

The Church

The first-century church thrived and grew because of the early Christians' commitment to sharing, praying, caring, and telling others about Jesus. Their hearts were filled with joy as they lived out the gospel. Those who had enough freely gave to those who didn't. And every day new converts embraced faith in Christ and joined the ranks of his followers. Reading about the first Christians may cause us to think, *If only our churches today could be like the early church.* They can be if we commit to living out the gospel with the same faith and enthusiasm as the early Christians.

Like many adults, most 3- and 4-year-olds think of church as a place to go—a building where people meet with Christian friends to worship and learn about God. These lessons will teach children that the church building is only a meeting place. The true church is the dynamic, loving, growing group of faithful people who believe in Jesus and accept him as Lord. In these lessons on the church, your preschoolers will learn and practice Christian actions and attitudes such as praying, sharing, and caring. Use these lessons to help your preschoolers discover that they, too, are an important part of God's church.

Four Lessons on the Church

Lesson	Bible Point	Page	Bible Basis
10	We are the church, and we share with each other.	131	Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37
11	We are the church, and we pray together.	147	Acts 12:1-17
12	We are the church, and we take care of each other.	163	Acts 16:11-15
13	We are the church, and we tell others about Jesus.	175	Acts 18:1-28



Bible Point ▶

We are the church, and we share with each other.

Bible Verse

“The believers met together...and shared everything they had” (Acts 2:44).

Growing Closer to Jesus

- Children will
- learn that the church is people, not a building,
 - hear how the early church shared,
 - work together on an art project, and
 - share a snack with another class.

Teacher Enrichment

Bible Basis

- **The early Christians share everything.**

**Acts 2:42-47;
4:32-37**



All the things the believers did together apparently developed in them a true sense of unity and concern for one another. Their sharing with one another to meet needs was a demonstration of that unity seldom seen in the history of the world.

We sometimes complain about going to church once or twice a week. But these believers were dedicated to their mission. They met daily. And their example apparently attracted more and more followers. In fact, God blessed what they were doing as new followers were added each day!

The love the early Christians showed to one another made their faith something that others wanted to learn more about; notice that the Christians were actually well-liked for a time. Jesus had told his disciples, “Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples” (John 13:35). As we treat one another with love, people around us will see that we’re followers of Jesus, and they’ll be drawn to him, too!

Prayer

- Read John 13:34-35.
- How does your relationship with other Christians reflect your relationship with Jesus?
- Pray: Lord, help me to treat others with the love you have shown to me. This week help me to reach out with your love to...










It’s important to say the Bible Point just as it’s written in each activity. Repeating the Bible Point again and again will help children remember it and apply it to their lives.

Before the Lesson

- Collect the necessary items for the activities you plan to use, referring to the Classroom Supplies and Learning Lab Supplies listed on the chart.
- Make photocopies of the “Today I Learned...” handout (at the end of this lesson) to send home with your children.
- Pray for the children in your class and for God’s direction as you teach the lesson.

This Lesson at a Glance

	What Children Will Do	Classroom Supplies	Learning Lab Supplies
Welcome Time	Welcome! —Receive name tags, and be greeted by the teacher.	“Easter Lily Name Tags” (p. 10), scissors, marker, safety pins or tape	
Let’s Get Started Direct children to one or more of the optional activities until everyone arrives.	Option 1: Snack to Share —Prepare a snack to share with another class, and hear how the early church shared.	Wax paper, baby wipes, plastic knives, graham crackers, spoon, marshmallow creme, tray	
	Option 2: Sharing Dough —Discover ways to share modeling dough, and hear how the early church shared.	Modeling dough	
	Option 3: Box-It —Share supplies in a game, and hear how the early church shared.	Large box, beanbags or small balls	
	Pick-Up Time —Sing a song as they pick up toys and gather for Bible Story Time.	CD player	
Bible Story Time	Setting the Stage —Form human church shapes, and learn that people are the church.	Blocks	
	Bible Song and Prayer Time —Sing a song, bring out the Bible, and pray together.	Bible, CD player	
	Hear and Tell the Bible Story —Hear a story about the early church from Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-37.	Bible, scissors, plastic bag, bowl, paper towel, small snacks, baby wipes, poster board	
	Do the Bible Story —Share supplies and work together on a craft.	“We Are the Church” (p. 144), cardboard, scissors, hole punch, crayons, glue stick, construction paper	
Closing 	Here’s the Steeple —Teach Whiskers that the church is people, not a building.	Block church from Setting the Stage	
	Snack to Share —Deliver a snack to another class, and sing a Bible verse song.	Bible, snack prepared earlier, baby wipes, CD player	

*See the end of this lesson for extra-time ideas and supplies.

Welcome Time

SUPPLIES: “Easter Lily Name Tags” (p. 10), scissors, marker, safety pins or tape

- Kneel down and make eye contact with children as they arrive.
- Greet each child individually with an enthusiastic smile.
- Thank each child for coming to class today.
- As children arrive, ask them about how they put last week’s lesson into practice. Use questions such as “What did you tell your family about the Holy Spirit?” and “Who did you tell about believing in Jesus this week?”
- Say: **Today we’re going to learn that ► we are the church, and we share with each other.**
- Hand out the Easter lily name tags children made during Lesson 1, and pin or tape them to the children’s clothing. If some of the name tags were damaged or if children weren’t in class that week, have them make new name tags using the photocopiable handout.
- Direct children to the Let’s Get Started activities you’ve set up.



◀ **BIBLE POINT**

Let’s Get Started

Set up one or more of the following activities for children to do as they arrive. After you greet each child, invite him or her to choose an activity.

Circulate between the activities to offer help as needed and direct children’s conversation toward the point of today’s lesson. Ask questions such as “What kinds of things do you share with others?” or “How do you feel when someone shares something with you?”

■ Option 1: Snack to Share

SUPPLIES: wax paper, baby wipes, plastic knives, graham crackers, spoon, marshmallow creme, tray

Tell children they’ll be making a snack that they’ll eat with another group of children later. Have children clean their hands with baby wipes or at a nearby sink. Give each child a sheet of wax paper, a plastic knife or craft stick, two or three graham crackers, and a spoonful of marshmallow creme. Help children spread the marshmallow creme on the crackers and arrange the frosted crackers on a platter or tray.

As children work, talk with them about sharing. Explain that today’s Bible story is about early Christians who shared everything. Remind them that ► we are the church, and we share with each other.

■ Option 2: Sharing Dough

SUPPLIES: modeling dough

Announce that it’s time to play with modeling dough. As the children gather around the table, set all the modeling dough in front of you. Ask the children why no one is playing with the modeling dough. They’ll probably say you didn’t give them any. Then ask them how the modeling dough could be shared.



See page 5.



This is a sticky snack. Be sure to have plenty of baby wipes or damp paper towels on hand for cleanup.

If you choose not to do this activity, you’ll need to bring in a prepared snack for children to share with another class.



◀ **BIBLE POINT**



Try making your own modeling dough from this simple recipe. Mix together 2 cups of flour, 1 cup of salt, and 1 tablespoon of alum. Add 2 cups of boiling water, 3 tablespoons of cooking oil, and several drops of food coloring. Then mix and knead for several minutes.

Give some modeling dough to each child. As children play with the modeling dough, explain that today's Bible story is about how the first Christians shared their things. Encourage them to share their modeling dough with other children who may arrive as they're working.



■ Option 3: Box-It

SUPPLIES: large box, beanbags or small balls

Bring in a large box and several beanbags or small balls. Form two groups and have them sit on the floor.

Set the box several feet away from where children are sitting, and demonstrate how to toss the beanbags into the box. Then give one group the beanbags and the other group the box and send the groups to opposite sides of the room. Tell the group with the beanbags to stand up and play the game. They'll discover they can't play because they don't have the box. Then tell the other group to stand up and play the game. They won't be able to play either because they don't have the beanbags.

Help children discover that they need to share in order to play the game. Have each group take turns tossing beanbags into the box. Point out that they'll still have to share and take turns so that everyone gets a chance to play. As children are playing, explain that today's Bible story is about how the first Christians shared.

When everyone has arrived and you're ready to move on to Bible Story Time, encourage the children to finish what they're doing and get ready to clean up.

■ Pick-Up Time

SUPPLIES: CD player



Lead children in singing "Come Along With Me" (track 2) with the CD to the tune of "Come and Go With Me." Encourage children to sing along as they help clean up the room.

You'll be using this song each week to alert children to start picking up. At first, they may need a little encouragement. But after a few weeks, picking up and singing along will become a familiar routine.



**Come along with me and pick up all our things,
Pick up all our things,
Pick up all our things.
Come along with me and pick up all our things
So our room will be clean.**

(Repeat 2x.)

Bible Story Time

■ Setting the Stage

SUPPLIES: blocks

Tell the children you'll turn the lights off and on to get their attention. Explain that when you flash the lights, the children are to stop what they're doing and be quiet. Encourage children to respond quickly so you'll have time for all the fun activities you've planned.

Ask: • **What did you make or do when you came to class today?** (Made a snack; played with dough; tried to throw beanbags in a box.)

Say: **Some of you fixed a snack to share with another class, some of you shared your modeling dough, and some of you shared beanbags and a box as you played a game. You were all learning important things about sharing. Today we're going to learn that ►we are the church, and we share with each other. Let's build a church together right now.**

Have children help you build a church out of blocks. Children can take turns adding blocks until you run out. Leave the block church standing for use during the puppet script. Say: **This is a very nice building, but it's not really the church. A church is made of people, not blocks. When we talk about going to church, we really mean that we're going to the church building to learn about Jesus with all the people in our church.**

To help us remember that people are the church, let's use our bodies and make human church shapes. Who would like to be my helpers?

Have two children lie on the floor facing each other about two feet apart. Have them raise their arms so their fingertips touch, forming a pointed roof. Have a third child lie on the floor, feet touching the point of the roof and arms outstretched to form a cross shape.

Help other children gather in trios to form human church shapes. Say: **Our church is made up of people, just like your human church shapes. Just as each of you is part of your church shape, we're all part of the church. ►We are the church, and we share with each other. Let's bring out our Bible and find out how the early church shared.**

■ Bible Song and Prayer Time

SUPPLIES: Bible, CD player



tracks 3, 4

Say: **Now it's time to choose a Bible person to bring me the Bible marked with today's Bible story. As we sing our Bible song, we'll pass around our special Bible. The person who's holding the Bible when the music stops will be our Bible person today.**

Lead children in singing "I'm So Glad for the Bible" (track 3) with the CD to the tune of "Give Me Oil in My Lamp." As you sing, pass around the special Bible.



If you can't form trios, form groups of four. The fourth child can sit between the first two children and pretend to be the door to the church.



Remind children that each one will get a turn to bring you the Bible as the weeks go by—and be sure you keep track of who the Bible person is each week so that each child has an opportunity to serve in this way.



SING

I'm so glad for the Bible,
Keep me learnin', learnin', learnin'.
I'm so glad for God's book today.
I'm so glad for the Bible,
Keep me learnin', learnin', learnin'—
Keep me learnin' all about his way.

Let me hear 'bout God's love—
Keep me learnin', learnin', learnin'.
Let me hear 'bout God's love for me.
Let me hear 'bout God's love—
Keep me learnin', learnin', learnin'.
Let's shine the light for all to see.

(Repeat first verse.)

When the music stops, invite the child who's holding the Bible to bring it to you. Stamp the child's hand with the *church stamp*, and thank the child for bringing you the Bible. Then stamp the other children's hands. Return the *church stamp* and *ink pad* to the Learning Lab.

Say: **I'm thankful for** [name of child who brought the Bible], **and I'm thankful for everyone in our class today. Let's thank God together for all our friends in this class.**

Lead children in singing "I'm So Glad We're Together" (track 4) with the *CD* to the tune of "Give Me Oil in My Lamp."



SING

I'm so glad we're together:
Keep us prayin', prayin', prayin'.
I'm so glad we're all here today.
I'm so glad we're together:
Keep us prayin', prayin', prayin'—
Prayin' for each other every day.

Lead children in folding their hands and bowing their heads as you continue to sing.

Thank you, Lord, for each one.
Keep me thankful, thankful, thankful.
Thank you for everyone who's here.
Thank you, Lord, for each one.
Keep me thankful, thankful, thankful—
Thankful for our friends both far and near.



■ Hear and Tell the Bible Story

SUPPLIES: Bible, scissors, plastic bag, bowl, paper towel, small snacks, baby wipes, poster board



Before class, remove Poster 1 from the "We Are the Church" poster pack in the Learning Lab. Cut the poster along the dotted lines on the back. Remove the pieces that picture the children sharing the doll, and set them aside for use at the end of this activity. Place the other pieces in a plastic bag. Set the bag aside to

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use after you tell the Bible story. Cover a bowl of small snacks with a paper towel, and set it nearby.

Help children clean their hands with baby wipes or at a nearby sink. Open the Bible to **Acts 2** and show it to the children. Say: **Our Bible story comes from the book of Acts in the Bible. Today we're going to hear about the very first church.**

The people in the first church didn't have a church building as we do. They met outside or in each other's homes. What do you think it would be like to have church at your house? (Fun; different; crowded.)

Everyone in the first church loved Jesus very much. Jesus' followers taught, and everyone listened. They heard how Jesus showed God's love and how he died on the cross and came back to life. Every day more people heard about Jesus and believed in him.

The people in the first church prayed together. Show me what you look like when you're praying. Pause. **Many wonderful things happened when they prayed. Sick people were made well, and more and more people believed in Jesus. The people in the first church praised God together. We are the church, and we can praise God, too. Let's clap our hands together and say, "Praise God."**

Lead children in clapping their hands and saying, "Praise God." Then continue: **Do you know what else the people in the first church did? They shared everything they had with one another. They shared their food. Do you ever share your food?** Let children respond. Then say: **We're like the first church when we share our food. ► We are the church, and we share with each other. Let's share some food now.**

Give small snacks to the children. As they're eating the snacks, ask:

• **Everyone in the first church shared their things. If you were in the first church, what could you share?** (My stuffed animals; my trucks; my room.) **The people in the first church shared everything. They even shared their money.**

Bring out the plastic bag with the puzzle pieces.

Say: **These puzzle pieces show all the things we're learning about the first church. What do you think we'll see people doing in the puzzle pictures?** (Sharing; praying; going to someone's house for church.)

Today our puzzle will have pictures of the people of the first church talking and eating together. We'll see moms and dads and brothers and sisters meeting together to share their things and learn about Jesus. Everyone will get a chance to put the pieces together because ► we are the church, and we share with each other.

Hold out the bag, and let each child choose a piece. If you have more children than puzzle pieces, have children come up in pairs or trios. Encourage children to take turns and help each other put the puzzle together. You may need to help them match up the pieces.

When children finish the puzzle section, have them tell you what they see in the pictures. Then bring out the puzzle pieces with the children sharing the doll on them. Say: **I have two more pieces to add to our puzzle. Tell me what you see happening on these puzzle pieces.**

Have two more children help you add the last pieces to the puzzle.

Ask: • **What are these children doing?** (Sharing; playing together; sitting on the floor.)



Preschool children are just learning to work simple puzzles. This activity helps build their confidence in their growing skills!





BIBLE POINT



Say: **These children are part of the first church. Remember, the church isn't a building. The first church didn't even have a church building. The church is made up of people who love Jesus. When Jesus is our friend, we want to be with him and with others who love him. ► We are the church, and we share with each other. Let's thank Jesus for giving us the church as a place to share.**

Pray: **Dear Jesus, thank you that you share your love with us. Help us to follow you and share love with others, too. In your name, amen.**

Put the completed puzzle section on a large piece of poster board, and set it aside until next week.

■ Do the Bible Story

SUPPLIES: "We Are the Church" handout (p. 144), cardboard, scissors, hole punch, crayons, glue stick, construction paper



Before class, photocopy and glue the "We Are the Church" page to a piece of cardboard. Cut around the edges, and hole punch as indicated. Cut out one small circle of construction paper for each child. The circles should be about 2 inches in diameter and in light or bright colors that children can draw on easily. Take out the 3-foot length of the *rainbow cord* you cut and saved from lesson 2.

Say: **Because ► we are the church, and we share with each other, we're going to work together to make a church made out of us!**

Give each child a paper circle and provide crayons. Have each child draw his or her own face on a circle. As children work, invite one or two at a time to help you lace the *rainbow cord* through the holes around the edges of the church you prepared before class. When the *rainbow cord* has been laced through all the holes, tie a bow. Praise children as they work together and share supplies, reminding them that as a part of God's church, we share.

As children finish their drawings of themselves, let them glue their paper faces to the cardboard church. When the church has been completed, have the children gather around you. Point out the various colors on the *rainbow cord* that's laced around the edges as you share with the children.

Say: **We are the church, and our church is very special because of each of you. I see this yellow part of the string and I think of...** [Fill in a specific child's name and attribute such as "Amber, because of her yellow hair" or "Terry, because yellow is his favorite color."]

Say: **I see this green part of the string and I think of...** [Fill in a specific child's name and attribute such as "Alex, because he always likes to color with the green marker" or "Olivia, because her last name is Greene."]

Say: **I see this blue part of the string and I think of...** [Fill in a specific child's name and attribute such as "Curtis, because he has a blue house" or "Reggie, because his dog's name is Blue."]



BIBLE POINT



Bring in bits of yarn, and let children glue yarn onto their paper faces as hair.



Be sure to consider the interests and attributes of each child in your class before class begins so that each child is included in a personal way.

Say: **I see this purple part of the string and I think of...** [Fill in a specific child's name and attribute such as "Violet, because her name means purple" or "Ezra, because he has on a purple shirt."]

Say: **I see this pink part of the string and I think of...** [Fill in a specific child's name and attribute such as "Jennifer and Michaela, because their favorite color is pink" or "Troy, because he has pink pigs on his farm."]

Say: **I see this orange part of the string and I think of...** [Fill in a specific child's name and attribute such as "Katie, because her cat Tabby is orange" or "Elijah, because he's always cheerful like the sun."]

Say: **Look at how wonderful our church looks now that we are all in it. How would our church look if we were missing [child's name] or [child's name]? I'm so glad that we all worked together to make this church!**

Post the church on a wall or window where all the children can see what they've created by sharing together.

Closing

■ Here's the Steeple

SUPPLIES: block church from *Setting the Stage*

Bring out Whiskers, and go through the following puppet script. When you finish the script, put Whiskers away and out of sight.



(Whiskers, with his arms outstretched, is standing on top of the block church you built earlier.)

Teacher: Hello, Whiskers. What are you doing?

Whiskers: I heard all of you talking about the church. I wanted to be part of the church (*sounding proud*), so I decided to stand on top of it and be the steeple—you know, that tall thing that sticks up on the top of the church! (*Jumps down from the blocks.*) It feels good to be part of the church! Now I can be like all of you! I've got to go now. My church needs a steeple. (*Starts to jump back up.*)

Teacher: Wait, Whiskers. Before you go, there's something else I think you should know! Children, can you tell Whiskers what we've been learning about the church today?

(Help the children explain to Whiskers that the church is people, not a building. Lead children and Whiskers in repeating the Bible Point: ► We are the church, and we share with each other.)

Whiskers: (*Puzzled*) So you mean this building you meet in every week isn't the real church?

Teacher: That's right, Whiskers. A church building is just a place for people to meet together. But the real church is people—you and me and your friends in this class—everyone who believes in Jesus. We are the church, Whiskers, whether we're in a building with a steeple on it or not!

Whiskers: Wow! You mean I don't need to stand on top of these blocks all day to be a part of the church? Wait 'til I tell my cousin Joey! I've got to tell him about this right away. Thanks for helping me understand that we are the church! Goodbye!

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■ Snack to Share

SUPPLIES: Bible, snack prepared in Option 1, baby wipes, CD player



Before class, arrange to deliver the snack you've prepared to another class. Find out approximately how many students are in the class so you can be sure to have enough for everyone. You'll want to leave a few snacks in your classroom to eat when you return. Be sure to take along baby wipes or damp paper towels to clean hands both before and after eating.

Say: ► ***We are the church, and we share with each other. It's time to share the snack we made earlier. We're going to take some of the treats to another class; then we'll come back and have our own treats.***

Have children walk with you to the classroom to deliver the treats. If you have time, have children help hand out the snack.

After you've returned to your room, serve children the remaining snacks. As they eat, ask:

- **How did you feel about sharing your snacks with the other class?** (I wanted to eat some myself; I liked making them happy; it was fun.)
- **How do you feel when friends share things with you?** (It makes me feel good; I like it; it makes me want to share, too.)
- **What are some things you could share at home with your family or friends?** (My toys; snacks; the swing.)

Say: ► ***We are the church, and we share with each other. We can share just as the first church did. We can also sing together. Let's sing a song that has our Bible verse in it.*** Open your Bible to **Acts 2:44** and show children the words. **Our verse says,** ► ***"The believers met together...and shared everything they had."*** Those are the words to our song!

Lead children in singing "Believers Share" (Acts 2:44) (track 5) to the tune of "Do Your Ears Hang Low?" with the CD.



BIBLE POINT ►



At this stage in their mental development, 3- and 4-year-olds can recall some facts and events, can memorize stories, songs, or finger plays, and ask lots of questions!



BIBLE POINT ►

BIBLE VERSE ►



**The believers met together
And shared everything they had.
They loved to be together
As it made them feel so glad.
The believers met together
And shared everything they had.
They shared what they had.**

(Repeat.)



Growing closer to Jesus extends beyond the classroom.

Photocopy the “Today I Learned...” handout (at the end of this lesson) for this week, and send it home with the children. Encourage parents to use the handout to plan meaningful family activities to reinforce this week’s topic.



For Extra Time

If you have a long class time or want to add additional elements to your lesson, try one of the following activities.

Lively Learning: Who Is the Church?



track 19

Have children form pairs or trios and hold hands. Call each pair or trio to you by name.

Teacher: [Name] and [name], **who is the church?**

Children: **We are the church!**

Teacher: **Then skip** [run, hop, twirl] **over to me.**

Keep calling until all the children are standing with you. Then lead children in singing the first two verses of “We Are the Church” (track 19) with the CD to the tune of “Ten Little Indians.” As you sing, do the motions in parentheses.



SING

We are the church. Oh yes, we are. (*Point to self; on the word “church,” touch hands over head.*)

We are the church. Oh yes, we are. (*Point to self, touch hands over head.*)

We are the church. Oh yes, we are. (*Point to self, touch hands over head.*)

We are the church! (*Point to self, touch hands over head.*)

We share with each other. (*Hold out palms to indicate giving.*)

We share with each other. (*Hold out palms.*)

We share with each other. (*Hold out palms.*)

We are the church! (*Point to self, touch hands over head.*)

Make to Take: Sharing Collage



Give each child a paper plate. Set out glue sticks and collage items such as glitter, craft feathers, fabric scraps, or cut-paper shapes. Try to provide a different item for each child in your class.

Give each child one of the collage items. For example, you might give one child the glitter, another the fabric scraps, and so on. Point out the different items available and encourage children to share their items with each other. Show children how to glue their collage items to their paper plates. As they work, remind them that ► *we are the church, and we share with each other.*

■ **Treat to Eat: Cookie Sandwiches**

Set out plastic knives, vanilla wafer cookies, and the marshmallow creme you brought for Let's Get Started. Help children clean their hands with baby wipes or at a nearby sink. Have children work in pairs to make cookie sandwiches. Show them how to spread the marshmallow creme between two vanilla wafers and press the cookies together.

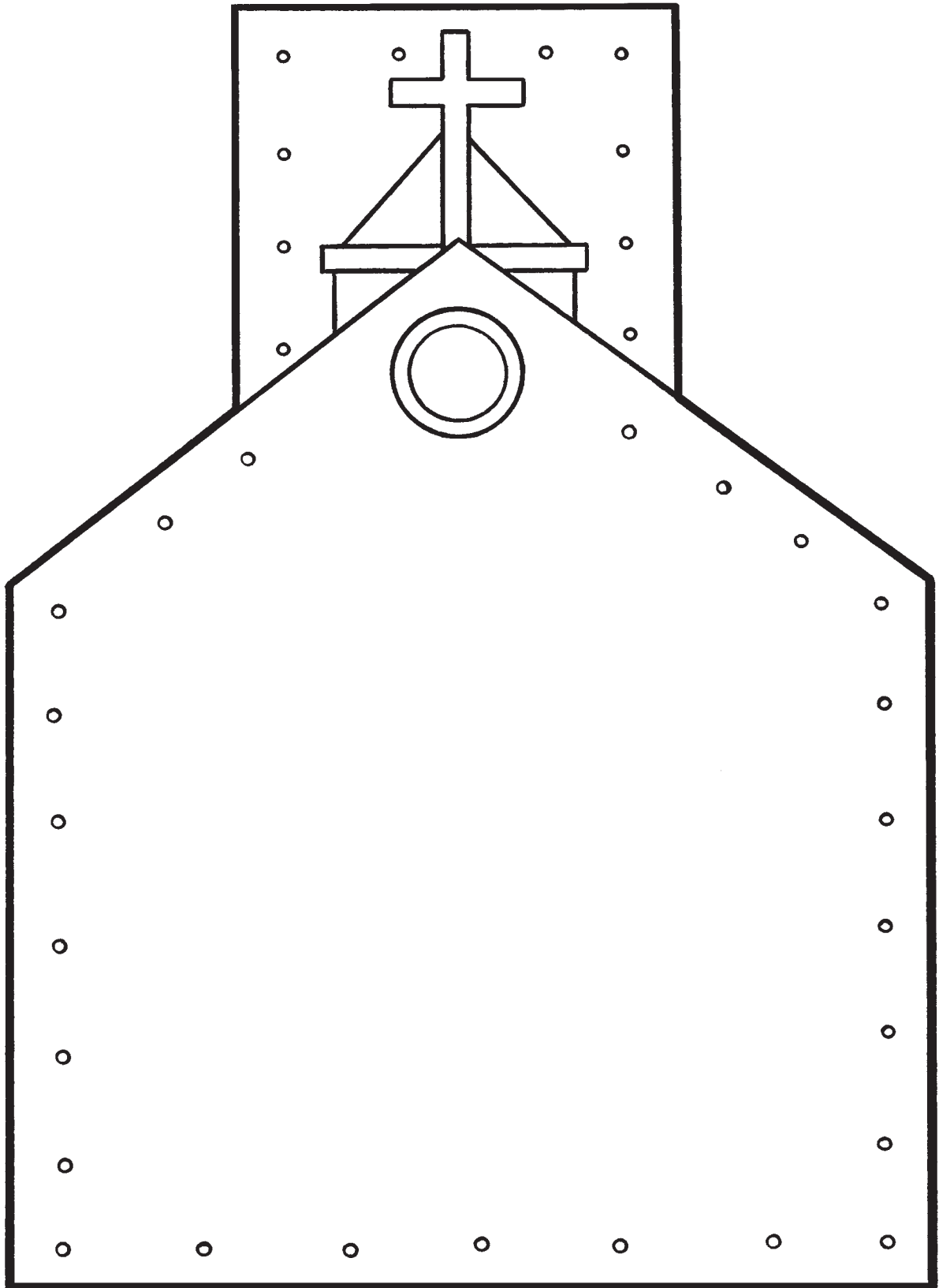
Let children each make several cookies; then help them put the cookies into sandwich bags to take home. Encourage each child to eat one cookie and share the others with friends or family members. Remind them that ► *we are the church, and we share with each other.*



■ **Story Picture: The Early Christians Share**

Give each child a copy of the “Today I Learned...” handout. Set out tape and pieces of aluminum foil and show children how to crinkle the foil and tape it to the coins on the handouts. As they work, talk about how the early church shared money, food, and other possessions. Remind them that ► *we are the church, and we share with each other.*

We Are the Church



Today i learned...
**We are the church,
and we share
with each other.**

Help me learn this:

"The believers met together...and shared everything they had" (Acts 2:44).

Ask me:

- What are some things the people of the early church did together?
- How do you feel when friends share things with you?
- How can our family share like the early church did?

Family Fun

- Invite another church family over for a meal or dessert. Let your child help plan the menu, invite guests, make the food, and serve it.
- Help your child make cookies and share them with a friend or neighbor.

Lesson 10
Today your child learned that
**WE ARE THE CHURCH, AND WE
SHARE WITH EACH OTHER.**
Children heard how people in
the early church shared with one
another. They made treats to
share with another class.

The Early Christians Share (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37)

