

Junior Soldiers

UNIT 15 : LESSON 3



The church in the Church

PURPOSE: For the children to explore and understand that the Christian Church is part of something bigger than their local corps.

Jesus came to them and said:

“I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth! Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to do everything I have told you. I will be with you always, even until the end of the world.”

Matthew 28:18-20 (CEV)

Consider & Prepare

It can be hard to grasp just how massive the Church (capital “c”) is. Think about the Christians who gather in your own village or city in or out of different church buildings or homes each week. Now, think of all the Christians who meet across your country. In fact, think about all the Christians who meet in different places and different times all around the whole world. Perhaps you have experienced church services in different places, or maybe even different countries. But many of our children may have only had one experience of a local church in their life. They may not be aware that they are a part of the universal body of Christ. This lesson seeks to give children an awareness of the greater purpose of the Church. Think about these broad questions as you contemplate your own understanding of God’s Church. Why is there a Church in the first place? What are churches supposed to do?

Read:

- John 17
- Acts 2
- 1 Timothy 5

The word “church” comes from the Greek word ekklesia which is defined as “an assembly” or “called-out ones.” In Romans 16:5, Paul refers to the people when he writes “... greet the church that is in their house.” He talks about the people, not the place. The church is also called “the body of Christ”, and Christ is the head. Ephesians 1:22-23 says, “And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”

The church is often considered in two parts – the Universal Church and the local church. The universal church is made up of all those who have a relationship with Jesus Christ. “Some of us are Jews, and others are Gentiles. Some of us are slaves, and others are free. But God’s Spirit baptized each of us and made us part of the body of Christ. Now we each drink from that same Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:13). A description of the local church can be found in Galatians 1:1-2: “From the apostle Paul and from all the Lord’s followers with me... To the churches in Galatia.” In the province of Galatia there were many churches. In this age, we would compare this to the local churches, The Salvation Army corps, a Baptist church, Lutheran church, Catholic church, Hillsong, etc. To put the two together, the members of the universal church should share, grow and serve, finding their belonging in their local church.

Although our expressions of worship are all unique, the Church shares many things. We have a shared belief, a shared experience, shared service, a shared mission and responsibility. Most of all, we share the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. (2 Corinthians 13:14 NIV)

These are some of the broader concepts that we hope children will take away from this lesson today:

- Church turns the “me” into “we”.
- Church gives me a scaffold to shape my life.
- Church is a gift to all believers from God.

What you will need:**For ‘Connecting In’**

- 10-20 wooden blocks per group, in a bag or bucket. “Jenga” stacking blocks are ideal.
- A variety of bases to build upon. For example: cushion, soft rug or blanket, table, book, chopping board. To emphasise the point, some will be easier to build on than others.
- Apples – separate into the following parts: an apple seed, some apple peel, an apple core, a slice of apple, a wedge of apple, whole apples. Leaves or branches from any tree that could be representative of an apple tree.
- Image of an apple tree (page 13)

For ‘The Main Thing’

- Bibles
- Pens, pencils
- Highlighters
- Print copies of the attached sheets if you choose Option 1 – Metaphor Search (page 9), or Option 2 – Picture Match (page 10)
- A whiteboard or butchers paper if you choose Option 3 - Hangman
- Salt shaker or a salt-mill that you can turn/grind (it makes noise and may be more noticeable!)

- Toy sheep, or sheepskin, wool or something that represents “flock”.
- Shepherd’s gear, such as a long stick and a tea-towel for the child to wear on his/her head.

For ‘Tying In’

- Print out of the passage from Acts.
- Highlighters
- Technology to watch YouTube clip if you wish to use it: PursueGOD Video August 3, 2013. <https://youtu.be/INsNTdaBIG8>
- Words for the memory verse written or printed out and cut into the phrases - see attachment.
- A world map or a globe.
- Print copies of the Prayer Circle sheet if you would like to use this option.
- Pens, pencils
- Chalk (optional)

For ‘Home & Beyond’

- Print off the Home & Beyond cards for each child.
- The children may like to take a copy of the ‘Praying for the Church’ sheet home to remind them of prayer points.

Connecting In

Building a Foundation

Today we are talking about the Church, the WHOLE Church of God. People often refer to the Church as a foundation, or a place we can build our lives on God. So, we’re going to begin with a building challenge.

Activity

Form groups of two to five children. Give each group a collection of wooden blocks (Jenga blocks are ideal). Ask teams to build the tallest tower that they can, in one minute. Now, give each group a different “base” to build on (see For Connecting In on page 2). Perhaps the team that worked well together and had least difficulty can be given a more difficult base to build on, and the team that struggled more can have an easier base. Give the same time limit, and ask the children to again build the tallest tower they can.

Link

You’ve just been building a tower with blocks. What was the easiest part? What did you find difficult? A firm foundation makes all the difference. Remember that the Church is a foundation, or a place we can build our lives on God. Did you know that the Church is a gift that God has given us? It’s great to be able to be part of God’s family, God’s people, God’s church.

The Bigger Church

Bring in a bowl of apples, and a container with cut up pieces. If you have an apple tree anywhere nearby, you could also bring in a part of the leaf, stem or branches. Or take these from another tree to represent the apple tree. Have a printed image of an apple tree ready. If appropriate to your group, you can offer children slices of apple to eat while you talk.

Hold up a whole apple. What is this? An apple

Hold up the apple core. What about this? Is this an apple, too? Yes, it's still an apple.

Pose the same question for the twig, leaf, a slice, a seed, and any other "parts" of the apple. Children may see that although they are all a little bit of an apple, or part of the tree, they all part of the same thing.

Now hold up picture of the tree. Is this an apple? Yes, it's an apple tree, with apples, grown from an apple seed like this.

This apple tree and all the different parts of the apple remind me a little of what people think the church is. Maybe you are each one of these slices, or a seed. Maybe our Junior Soldier group is a slice of apple, and our parents are another slice. Our whole church might be... an apple. Then what do you think the tree might be?

What would you say to someone who asked you, "What is the church?" Tell the person next to you what you would say.

Allow the children to take time to discuss and then ask if they want to share any responses.

The Main Thing

What is the Church?

1. Find the metaphor:

In this activity the children will search to find words/symbols that are used to help us understand what the church is. This activity can be done together or in small groups.

In the Bible, there are a lot of ways that different writers have tried to describe what the church is.

- Do you know what a "metaphor" is? *Allow for responses*

Some examples of metaphors are:

- Pull your socks up!
- Time is money.
- My teacher is a dragon.
- My room is a disaster area.

Jesus used metaphors like:

- I am the gate.
- I am the vine.

Metaphors can help us to understand something more clearly.

We are going to look at some metaphors for the church. I wonder if you can think of any before we start.

Allow for responses then complete one of the following three options.

→ Option 1 - Metaphor Search (page 9)

Ask volunteers to read out each of the following verses to discover some metaphors for the church.

The children can record the answers on the attached sheet.

→ Option 2 – Picture Match (May be more suitable for a younger group) (page 10)

Use the attached sheet to match these eight words (metaphors for the church) to symbols that may represent each one.

→ Option 3 – Metaphor Hangman

Play several rounds of 'hangman' using the following metaphors for the Church:

- Body of Christ
- Bride of Christ
- God's family
- Foundation of truth
- Living temple
- The flock
- Kingdom of God
- Light to the world
- Salt of the earth

2. What do these metaphors mean?

Use a salt shaker and a toy sheep or wool as props, to look a deeper into two of these metaphors.

Some metaphors are easy to understand but sometimes we need to look at them more closely to make sense of them.

→ a. Salt of the earth

In Matthew 5:13 the Church is described as the 'salt of the earth'.

Hold up salt shaker.

Who has something like this at home?

What do we use it for? *We use it in cooking to make food taste better.*

Did you know that salt is a multi-purpose tool? Besides cooking, it can be used to:

- Clean stained coffee cups.
- Stop icy roads from being slippery.
- Take away yucky smells from your shoes.
- Remove stains from carpet.

A long time ago, people even got PAID with salt instead of money!

So why would the Church, as a whole big group, be called the SALT? Have a think about that, while you come and stand in a circle. Can you mime the action of shaking/grinding the salt shaker for each of these examples that I give? *Each time you say "add some salt" ask the children to do an action to match.*

Just like I use "real salt" ... The popcorn is tasteless... *add some salt...* Mmmmm!

I can be the salt. But to get stuff salty you need to shake it up. Get ready to be shaken up.

My friends are fighting... *add some salt...* bring peace!

My brother is feeling down... *add some salt...* bring joy!

My teacher is frustrated... *add some salt...* make his day brighter!

The kids are teasing the smallest kid in our class... *add some salt...* bring some kindness to her life!

I've been messing up by using some horrible swear words... *add some salt...* and clean up your mouth!

Think of another one that is just for you... don't say it out aloud just think it... ready?

_____ *... add some salt...* _____

God you know where I'm in need of salt... *add some salt...* and look what happens!

This week, when you see a situation that needs some salt, maybe you can remind yourself to be the salt that is needed in the world.

→ b. The Flock

I'm thinking now of another metaphor that was used for the Church. *Show the props*. Which one do you think I have in mind? *The Flock*.

In John 10:16 the Church is described as 'the flock'.

Sheep are pretty calm animals.

They don't do much really. Eat... baa... move... baa... eat... baa... poo...

They like to hang out together, but they need someone to tell them what to do. Who is that? *A shepherd*

I need a shepherd for this next activity. *Give your volunteer shepherd a long stick and a tea-towel to put on his/her head*.

Ask the shepherd to lead his sheep, by playing "Shepherd Says..." You might like to choose a few shepherds to have a turn, if time permits.

Shepherd Says (Played in the same way as 'Simon Says')

- *The volunteer must say 'Shepherd says...' then choose an action for the other children to do. For example, 'Shepherd says turn in circles.' The children must all immediately do the chosen action.*
- *Occasionally, the volunteer must give an instruction without first saying 'Shepherd says'. When this happens the children must continue doing the previous action. Any child who begins to do the new action is out.*

Every flock needs a shepherd. So if the Church is the flock, who is our shepherd? God.

How do we follow the shepherd, if we can't actually see him? *We learn about him by reading our Bible, coming to Junior Soldiers and to church services, praying, following the example of Jesus and learning from other Christians.*

Leader, take the shepherd props and put them on. Ask the children to sit quietly like sheep. Touch each child on the shoulder, as you walk around and say this prayer, "My prayer for each of you today is that you will always be part of the flock. I pray that you will know the shepherd more and more. I pray that you will grow up to be a junior shepherd for others in our flock. Thank you God for caring for us..."

Tying In

So far in this lesson, we have remembered that the Church is a foundation that helps us to build our lives on God. The Church is bigger than just one person, one local church or one denomination. The Church has members all over the world and all of us together love and serve Jesus. As the 'salt of the earth' we can make the world a better place to live by sprinkling joy, peace, kindness and love in the lives of those around us. As 'the flock' we have a shepherd who leads and guides us.

Now, what does the Church do?

Hand out printed copies of Acts 2:42:47 (page 11).

Take a few minutes to read through these verses from Acts 2. Use a highlighter to mark anything that tells us what the people in the early church did.

⁴² They spent their time **learning** from the apostles, and they were **like family** to each other. They also **broke bread and prayed together**. ⁴³ Everyone was **amazed by the many miracles and wonders** that the apostles worked. ⁴⁴ All the Lord's followers **often met together**, and they **shared everything they had**. ⁴⁵ They would **sell their property and possessions and give the money to whoever needed it**. ⁴⁶ Day after

day they met together in the temple. They broke bread together in different homes and shared their food happily and freely, ⁴⁷ while praising God. Everyone liked them, and each day the Lord added to their group others who were being saved.

- What did you find?
- Which of these things do we do?
- Which of these do you think other churches in (our town/village/city) do?
- Which of these do you think churches in other countries do?

You might like to reinforce this by watching the clip What is the Church (<https://youtu.be/INsNTdaBIG8>)?

- What difference does the Church make in your life?
- What difference do you think the Church makes in the world?
- Why do you think it's important for the Church to be bigger than just us?

Memory Verse

We've learned a lot of things about what the church is and what the church should do. God loves his church and he wants us to share this love with others.

I'm thinking now of one last metaphor for the Church. *Hold up torch or light.*
Which one do you think I have in mind? *A light to the world*

Ephesians 5:9-10 reminds us to let our light shine.

I'm going to shine a light on the words that make up our memory verse for today. Follow the torchlight and read the words as I point it.

Using the torch, point to the words that you have placed around the room. As you hold the light on them, the children can read the words aloud. After reading the verse a few times, ask someone to come and shine the light for the others. You can put them in the right order and follow them from one to the next or mix them up and have the children follow the light around the room as you seek out the part that comes next.

Make your light shine. Be good and honest and truthful, as you try to please God. Ephesians 5:9-10.

Prayer Time

- 1. If you have a globe, or a world map, pass it around and ask the children to find a country that they are familiar with, or at least know the name of. Give them one an opportunity to pray "God bless the church in ... (eg. Japan)". Some children may have a cultural heritage from a different country or may have relatives who are from another country. Some of them may have travelled overseas. More than one child might like to pray for the same country.*
- 2. Divide the children into small groups or pairs and use the 'Praying for the Church' sheet (page 14) to pray for the ever-extending parts of the Church. The children can write a sentence prayer in each section and may like to read them out with a partner or in a small group. If you have outdoor space, you could draw these circles in the dirt or with chalk on the ground. Ask the children to step from one circle to the next as they pray for each part of the Church.*

Home & Beyond

Print off the 'Home & Beyond' cards attached. The children might like to keep these in their journals or notebook where they could write or stick the challenges, reflect, answer questions or complete activities each week.

Ask your Big Bud or a family member to help you to use the internet to research a Christian church in another country.

- What is the name of the church?
- What denomination is it? (E.g. Lutheran, Anglican, Catholic, Salvation Army.)
- What country is it in?
- What difference is this church making in its community?

Use the 'Praying for the Church' sheet to pray for the Church this week.

Metaphor Search

Read the verses below to find out what the CHURCH is being compared to.

The Church is like...

The **O** of Christ

1 Corinthians 12:27

The living **E** **E**

2 Corinthians 6:16

A to the World

Matthew 5:14

The **I** **E** of Christ

Revelation 19:7

The **O**

John 10:16

The **A** of the Earth

Matthew 5:13

God's **A** ; and
the **O **A** of truth**

1 Timothy 3:15

Part of the **O** of God

Mark 10:14

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Picture Match

Match the Bible reference to the word that describes the church and then to the symbol in the last column.

1 TIMOTHY 3:15

Body



2 CORINTHIANS 6:16

Bride



MATTHEW 5:13

Family



Ephesians 4:4

Foundation



Revelation 19:7

Temple



John 10:16

Flock



Ephesians 5:9-10

Kingdom



1 Timothy 3:15

Light



Mark 10:14

Salt



Acts 2:42-47

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...Make your light shine.

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and honest

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Ephesians 5:9-10



What am I?

The church in other parts of the world

The church in other parts of the world

The church in my country

The church in my own town

My church

My family and I



In John 17:21, Jesus prayed this prayer for his disciples and for all of the believers that would, one day, become “the Church”.

“I want all of them to be one with each other, just as I am one with you and you are one with me. I also want them to be one with us. Then the people of this world will believe that you sent me.”

Home & Beyond

Print off the 'Home & Beyond' cards attached. The children might like to keep these in their journals or notebook where they could write or stick the challenges, reflect, answer questions or complete activities each week.

Ask your Big Bud or a family member to help you to use the internet to research a Christian Church?

- What is the name of the Church?
- What denomination is it? (E.g. Lutheran, Anglican, Catholic, Salvation Army.)
- What country is it in?
- What difference is this Church making in its community?
- What 'praying for the Church' sheet to pray for the Church this week.


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