

The Church Grows (New Believers)

Teacher Pep Talk: Can you imagine the first church? The Bible says that on the morning of Pentecost all of the believers were together in one place. *(There must not have been too many of them yet. Maybe they met in somebody's living room! ☺)* Then they received the Holy Spirit, Peter preached a powerful sermon, and over 3000 people believed and were added to the church on that day. *(Now what? Whose living room would they meet in now? ☺)* From that time until this, the church has grown in similar fashion: Believers tell others about Jesus; new people believe and are added to the church. Then the process repeats itself... *So many living rooms!*

NOTE: This lesson involves a discussion on Salvation (how we come to know Jesus and accept Him as our Savior.) Consider talking to your pastor about the lesson ahead of time, and/or invite him/her to visit your class to discuss salvation with the children.

You will need: Various items depending on the Activities chosen

Major Points: The Holy Spirit Came and Things Changed
The Believers Told Others about Jesus
New People Believed in Jesus (Salvation)
New Believers were added to the Church
The Church Grew (and Keeps on Growing!)

Scripture Ref: Acts 2 and John 3:16

Memory Verse: Acts 2:21 *...everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*

Lesson: **The Holy Spirit Came and Things Changed**

- Do you like things to change... or for things to stay the same? *(Wait for answers.)* How about birthdays? Do you like having birthdays (and getting older)? How about growing? Do you like to grow and get taller? *(After each question, wait for answers.)*
- All living things grow. Did you know that the church grows? It does. And we are going to talk about how it grows.
- Jesus promised His Disciples that the Holy Spirit would come
- On the day of Pentecost, that happened. (And things changed!)
- The Holy Spirit came and empowered the Believers!
- Because of the Holy Spirit, the believers were able to speak to others about Jesus very powerfully (and in different languages!)
- **All of a sudden, things had changed!** *(Before the Holy Spirit came, the Believers had been keeping to themselves. Now they were talking to others about Jesus... in the streets of the city!)*

The Believers Told Others about Jesus

- When the Holy Spirit came, He gave the Disciples (Believers) the power (ability) to talk to other people about Jesus
- Peter and the other disciples found themselves in front of a crowd of people, praising God in various languages and telling people about Jesus.
- The crowd asked them what they were doing
- Peter stood up before them all and preached a mighty sermon. (Some say that it was the best sermon ever preached.) He told them that:
 - God had promised to send a Savior.
 - Jesus was that Savior
 - All the things that had happened to Jesus were just like what God had said would happen to the Savior.
 - After Jesus died on the cross, God raised Him from the dead
 - God had made this Jesus (that they had crucified) both Lord and Christ!
- Uh, oh. The people Peter was talking to had been there when Jesus was crucified. Maybe some of them had even been in the crowd that shouted “Crucify Him, Crucify Him.” Maybe they hadn’t helped Jesus, or spoken up for Him. Maybe they had just turned their heads the other way, when it all happened.
- The Bible says that the people listening were “cut to the heart” which means that all of a sudden they knew Peter was telling the truth! (*The Holy Spirit was there, helping them know that.*)
- The people in the crowd begged the Disciples, “Brothers, what shall we do?” (Or... “We know we were wrong... Now what?”)

New People Believed in Jesus (Salvation)

- “What shall we do?” That’s a good question. What do you do when you realize down deep that you have done something wrong? (*Wait for answers. This is important. Take some time.*)
- Do you feel sorry? Do you admit to your parents or to someone else what you have done? Do you apologize?
- Sometimes we say, “I’m sorry. Please forgive me.” We know in our heart that we don’t want to do the wrong thing anymore. And then something wonderful happens... We change!
- The people in the crowd had been wrong about Jesus. They had heard Him speak. They had seen Him do miracles. They knew that God had promised a Savior, but they didn’t think that Jesus was Him. Or if they did, they didn’t want it to be Him.
- They turned away from Jesus. They rejected Him. They crucified Him.
- But then, something wonderful happened. God raised Jesus from the dead! **Things had changed!** Jesus was alive!

New Believers were added to the Church

- “What shall we do?” the crowd had asked. What now?
- Peter told them, *“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”* Acts 2:38-39.
- (In other words: Turn away from your wrong thinking and your wrong actions about Jesus. He is the Savior. Believe on Him and in what He did for you by coming here and making you right with God. And be baptized in His name to show others what God has done for you. And the Holy Spirit will come to live in your life as well. This promise is for you and your children, and for everyone else whom God will call.)
- The people in the crowd listened to Peter. The Holy Spirit had helped them understand that they had been wrong about Jesus. Now they knew the truth down deep in their hearts.
- The Bible says that “Those who accepted his message were baptized.” The people believed and then they were baptized. (*Baptized means “to dip in water” like you put a dish into water to wash it. It is an outward symbol of an inward change.*)
- Over 3,000 people were added to their number that day!

The Church Grew (and Keeps on Growing!)

- This was the beginning of the church.
- The church is made up of all people who believe in Jesus as their Savior. It includes all the people who believed way back then, and who believe now, and who will believe in the future. It includes people here, where we live, and in other towns nearby, and in far off lands on the other side of the world.
- Every time someone new believes in Jesus, the church grows.
- And the way it grows is the same every time:
 - First, someone who believes in Jesus tells someone else about Him
 - The Holy Spirit helps the new person understand that the believer is telling the truth about Jesus
 - The new person (turns away from their wrong thinking and) believes on Jesus as their Savior
 - The new believer is baptized in the name of Jesus Christ and receives the gift of the Holy Spirit
 - And the church grows!
- Now the new believer can go and tell others about Jesus! And the process repeats itself again and again.
- And the church keeps on growing!

Let's pray and thank God that He is growing His church all over the world!

Prayer: Dear God,
Thank you that you are growing your church all over the world.
Thank you that Jesus came for us, as our Savior.
Thank you that you love us.
We love you back.
Amen.

Suggested Activities: *(Choose 2-3 activities that seem to work well with your group.)*

Pastor Talk – *The children will hear from you or their pastor regarding salvation.*

Before Class: Make an appointment with your pastor to come to your class at a convenient time to discuss salvation with your students. Churches vary in this outreach towards children. It is important to discuss your plans to teach this lesson with your pastor, before the day of class. Find out what your particular church teaches regarding children accepting Christ as Savior, being baptized, and becoming a church member. It might be a good idea to inform parents that you will be discussing it that day as well.

During Class: Introduce the pastor to the children. Participate as much or as little as the pastor requests in the discussion with the children regarding salvation, baptism, and/or church membership. Pray with the children, asking God to bless your students. If a child seems interested in accepting Christ, pray with them individually. Involve parents (and the pastor) if any child shows interest in accepting Christ as Savior.

How the Church Grows – *The children will learn how the church grows.*

Before Class: Make up some signs that say “Come and Believe,” “Stay and Learn,” and “Go and Tell.” For emphasis the signs can be in different colors of ink or marker.

During Class: Tell the children about how the church grows; as you speak show the 3 different signs. Say, “First we tell people about Jesus and invite them to **Come and Believe.**” (Repeat Come and Believe with the children.) “Then people are part of the church where they **Stay and Learn** about Jesus.” (Repeat Stay and Learn with the children.) “And that’s really nice, but then there are still lots of people who don’t know Jesus yet; so then we send people out in groups (of at least 2) to **“Go and Tell”** others. Use the signs to go through the different parts again with the children.

Come and Believe - Wave your hand as if asking someone to come to you
Stay and Learn - Motion as if offering a person a chair
Go and Tell - Point off in the distance

Come and Believe – *The children will play a game to learn how the church grows.*

Before Class: Mark off one small area in your room to be your first “church.” The easiest way to do this is to place a large towel on the floor (or to tape off a small rectangular area.) Have several large towels available to make new “churches” around the room.

During Class: Everyone sits down. Now, invite three students to stand in the first small area with you by saying, “Come and Believe.” This represents the first church. Now each of you goes and invites one other person to “Come and Believe.” Other students join you inside the small area. Now it is crowded! And there are others who still haven’t

heard about Jesus. Send two of the original students to a new location in the room to start a new “church.” (Put down a towel to denote new church.) Now they go out and invite others to “Come and Believe.” Soon the new church is crowded too; send out two new persons to start a third church, and so forth. Of course, people in the first and second churches can continue to invite people to come and believe and continue to send out people in two’s to start new churches. Play until everyone is involved. Repeat.

Sing Jesus Loves Me – *The children will praise God that Jesus loves them.*

Before Class: Write the words of “Jesus Loves Me” where the children can see them.

During Class: Encourage the children to sing this wonderful song with you. Remind them of Jesus’ love for each of us. We can say that Jesus Loves Me because we know that God’s Word, the Bible, tells us that. We can always trust God to tell the truth.

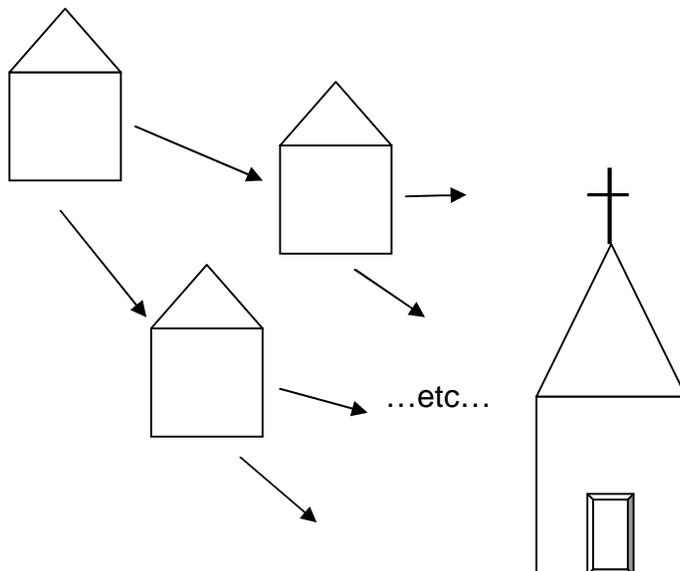
Growing Churches – *The children will learn more about how the church grows.*

Before Class: Bring a large pad of paper to class to draw upon, or use a chalk board.

Make a copy of the activity sheet for each child. Provide crayons or markers.

During Class: Talk to the children about the church. (As you talk draw little houses with people in them and then more houses with more people in them.) Say that the church isn’t really one building or another. The Church is actually made up of all people, through all time, who trust in Jesus as their Savior. (If people don’t believe in Jesus, they are not really part of His Church.) When we look around there are lots and lots of church buildings. How did we get so many?! Where did they all come from?

Imagine the first church... there probably weren’t many people in it. Maybe they all met in one place... like someone’s house. But then pretty soon they told other people about Jesus and more people believed on Him as their Savior. Now there were too many people to meet in one house, so they started meeting in different people’s houses. Then more people believed and filled up even more houses. Eventually people began building special buildings called “churches” for the people to meet in together. And that’s one way we ended up with so many different church buildings. But (and this is important) everyone who believes on Jesus as their Savior is part of His Church.



- 1.) Draw first house.
- 2.) Fill first house with people.
- 3.) Draw an arrow and then another house.
- 4.) Fill second house with people....Continue...
- 5.) Eventually draw a church building with cross on top.
- 6.) **Hand out the Activity sheet.**
- 7.) Let the children draw people in the church.
- 8.) Color the cross at the top.
- 9.) Draw windows, etc...

