

# The First Church

Scripture Reference: [Acts 2:42-47](#)



**Suggested Emphasis:** Emphasise the fact that the church today is not a building but is made up of Christians. The church today does the same things as the early church.



Background Study



Story Introduction



Telling the Story



Review Questions



Songs



Learning Activities



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## Story Overview:

The early church was full of excitement as they saw more and more people becoming Christians every day. Many people who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost stayed longer to be with the rest of the new Christians. The church devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread (Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

## Background Study:

[Click here for an overview of the Book of Acts](#)

The church began on the day of Pentecost ([Acts 2:1-4](#)) with the Apostles preaching the good news about King Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. See the lesson [Sermon at Pentecost](#). It must have been amazing to witness about 3,000 people accepting and becoming followers of King Jesus through baptism ([Acts 2:36-41](#)). The church grew rapidly at this time as “the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” (NIV).

Thousands of Jews were gathered in Jerusalem for the Pentecost Feast. The holiday was held 50 days after the Passover so it makes sense that it was known, at that time, by the Greek word for 50, or “Pentecost”. In [Leviticus 23:15-22](#) it was called the “Feast of Weeks” but it is also known to Jews as “Shavuot” which is “weeks” in Hebrew. Pentecost was a week of celebration for the harvest but also was traditionally associated with the giving of Law. This feast explains why so many people were in Jerusalem. It also explains why so many were able to extend their stay in the city and enjoy the fellowship of their new brothers and sisters in Christ.

This was a very Jewish church in Jerusalem. The apostles were Jewish and these new Christians would have been Jewish. The Jews that heard the apostles share the good news had come from many places to celebrate the Feast ([Acts 2:5-11](#)). After becoming Christians they enjoyed a time of beautiful fellowship before the time came for many of them to head back to their homes far away. Just before he ascended to heaven Jesus had said that everything would begin in Jerusalem ([Acts 1:7-8](#)) but that it would spread out to the “ends of the earth.”

The Jerusalem church in these early days can serve as a model of what a church should be like. They were an extremely diverse group yet they came together in the church with devotion, sincerity and joy in four main areas.

1. The Apostles’ Teaching ([Acts 2:42-43](#)):

The apostles continued to fulfil what Jesus had told them to do. “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and

of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” ([Matthew 28:19-20](#), NIV). The apostles were proving the authority of what they were saying through wonders and miraculous signs. The church was filled with awe ([Acts 2:43](#)).

2. Fellowship ([Acts 2:42, 44-47](#)):

The new Christians continued to meet together every day in the temple courts. Many Jews would run out of food as they had probably come to Jerusalem only prepared to stay for the duration of the Feast of Pentecost. Those that had something to sell sold it to provide for others around them. They shared everything. Verse 47 records that they enjoyed favour with the people and that new Christians were being added every day. It was as Jesus had said, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” ([John 13:35](#), NIV)

3. Breaking of Bread ([Acts 2:42, 46](#)):

They did not just meet in the temple courts. They also met together in homes. They shared meals together. The “breaking of bread” also seems to indicate that they shared the Lord’s Supper together in remembrance of the death of Jesus. We read later in Acts that Christians continued to meet together on the first day of the week to “break bread” in the Lord’s Supper ([Acts 20:7](#)). Refer to the lesson [The Meaning of the Lord’s Supper](#).

4. Prayer ([Acts 2:42](#)):

This time of gladness, fellowship and new life was also focussed on God through prayer. Again, praying together becomes part of the life to the church. See [Peter’s Miraculous Escape from Prison](#). Other scriptures on prayer: [Romans 12:12](#); [Ephesians 6:18](#); [Philippians 4:6](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:16-18](#); [James 5:13](#)

A church is not a building. The Jerusalem church met in the temple courtyard and in homes but they were still a church. The church is better compared to a body with Jesus Christ being the head and followers of Jesus Christ being parts of the body ([Colossians 1:17-18](#); [1 Corinthians 12:12-27](#)).

As we continue reading the Book of Acts we find the church growing and spreading out to far regions. As the church later faces challenges such as persecution from without and disagreement from within it continues to strive to function in the same way as this early church. No group of people is perfect but, even today, being part of a group that is devoted to one another and to the teachings of Jesus Christ is a blessing like no other.



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## Way to Introduce the Story:

Bring photographs of your family and of your house to class today. After you have shown the photos to the children point to one of the house pictures and ask the children if this is your family. Of course it is not. The house is only the building where my family lives. "Who is my family?" Let the children name the family members. Now show a picture of the church building. Ask the children if this is the church. Of course not, this is only the building where the church meets. "Who is the church?" Let the children name some members of the church.

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## The Story:

Amazing events had been taking place in the city of Jerusalem! For one thing there was a big Holiday. Thousands of Jewish people from many regions and countries had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost. This was a time when the Jews came to thank God for the food and grain he had provided for them in the harvest. They also thanked God for the Law and the Ten Commandments.

But that wasn't the most important event that took place in Jerusalem at that time. Everyone was talking about something new. Peter and the other apostles were telling everyone about Jesus and how he became king. They preached about how Jesus had been killed on a cross but had come back alive. Jesus had gone back to heaven but, before he went, he told the apostles to tell everyone the good news about him.

When people heard about Jesus many of them said they wanted to follow him. They said they were sorry for all of their sins and they were baptised. More and more people decided to obey Jesus and become Christians.

Do you know what a person becomes a part of when they become a Christian? He or she becomes part of the church. Being part of the church means that you follow the church's leader, Jesus. Being part of the church also means you are part of a new family. The other people in the church are your brothers and sisters.

All of the people in Jerusalem who became Christians were now part of the church. It was a very big church! On the first day there were almost 3,000 people in it. More and more people obeyed the teachings of Jesus and were added to the church every day.

What do you think a church should be like today? Do you think you can be a good example and help your church be like the church in Jerusalem?

*The church listened to the apostles teach about Jesus.*

Before he went back to heaven Jesus said this to the apostles. "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." ([Matthew 28:19-20](#), NIV). So that is exactly what the apostles did. They taught people about Jesus every day. Sometimes people needed proof to show that the teachings were really true so the apostles would perform miracles to prove it. The church was filled with awe ([Acts 2:43](#)).

In our time Jesus' teachings are written in the Bible. How can you help your church read the Bible and listen to people teach about Jesus?

*The church had fellowship with one another.*

They met together in the temple courts and in their homes. They weren't even worried that they didn't have a big and beautiful church building. If a Christian brother or sister was hungry or needed clothes then another Christian brother or sister would sell something and use the money to buy what was needed. They shared everything.

What can you do when someone in the church needs help?

*The church shared meals and shared the Lord's Supper together.*

The church often ate food together. When the first day of the week came around the church drank grape juice or wine and ate unleavened bread together to remember Jesus in the Lord's Supper. They wanted to remember again and again all of the good things that Jesus had done.

What can you do to help when your church shares meals together? What do you do when people are remembering Jesus by taking the Lord's Supper?

*The church prayed together.*

God listens when we talk to him. The church in Jerusalem talked to God. Maybe they asked God to help them be good. Maybe they prayed for their Christian brothers and sisters that were sick. Maybe they prayed that more and more people would follow Jesus.

Do you talk to God? What can you pray about for your church? Let's bow our heads now and pray for the church.

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# Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download the slideshow](#) or [Click here to download the pictures to print.](#)

Each teacher is unique so only use the illustrations that best relate to the way YOU are telling the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

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## Review Questions:

1. What are the four things that the early church devoted themselves to? the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread (Lord's Supper), and to prayer
2. Is the church a building? No
3. What is the church? People who are Christians are the church

## Song Suggestions:

- [I'm in the Lord's Army Song](#)
- [I am a C-H-R-I-S-T-I-A-N \(Song\)](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

## Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

*Activities:*

- Make plans for the class to serve a cup of tea to the church after worship.
- Read the church bulletin and circle ways the church fellowships today.
- Make a church bulletin for the Jerusalem church.
- Plan a class fellowship event.
- Arrange to have the children help prepare the Lord's Supper for the church or watch those who prepare it.

### *Crafts:*

- Draw a picture of a church building. Try one of the following:
  - Help the children write the names of church members inside.
  - Or children can draw people inside the building.
  - If you have pictures of church members they could glue the pictures on the



church building.

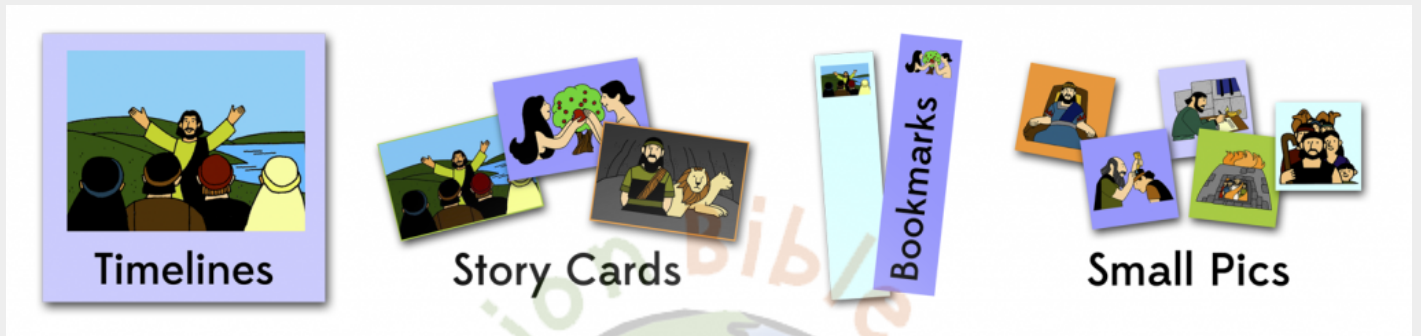
- Use this simple drawing idea [Teaching Children About the Church](#) to help children understand that the church is made up of Christians and is not just a church building.
- Draw pictures of the church in the first century and the church today devoting themselves to bible study, fellowship, the Lord's Supper, and to prayer.
- Have children draw 2 boxes on a paper. Write "church building" over one box. Write "church" over the other. Guide children in drawing or writing words inside



the first box that relate to a building (pews, pulpit, song books...). In the second box have them write about or draw people listening to God's Word, fellowshiping, taking the Lord's Supper and praying. Discuss together as they draw.

[Video Instructions here](#) or [Print a worksheet.](#)

Check the [Teaching Ideas](#) page on this website for ideas that are adaptable to any lesson.



[Click here for "The First Church" printables to print \(A4 paper\)](#)

[Click here for "The First Church" to print \(Letter size-USA\)](#)

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## Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page and puzzle worksheets \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Video: Good simple explanation \(2 minutes and 19 seconds\) from Bible Theater: Acts - The Early Church - LifeKids.tv on Youtube](#)
- [A VBS Lesson that has some good ideas for discussion from   
<http://www.eldrbarry.net/vbs/4/actsstr3.htm>](#)

<https://www.pinterest.com/marynnz/acts-beginning-in-jerusalem/>

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