



LOVE YOUR CHURCH FOR KIDS



the goodbook
COMPANY

Based on *Love Your Church* by Tony Merida

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ONE: BELONGING

INTRODUCTORY GAME: YELLOW FUZZIES ON THE MOVE

(FROM BIBLEGAMESCENTRAL.COM)

HOW TO PREPARE

Cut strings into two-foot lengths. You will be playing in teams of two to four players, and each team will need four strings and a rubber band.

Divide into teams. The players must tie one end of each string to the rubber band.

At one end of the room, place a few tennis balls on the floor for each team. Each team's tennis balls should be several feet away from the next team's. At the opposite end of the room, place a bucket on the floor for each team.

Each team stands around its tennis balls with each player holding one loose end of the string. If there are fewer than four players in the team, some players will need to hold two strings.

HOW TO PLAY

On the word "go," team members pull their strings in opposing directions to stretch their rubber bands to pick up a tennis ball. Players are not allowed to touch the tennis balls or rubber bands; they can only hold onto the loose ends of the strings.

After picking up the tennis ball with the rubber band, they must carefully walk to the opposite end of the room to drop the tennis ball into their bucket.

Players must lift the tennis balls up with the string and not drag them on the floor.

If the tennis ball drops anywhere other than in the team's designated bucket, they must pick it up and return to the starting point and start again.

TEACHING

In this game, everyone had to work together and do their part to be able to move your ball to the bucket. It's kind of the same way with church. We all need to work together to accomplish what God wants us to do. Today we are going to talk about why the church is so important and why it's important for us to belong to a church.

LESSON, PART ONE: WHAT IS A CHURCH?

DISCUSSION

What is a church? *Let the kids give answers.*

TEACHING

The church is actually a few things.

First, the church is a family. When you become a Christian, God adopts you as his child. That means we are all brothers and sisters. We are all one *really* big family. That doesn't just include the members of our church here but *all* the members of *all* the Christian churches. Everyone who has ever asked Jesus to forgive their sins and come live in their heart is a part of that family.

Second, the church is supposed to be a picture of what God's kingdom is like. We aren't perfect, like we will be in heaven, but we are a group of believers trying to live like Jesus. So when the world looks at us, they should see what community *should* be like. As much as we are able, we should be showing the world how God created us to be, as individuals and as a community.

Because of the fall, this world and people are not how God created us to be. As Christians grow closer to God and more Christ-like, we realize more and more that this world is not our home. Our home is in heaven. We can see this world as a temporary mission field.

"We are here so that the outside world would look at us and see something different and ask, 'You guys aren't from around here, are you?' No, we aren't. Our citizenship is in heaven, and we're waiting for our Savior to come from there to here and make all things new."

(Love Your Church, page 17)

So, why is it important for us to be a part of this community?

ILLUSTRATION

Take several dowel rods, or sticks of similar lengths and thicknesses. Demonstrate how easy it is to break one stick on its own versus trying to break several at once. You can use a volunteer to help you with this.

TEACHING

As you saw, one stick on its own can be easily defeated. But as a group, a family, we are able to stand up against the world.

Another way of looking at it is light in the dark. We are called to be the light to the world. When you have one small candle in a large dark room, it doesn't make much of a dent in the darkness. But a group of candles can make a big difference.

Being a part of a church family makes us stronger and provides a greater witness to the world than we could make on our own.

LESSON, PART TWO: BELONGING TO A CHURCH

TEACHING

In his letter to the church of Ephesus, Paul describes the church as the body of Christ. He explains that, just like how the different parts of the body have different functions (feet play a different role than eyes), different members of the church have different functions in the church. We are all needed to make the church work the way it's supposed to.

DISCUSSION

If time allows, stop here and talk with the kids about different tasks and ministries in the church and how they can do their part now.

TEACHING

Another reason we should be part of a local church is community. God created us for community. He created Eve because he saw that it was not good for man to be alone. We all learned during Covid how important seeing each other in person is. John wrote in 2 John 12, "Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete."

"John says there are limits to pen and ink (or, for us, the computer/texting/video). Emails, texts, and calls are poor substitutes for embodied relationships." (*Love Your Church*, page 34)

We need face-to-face interactions. We need physical touch—handshakes, hugs, pats on the back. Without that we can lose our joy.

For all the reasons we've talked about today, we should never treat church as unimportant or unnecessary. No church is perfect, because we still live in a fallen world, but church is needed. We need to be part of the church for strength, for community, to do our needed part in the church, and to help show that picture of God's kingdom to the world. Always remember that being able to belong to the church is a privilege. It's a gift to share in worship, to go through life together, and to serve together. It's a gift to have other people we can stand together with against what we know is wrong and to know that we will one day be together with all the church members around the world in eternal worship of God.

PRAYER

Say thank you to God for your church.

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

READ

Read *God's Very Good Idea* by Trillia Newbell.

COLOR

Use some pages from *God's Very Good Idea Coloring and Activity Book*.

TWO: WELCOMING

INTRODUCTORY GAME: SHARKS AND MINNOWS

HOW TO PLAY

Choose one or two people to be a shark. This could be leaders or children. Everyone else is a minnow.

The shark stands in the middle of the play area and says, "Fishy, fishy, come out and play!" The minnows must slowly walk toward the sharks.

At any time the shark can yell, "Shark attack!" At this point, the minnows must run to the opposite boundary line without being tagged.

If a minnow is tagged, he or she becomes a shark. Then replay. The last minnows left are the winners.

TEACHING

In this game, the shark's goal was to make all the other players into sharks. This was done in a scary way, but it makes me think of how we should treat other people in church. Obviously we don't want to threaten or literally chase people, but we do want to encourage people to come to our church and to learn about Jesus. We want people to feel welcome and want to become part of our church family.

So while we don't want to chase our visitors down and tag them, we do want to say hello, see if they need anything, and make them feel welcome.

LESSON: DON'T PLAY FAVORITES

DISCUSSION

In James 2, James is writing to the church about playing favorites.

- How many of you have ever felt as if you were being treated like the favorite, or teacher's pet?
- How many of you ever felt left out and like someone else was favored over you?

TEACHING

James is talking about people in the church who were treating those who had money or were powerful as if they were better than other people.

Read James 2:1-4.

Is that the way we should welcome people into the church? Last week, we talked about how God intended the church to be an example of what community and his kingdom should be like. Part of that means treating everyone as equals.

Christ didn't play favorites when he laid down his life to pay for our sins. He didn't do it just for the rich people, or the popular kids, or only people of a certain color or from a certain country. He died for everyone! Paul was thinking of that when he wrote in Romans 15:7, "Welcome one other as Christ has welcomed you" (ESV).

In your family, is anyone more important than anyone else? Hopefully not! That's how it should be in a church family too.

ACTIVITY

Using a white board or piece of butcher paper, make a list together of ways we can be welcoming and a list of ways we can be unwelcoming. (Try to include some things that are specific to your church, as well as more general ideas that can apply anywhere.)

PRAYER

Prayer is important for being welcoming. We need to ask God to help us remember how he welcomed us, to show us if we aren't thinking of or treating everyone the same, and to pray for our leaders and fellow members to be welcoming too.

Spend some time in prayer.

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

CRAFT

Have the kids make cards saying, "Welcome, we are glad you visited!" Or choose something else that they can hand out when they see a visitor at church.

READ

Read *The Big Wide Welcome* by Trillia Newbell together.

COLOR

Use some pages from *The Big Wide Welcome Coloring and Activity Book*.

THREE: GATHERING

INTRODUCTORY GAME: STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

(FROM YOUNG-CATHOLICS.COM)

THE FIRST CHALLENGE

Divide the players into groups of three. Give each group two shopping bags and six cans.

Each player must hold a can in each hand with their arms straight out. The arms must not be held downward or upward. They should hold this position for one minute or more.

THE SECOND CHALLENGE

Each group now needs to choose one member of their group to hold the cans out in the same way. The other two members support their teammate's arms in whatever way they like. They should hold this position for the same amount of time as for the first challenge.

Ask the players the following questions:

- For those holding the cans, was this easier or more difficult?
- For those supporting arms, was this easier or more difficult?

THE THIRD CHALLENGE

Each group must now place their six cans in two shopping bags, three cans in each bag. One team member holds the two shopping bags straight out while the other two support his or her arms. All group members must remain standing. The supporting members must only support the arms between the shoulder and the elbow. The group which holds their position for the longest wins!

DISCUSSION

Who do you normally turn to for help? Do you ever think of asking your church for help?

Discuss how God supports us when our burdens seem heavy, and how we can support each other.

LESSON, PART ONE: REGULAR GATHERING

TEACHING

We just demonstrated that other people can support us when we need help. That is actually part of why God created the church. We've talked over the last couple of weeks about why we should belong to a local church and how we should welcome other people to come belong to that family as well. This week we will be learning about why it's important to not just belong but regularly gather together with that family.

When we gather in worship, we aren't just gathering with those we can see. We are joining "thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly" and the "church of the firstborn"

(Hebrews 12:22-23, NIV). That church of the firstborn is all Christians everywhere and through all time. What a privilege to be able to worship with all those saints and angels, to be able to add our voices to that chorus! In fact, part of why we should bring our worship to God is in thanks for our acceptance into this great kingdom (Hebrews 12:28). Gathering with this assembly is a taste of and a picture of what heaven will be like—praising God with all his people.

Let's take a look at a story from Acts about the early church to see the example that is set for us to follow in our gatherings.

Read Acts 20:7-12.

First of all, you can see that they met on the first day of the week. The way this reads, it seems that the church met weekly. They knew it was important to meet on a regular basis.

DISCUSSION

What habits do you have? Good or bad?

Talk for a minute about how our habits shape us. Use the examples the kids have given. Point out how habits like reading their Bible and praying could shape their lives for the better.

So we should attend church regularly, if for no other reason than because it's a good habit that can help us.

TEACHING

Also, you never know what you might miss. Look at the passage we just read. Would you want to be the one who missed the kid falling out the window and being brought back to life?!

We shouldn't come just because we might miss something. But did you know that it's actually dangerous to not assemble regularly? You may meet Christians who attend church weekly that are not thriving in their faith, but you will almost never meet one who *doesn't* go to church who is thriving. We need that support, that encouragement, that family connection to grow in our faith and relationship with Jesus.

ILLUSTRATION: A SPECIAL FRIENDSHIP

(From *Science and the Bible* by Donald DeYoung)

Tie several pendulums (for example, marbles taped to strings) to a slack horizontal supporting string, which should be attached to the backs of two chairs placed four feet apart. Each pendulum has a different length, with just two of them being equal. Lengths between two and three feet work well. It is not critical that the pendulums weigh exactly the same amount.

Start one of the equal pendulums swinging. The others vibrate somewhat. However, the matching pendulum will gradually pick up motion, and finally the two will swing together. The two equal-length pendulums are in resonance, or in tune, with each other.

If the described motion does not occur, try tightening the top supporting string. If the matched pendulums are not quite equal in length, something else interesting happens: the first pendulum will cease moving altogether, giving all its energy to its partner. Then the process will reverse itself and the original pendulum will slowly gain its motion.

TEACHING

Christians should support and energize each other, like the two matched pendulums. There is a special bond or connection between them. Other people (the remaining pendulums) are not ignored, but there is an obvious link between the true believers. Just as the two equal pendulums energize each other and share their motion, Christians share the love of Christ and also extend it to others.

LESSON, PART TWO: WHAT WE DO WHEN WE GATHER

TEACHING

There are essentially two parts to our regular gatherings.

In one part, we are speaking to God. That is when we sing and when we pray.

All through Scripture, we see examples of people worshipping God through music. Music can take all kinds of forms—there’s a huge variety. But all the passages emphasize that the singing should be from the heart. It’s not so much about the form, it’s the substance.

As Paul tells us in Hebrews 13:15-16, we need to continually offer up that “sacrifice of praise” and not neglect doing so. So we should sing even when we don’t feel like it. It doesn’t matter if you don’t like to sing, if you don’t think you sound good, or whatever else. It’s not about you. Praise and worship is about God. We worship him because of who he is and what he has done for us. That doesn’t change with our feelings or wants.

The second part is when God speaks to us through the pastor.

If the pastor is speaking from God’s word, he is speaking from God. He is bringing a life-changing message to everyone listening.

We should listen attentively, looking for ways we can apply the message to our lives. Taking notes can help us stay focused and keep our minds from wandering.

DISCUSSION

What are some things we can do now to make the most of our church gatherings? *Discuss and brainstorm with the kids.*

PRAYER

Divide into groups to pray for one another.

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

READ

Read *God’s Big, Big Church* (B&H) together.

FOUR: CARING

INTRODUCTORY GAME: A LITTLE HELP FROM YOUR FRIENDS

(FROM CLASSROOM.SYNONYM.COM)

HOW TO PLAY

Give each child a tissue to place on his or her head.

Instruct the children to move around while keeping the tissue on their heads. (You can play music while they do.) If a tissue falls off, the child will freeze. Another child needs to help the frozen child by placing the tissue back on the frozen child's head, allowing the frozen child to rejoin the game.

TEACHING

We've been talking about our responsibilities as church members. So far we have learned that we have the responsibility to *belong* to a local church, to *welcome* those who come to our church, and to *gather* on a regular basis for worship. Today we are talking about our responsibility to *care* for other church members.

In the game, you often needed help to keep playing. In our lives, we often need help too. Sometimes we need encouragement, or someone to help take care of us when we are sick, or sometimes we even need help with money. Just like a family helps each other, our church family should help each other too.

LESSON, PART ONE: WHEN WE NEED HELP

TEACHING

In the early church, back in the times of the New Testament, people often remarked about how well the early church cared for one another. Would people say that about our church? Or would they say that we talk mean about each other, or gossip about each other? The Bible tells us over and over and over about how we should take care of each other. If we were to follow all the instructions the Bible tells us to do to care for one another, our church would look very, very different than other groups of people in the world. And that's the point. That's another way that we can show the world how good God's kingdom is.

In the game, you needed to watch for other kids who needed help. We should be doing that in our everyday lives. We should "be alert to the burdens of others and be committed to making them lighter" (*Love Your Church*, page 82).

Also, you should let people know when you need help. Your church family can't help if we don't know you need help.

And this isn't just a job for "grown-ups". This is a responsibility for all Christians. We should all be looking for ways to help those around us. And even if it's not something you can help with, you can turn to the grown-ups around you to find ways to help. Maybe you will notice a need that a grown-up didn't see. Even if you can't personally help meet the need, you are helping by making sure someone who can help knows about it.

LESSON, PART TWO: LOVING EACH OTHER

(FROM FAITHWEAVER SPRING QUARTER, SESSION 11)

DISCUSSION

Read Acts 2:42-47.

- Why was it important that the early Christians shared with those in need? (*Everyone could spend more time learning about God; they could help each other have faith.*)
- Why did so many people want to be part of the early church? (*People were helping each other; people could see God's love in the early church.*)
- What can we do in our church to be more like the early Christians? (*We can listen to people's prayer requests and pray for them; we can share our stuff with people who don't have as much.*)
- What specific things can you do personally to be more like the early Christians? (*Sing praise songs; visit kids from church and talk about God; help a friend who needs help with homework or something; tell a grown-up if you see a friend who needs something you can't help with.*)

People who love God find ways to express that love. God wants us to love him wholeheartedly and to share his love with one another. We please him when we're loving toward others.

ILLUSTRATION

Use the pendulum from last week.

Just as the pendulum affected the others around it, so our actions affect the lives of those around us. We can't be doing and thinking about bad things and then expect good things to come out of us. So it's going to be very hard to care for those around us, or even to notice the needs of those around us, if we aren't planting good things. Also, when we focus on God, we are better able to see the needs of those around us because God teaches us to see and love others as he sees and loves them.

TEACHING

Our personal lives impact our relational lives. Galatians 6:7 tells us that what we sow, we reap—in other words, what we plant and put care into is what we will harvest. If you plant apples, you get apples. If you "plant" sin (spending your time and energy on things of the world), you harvest sin and the consequences. If you "plant" holiness (spending your time on prayer, Bible study, worship, and serving God), you will harvest holiness and God's blessing.

"When I seek to put sin to death in my life, it will inevitably bless others; and when I am indulging in sin, it will have a negative impact on others. We never really sin in isolation."

(*Love Your Church*, page 86)

Love is a verb, not an object or a feeling. It's something we *do*. It requires action. Christ didn't just say that he loved us; he *showed* us by dying on the cross for us.

Let's look at 1 John 3:16: "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers." (ESV)

And in verses 17-18, John asks us, if we see someone in need and don't help them, how can we say that we have God's love in us? He tells us that we are to love not just in words, but in actions. Real love will move us to act.

PRAYER

Invite the children to thank Jesus for his love and to pray for members of the church who are in particular need at the moment.

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

CRAFT: CARING AIRPLANES

(From sermons4kids.com)

Give each child a sheet of paper to make a paper airplane. They should decorate it by writing or illustrating some ways to show we care.

After all the planes have been made and decorated, let the children fly their plane to another child in the class, to represent spreading their caring from person to person.

FIVE: SERVING

INTRODUCTORY GAME: LEGO PLAY

(FROM THE LEGO SERMON BY MIKE BORGSTED, VIA THE HOLYMESS.COM)

STAGE ONE

Give each child one LEGO brick. Try to make sure they are as varied as possible.

TEACHING

Each of you has a brick in your hand, but one brick really doesn't do a whole lot. It's not designed to be a solo player. The word "LEGO" comes from the Danish phrase "leg godt," which means "play well." You don't play well by yourself. You need other bricks to put together to do things, to be creative with them. And that's the wonderful thing about LEGO. You can put the bricks together in many different ways and produce many different things.

STAGE TWO

Have the kids get into a group and build something with their bricks.

TEACHING

LEGO bricks are not designed to be solo things. They're designed to be put together in ways that create new things.

That is like us in the body of Christ, the church. Each of you is like an individual brick. Each of you has your own different gifts and ways to serve. Each LEGO piece is different and unique, but it doesn't work until you put them together. The more we work together and bring our gifts and talents to work for God and his church, the more we will build up the body of Christ.

LESSON, PART ONE: USING OUR GIFTS

TEACHING

We've talked over the last few weeks about how God created us for community. We need each other. One of the ways we are needed in the church is serving. We have talked about caring for one another, and that is a type of service, but there are lots of other ways to serve in the church too.

We all have what are called spiritual gifts. God created each of us with special gifts and talents and we should use those to serve him. We will talk about what those gifts are and how to use them in a minute, but first I want to talk about why we should use those gifts for God.

First off, God gave them to us to use for the church. If your mom gave you money to buy lunch and you bought a toy instead, you wouldn't have used that money the way you were supposed to, correct?

Second, Jesus gave us everything—even his life. That love should move us to action. It makes me so thankful that I want to give back to him. I can do that by using my gifts for him.

Third, Christ is coming back. What do you want to be doing when he returns? Do you want to be wasting your life and talents, or to be doing what he called us to do?

DISCUSSION

- When a parent or teacher leaves the room for a minute, what do you want them to find you doing when you get back? What you are supposed to be doing, or something else?
- Which would be better for you?
- What do you want to be doing when Christ comes back? Why?

LESSON, PART TWO: WHAT ARE OUR GIFTS?

TEACHING

So what are spiritual gifts? These are special talents that we all have as Christians that help us as we serve in the church. Something to keep in mind is that we are all called to do many different actions or ways of serving at some point, but we all have certain areas that we will naturally do better in than others.

We are going to talk about four main types of spiritual gifts: teaching, serving, giving, and encouraging.

Teaching gifts involve showing God’s love by teaching people. This could involve teaching a class, helping someone understand Scripture, or sharing your wisdom to see the right thing to do in a situation. This might be your gift if you enjoy studying the Bible and learning new things, if you ask lots of questions and want to understand everything, or if you are good at giving good advice.

Serving gifts involve showing God’s love by meeting people’s needs. This is what we meant in the last session when we talked about caring. We are all called to care for one another, but some of us are more gifted in that than others.

Serving gifts can include things like being more attuned to the needs of others, being aware of when things need fixing, and being good at organizing things or people. You might be gifted in service if you like helping people, if you like to work “behind the scenes” making things run smoothly, or if you like knowing people can depend on you.

Giving gifts can involve, well, giving gifts! These are the people who just love to give. They give of their time, their things, their home, their money. They have been blessed by God and can’t wait to share that blessing. If you like to give even when you don’t get a thank-you, you probably have the gift of giving.

Finally, we have the gifts of encouragement. These gifts involve showing God’s love by encouraging spiritual growth in others. This can include showing your faith that God can handle anything, comforting people around you who are hurting, showing mercy to people, and helping others grow in their faith. You can do that by praying for others, asking them about their quiet times, dropping notes of encouragement, and saying thank you when you see someone serving God well.

There are more gifts, but most fall in these categories.

DISCUSSION

- Which spiritual gifts do you think God might have given you?
- Which spiritual gift would you like to ask God to give you?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer based on what you have discussed.

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

SPIRITUAL GIFTS INVENTORIES

“Spiritual Gifts for Kids” from DiscipleLand.

“Spiritual Gifts Inventory” from 3 Little Teachers, via Teachers Pay Teachers.

CRAFT

“My Spiritual Gifts” folder from 3 Little Teachers, via Teachers Pay Teachers.

SIX: HONORING

INTRODUCTORY GAME: SHEEP GAMES

(FROM SERMONS4KIDS.COM)

GAME ONE: SHEEP TAG

The children will play a game of tag. One child will be designated as the “shepherd” and will try to tag the other children, who represent the sheep. When one of the “sheep” is tagged, that child will lie down right where they were tagged. Continue to play until all of the sheep are lying down. Children can make sheep sounds while laying down. Allow different children to be the shepherd if time allows.

GAME TWO: SHEEP VOICES

Have the children sit in a circle representing sheep in a pen. One of the children will wear a blindfold and will be the shepherd. The teacher will point to one student at a time to make a baa-baa sound. The shepherd will listen to the baa-baa sounds of the sheep and will try to guess which sheep is calling.

LESSON, PART ONE: WHAT IS A PASTOR?

DISCUSSION

This week we are talking about our responsibility as a church member to honor our pastor. So what is a pastor?

We know that [name] is our pastor, but what is his job? What does he do?

Pastors do a lot more than just preach. The Bible actually refers to pastors as shepherds.

Who knows what a shepherd does? (*Answers should include know, care, protect, and feed.*)

ILLUSTRATION: SHEPHERD'S CROOK

If you can get hold of a shepherd's crook, hold it up now. Alternatively, show a picture.

Shepherds use their crook for a lot of things when they are caring for their sheep. If the sheep tries to go the wrong way, they can hook it with the crook and steer it back onto the right path. They can also use it as a staff to protect the sheep from a wild animal.

Pastors don't use a shepherd's crook, but they do have the Bible. When we stray off our path or our church is being attacked by Satan, the pastor uses the Bible to teach us what we should do—what God wants us to do.

TEACHING

Pastors have a good example to follow to know how to do their jobs.

Who in the Bible was called the Good Shepherd?

That's right: Jesus!

When we have a pastor who is following Jesus' example and is a good and faithful pastor, we should honor them for that sacrifice and work. Being a pastor is a very big responsibility. Pastors are responsible for the spiritual health of their whole congregation! That sounds like a really big and important job to me!

LESSON, PART TWO: HOW TO TREAT OUR PASTOR

TEACHING

So, we know what a pastor does, but where is the part about our responsibility to honor pastors? Let's see what the Bible has to say about how we are supposed to honor our pastor.

Read the following Bible passages together.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13: Respect faithful pastors. If you see a pastor that is being a good shepherd, you should treat them with respect and listen to their instruction.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:13: Love your pastor. Remember they are a part of the church family too!
- Hebrews 13:7: Follow the pastor's example. A pastor should be a great example of living a holy life, pleasing to the Lord.
- Hebrews 13:17: Be a joy to pastor. Don't be gossipy, quarrelsome, or grumbly. Be productive, involved, and joyful!
- 2 Thessalonians 3:1: Pray for your pastor. This is one of many examples of Paul asking his churches to pray for him. The pastor has a really big job and responsibility and needs lots of prayer!

DISCUSSION

So, what are some specific things that we can do for our pastor?

PRAYER

Close by praying for your pastor.

ACTIVITY

Take a large sheet of butcher paper with "Thank EWE for shepherding our flock!" written on it. Give each child a simple picture of a sheep (or ask them to draw one). Have the children write their name on their sheep, then decorate it and cut it out. Glue all the sheep to the display paper.

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

TRIVIA GAME

Use the "Meet the Pastor" trivia game from kidsenjoyingjesus.com, or devise your own quiz about your church's pastor.

SEVEN: WITNESSING

INTRODUCTORY GAME: PASS IT ON

(FROM SUNDAYSCHOOLNETWORK.COM)

HOW TO PREPARE

You will need 20 ping-pong balls, 2 boxes or bags to hold the balls, and a spoon for each player.

Write one letter from the phrase “Jesus Saves” on each of the first ten ping-pong balls (one letter per ball). Then do the same for the remaining ten. Place each set of balls in a box or bag, jumbled up.

Divide the children into two teams. Each team should line up, standing shoulder to shoulder, approximately two feet away from the other team. Place the box of balls at one end of each team line.

HOW TO PLAY

The object of the game is to pass the balls from the box to the end of the team’s line, then assemble the balls to form a two-word phrase (show one of the balls with a letter written on it).

Don’t tell the kids the phrase, but do give them a clue: the phrase is something Christians should want to pass on to others.

At the word “go,” the first person in each team scoops a ball onto his or her spoon and passes it on to the next player in line. The next player receives the ball with his or her spoon and passes it on to the next player in line, who passes it to the next player, and the next, and so on until the ball reaches the end of the line. The last player in line lays the ball down on the floor next to his or her feet.

As soon as the first ball is passed on to the second player in line, the first player in line may scoop up a second ball from the box and begin to pass it down the line to the end player.

When all the balls are passed down the line, each team must try to assemble the letters to form the phrase written on the balls. The winner is the first team to arrange and proclaim the secret phrase!

LESSON: WAYS TO SHARE THE GOSPEL

TEACHING

Why do people come to church for the first time? Do they just wake up one Sunday and say, “I should go to church today.”? That doesn’t usually happen! People almost always go to church, especially for the first time, because someone invited them.

Inviting people to church and telling people about how Jesus died for their sins is every Christian’s job. I know sometimes, especially as kids, we think that these are jobs for the pastor or the other church leaders. But the Bible doesn’t say that. It says that we are all supposed to share our faith!

Suppose something really exciting happened. For example, what if your parents told you that you were getting a new baby brother or sister. Or maybe that you are going to Disneyworld! Would you want to tell people about that? Of course you would! When something exciting happens, we want to talk about it. We love to share good news with people, especially with our friends and family. It should be like that with telling people about Jesus! Just like we passed on the good news that Jesus saves in our game earlier, so we should be passing on that good news to everyone we know.

So how do we do that? We are going to talk about three things that can help us.

DISCUSSION

First, we don't just share the gospel by talking. We need to show our faith, not just talk about it!

When you are living like Christ and displaying the fruits of the Spirit, people will notice!

Who knows what the fruits of the Spirit are?

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. If you met someone who was showing even some of those, you would want to be around them and find out why they are so different.

Have you ever been around someone who was joyful? I mean REALLY joyful? Aren't they fun to be around?

And what about someone who is very kind and patient?

Or how about someone who is very loving and peaceful?

When I meet someone like that, I want to know more about them. People are drawn to those qualities.

TEACHING

What is something that can keep you from talking to others about Jesus? Maybe you are afraid of what other people might think about you or say to you.

This second thing will help you with that. We need to remember how amazing and powerful God is—all the things he has done for us, and how holy and glorious he is! This makes us less worried about other people and their opinions, because we realize that the only opinion that should truly matter to us is God's. Seeing how big and amazing God is should keep us from being trapped in our fear.

The third thing is to be ready. In 1 Peter 3:15, Peter tells us to "always [be] prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" (ESV). We talked about how if we live like Christ, people are likely to ask us about what makes us different. We need to be ready to answer those questions!

This doesn't mean that you have to know everything. It doesn't mean you have to wait until you know the Bible really, really well. It doesn't mean you have to be able to answer every single question that people might ask you. All it means is that when someone asks you what is different about you—maybe why you are so happy or kind—you are ready to tell them about Jesus, your faith, and your hope!

- If you are doing all three of those things, does that mean that you are going to see everyone you know come to church or become Christians right away?

No, of course not.

- How many of you have been fishing? Do you get a bite as soon as you drop your line in the water?

Almost never! Jesus compared witnessing to fishing for a reason. He knew that it takes patience. And it can take talking to someone about God more than once. It can take being faithful in talking to them and being Christ-like to them for a long time. In fact, you may never see a result! But that doesn't matter. What matters is that you are doing what you are supposed to be doing. God will take care of the rest!

Let's see an example of how this works.

ILLUSTRATION: MOVING A MOUNTAIN

(From *Science and the Bible* by Donald DeYoung)

You need a heavy weight, a strong cord, and a small hammer. Suspend the weight on the cord from the ceiling or something high and sturdy.

When the weight is hanging still, gently tap it. Keep tapping. The weight will slowly start to move and pick up speed and motion.

Say: When you are a consistent witness to others in the way you act, and you talk to people about God and invite them to church, it can add up to big results for God's glory! Never underestimate the influence of a consistent Christian life.

PRAYER

Ask God to show you opportunities to be a witness in the coming week, or pray for those you know who are not yet Christians.

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

WORKSHEET

Use the Week 7 worksheet from the *Love Your Church* resources at The Good Book Company website. Go over the categories of people, and encourage the kids to pick at least one person from each and at least one thing they can do for each.

CRAFT

Have the kids make invitations to church that they can give to someone.

COLOR

"Tell My Friends About Jesus" coloring sheet (from sermons4kids.com).

EIGHT: SENDING

INTRODUCTORY GAME: CORPORATE CONSTRUCTION

(FROM THE GIGANTIC BOOK OF GAMES FOR YOUTH MINISTRY, VOLUME 1)

HOW TO PLAY

You will need two LEGO kits, each divided between multiple sandwich bags.

Lay out the instructions for the build and give each child a sandwich bag containing LEGO bricks. Inform the kids that they need to use their pieces to build the kit according to the instructions. They will need to work together with others to have all the pieces they need. The first team to complete the kit wins.

LESSON: JUST LIKE THE EARLY CHURCH

TEACHING

This week we are talking about the last of the 8 responsibilities we all have as church members. That responsibility is *sending*.

The book of Acts in the New Testament tells us the story of the early church. Acts was written by Luke. It is “Part 2” of the Gospel of Luke. So, it’s actually *not* just a story of the early church—it’s a continuation of the story of Jesus. It’s how the early church carried out the mission of Jesus.

Acts ends on a cliffhanger. We are left with lots of questions about what happened to Paul, to Peter, to the early churches, and so many more loose ends! But that’s because the story wasn’t over. It still isn’t! We are actually part of that story too—because we are a part of the church and part of God’s big story. This story and our mission will continue until Jesus returns!

That mission is to be a world-changing local church. We are to spread the gospel both locally and to the ends of the earth. So how can we do that?

We are going to think about a church that Luke told us about in the book of Acts. That church is the church of Antioch. Antioch was a city back in Bible times. It was the third largest city in the Middle East back then. It sat on a major crossroads and was filled with people from lots and lots of countries. These people came from all kinds of backgrounds and religions.

Up until this church started, most Christians were Jewish. Some were Samaritans, who were close cousins to the Jewish people, but most were Jews.

So the Christians who came and started preaching in Antioch were breaking some major social barriers. They were talking to non-Jewish people about Jesus, and that would have surprised lots of people. But we know that Jesus died for all people—not just the Jews or any other one people group. And just like those Christians in Antioch, we should share the gospel with everyone—not just people like us.

In fact, the leaders of the church of Antioch were very diverse! From the little we know about them, we believe that there were leaders from Africa, Cyprus, Rome, and somewhere near Egypt. And their church was probably just as diverse. So a visitor would have been able to see at a glance that the gospel was for everyone.

This church was growing, and word got back to the church in Jerusalem. The Jerusalem church decided that they wanted to send a man named Barnabas to check out the church in Antioch and see if he could help. Just like we need someone to teach and guide us when we become a Christian, a new church needs help and guidance, and lots of encouragement! And Barnabas was the right man for that job. He was actually known as the “son of encouragement”! What a great nickname! Barnabas sent for Paul to come help too, and he and Barnabas spent a whole year in Antioch training and equipping leaders there.

What were they teaching them to do? To keep spreading the gospel and be even more effective at it. They did this in several ways.

DISCUSSION

First, they did this by showing mercy. Mercy ministry means “meeting needs through deeds.” It’s taking care of the physical needs of other people—whether they live near us or not. The church in Antioch learned about a famine and used the position they were in as a major trading city to send food and other supplies to the church in Jerusalem.

What about us? Can you think of some ways our church helps meet people’s needs?

Discuss with the children any collections your church has made to help people’s physical needs—either locally or around the world.

Another way that the church in Antioch spread the gospel was by sending out missionaries.

What about us? Can you think of some people our church has sent out as missionaries?

Talk with the children about any mission trips your church members have been involved with, or long-term missionaries you support.

The last way that this church spread the gospel was by planting new churches. All through the New Testament we see this pattern. A new church is planted in a big city like Antioch, and then that church would plant more churches in the rural areas around them.

What about us? Can you think of how our church has been involved in planting new churches?

Discuss anything relevant to your church here.

TEACHING

All of these things—mercy ministries, sending missionaries, and planting churches—require people to work together. Remember how you worked together to put together those LEGO kits earlier? It’s like that. It takes all of us working together to spread the gospel as a church.

And it’s not just that. Being a church takes all of us carrying out our eight responsibilities as a church member.

Who can remember all eight?

PRAYER

Close by praying for the spread of the gospel in the whole world. You could pray for your church's mission partners.

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY

"I Can Be a Missionary" activity book from Georgia Baptist Convention.