete, have the children read the verse aloud with you a couple of times. You may choose to show them where the verse is actually located in the Bible.

Ask the following discussion questions: **Whose word is this verse talking about? What is God's Word? What does it mean to hide God's Word in our hearts? Why is it important to hide God's Word in our hearts? Coming to church leads us to study God's Word and to hide it in our hearts. Let's hide God's Word in our hearts today by memorizing this verse.** Help the children memorize the Bible verse by having them say it over and over again as you erase a few words with each recitation. Continue until all the words have been erased.

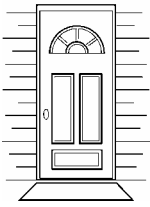


Life Application:

(For this activity, you will need a snack of some sort for the children, napkins, and cups if drink is included. A snack suggestion might be heart-shaped cookies to re-emphasize the previous activity.)

Say: **We've already learned two important reasons to go to church – to SHOUT His praises and to STUDY His Word. A third reason we go to church is to SHARE time with others (*believers*). Grown-ups might refer to this as fellowship. But fellowship simply means friendship. We come to church to meet friends who also believe in Jesus. Why is it important to have friends who believe in Jesus? Two good ways to make new friends is to work on a project together or to eat together. We already worked together hunting for hearts and memorizing the Bible verse. Now we're going to have a chance to eat together. We're having a special snack time today.**

Serve the children the snack provided. As they eat, allow them to talk among each other. Feel free to join in their talk, asking them about school, their interests, etc. When everyone is finished eating, have them throw away any garbage. Say: **It's important for us to share time with other believers, but God doesn't want us to forget about the people around us who don't know Him yet. This brings us to another reason we go to church.**



Closing Activity:

(For this activity, you will need the following items for each child and the teacher: 12" of leather lacing, 1 black pony bead, 1 red pony bead, 1 white pony bead, 1 blue pony bead, 1 green pony bead, and 1 yellow pony bead. You'll also need to make enough copies of the attached parent letter for each child to receive one.

Ahead of time, assemble your own *Witness Bracelet* by following these directions. Tie a knot approximately 4" from one end of the lace. Put the beads on in the order given [black, red, white, blue, green, yellow]. Then tie another knot in the lace after the beads.)

Gather the children in a circle on the floor or around a table. Say: **A fourth reason we come to church is to encourage us to SPREAD His love. What are some ways we can spread God's love to others? When we spread God's love by telling others about Jesus, it's called witnessing. Witnessing can be a little scary at times, but I brought a special bracelet this morning to help tell others the Good News about Jesus.**

This first knot stands for when we were born. The black bead stands for sin, the bad things we do. The red bead stands for Jesus' blood; Jesus died so we can be forgiven of our sins. The white bead stands for our lives once Christ has taken away our "black" sins. The blue bead stands for water. One way we can show God we love Him is to be baptized in water. It shows that we believe God has washed us clean from our sins. The green bead stands for growth. Just as green plants grow, we also grow to become more like Jesus, loving others as He wants us to do. The yellow bead stands for the streets of gold that we'll see in Heaven someday. This last knot stands for when we die. When the bracelet band is tied around my wrist, it forms a circle which goes on and on. When we go to Heaven, we'll live on and on forever.

You're each going to have an opportunity now to make your own Witness Bracelet to help you tell a friend about Jesus.

Lead the children step-by-step in making their bracelets. Have the students pair up to practice "witnessing" to each other. Before dismissing, quickly reiterate the four reasons for going to church that were covered today. Let the students know you'll be talking about one final reason for going to church during next week's class. Send parent letter regarding next week's lesson home with the children.

Parent Letter

To the Parent(s) of _____,

This week in Sunday School your child learned about four important reasons we go to church: to **SHOUT** His praises, to **STUDY** His Word, to **SHARE** time with others, and to **SPREAD** His love. Please take time to ask your child what activities we did to explore each of these areas. We had a very rewarding class time.

Next week we will be learning a fifth reason we go to church – to **SERVE** with our gifts. An emphasis will be placed on the fact that God made us unique and talented individuals. We will be mixing up cookie dough in class to demonstrate how the different ingredients each has a different job to do, just as each of us has a different way to serve God.

We would like to take this lesson a step further by allowing the class an opportunity to practice the gift of hospitality. While an adult helper bakes the cookies, we will continue with our Bible discussion and conclude by designing cards for the shut-ins from our church. Would you and your child be willing to deliver a plate of cookies and a card to one of the shut-ins later that day or sometime the next day? If you are, please call me at _____ by this coming Saturday. I need to notify the shut-ins that you will be coming.

Thank you for your willingness to show your child God's love in action.

Sincerely,