



Bible Point ▶

We are the church, and we pray together.

Bible Verse

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

Growing Closer to Jesus

- Children will
- talk about times they pray,
 - play a game to learn the difference between wishing and praying,
 - hear how Peter’s friends prayed for him while he was in prison, and
 - pray for one another.

Teacher Enrichment

Bible Basis

■ The early church prays for Peter.



This passage describes something of a competition: Peter was securely in prison, guarded by 16 of Rome’s finest and handcuffed to a guard on each side of him. But on the other hand, God’s people were praying earnestly for Peter on the night that Herod intended to be Peter’s last night on earth.

Peter thought he was having a vision as he was released from prison. Only after Peter’s chains had fallen off, after he and the angel had walked through the gates to the street, and after the angel had led him down the street, did Peter come to the realization that he was really free.

The scene that unfolded when Peter arrived at Mark’s mother’s house is somewhat comical. Rhoda, the servant girl, came to see who was knocking at the door in the middle of the night. When she realized it was Peter, she was so excited that she ran back to tell the others without unlocking the door! And then the people who had been earnestly praying for Peter refused to believe that he could really be at the gate. And all the while, Peter was standing outside knocking. When they went to the door to see for themselves, they were astonished by the truth. There was so much excitement that Peter had to quiet them down before he could tell them the amazing story of what God had done for him.







Prayer

- Read Psalm 69:13.
- When have you cried out to God and been amazed at how God responded?
- Pray: Lord, thank you for working in amazing and powerful ways. Help me to remember to turn to you more and more. I especially need your power and help with...

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: In and Out of Jail —Play jail by sitting under a blanket-covered table and then being set free.	Blanket	
	Option 2: Prayer Rhyme —Learn an action rhyme about praying together.		
	Option 3: Time to Pray —Talk about times they can pray.	“Time to Pray” handout (p. 159), scissors	
	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 —Play a game to learn the difference between wishing and praying.	Bible, bowl of water, pennies	
	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 from Acts 12:1-17 how Peter escaped from prison.	Bible, scissors, plastic bag	
	Do the Bible Story —Act out Peter’s escape from prison.	Bible	
Closing 	Prayer Anywhere —Help Whiskers learn that he can pray anywhere, anytime.		
	Praying Together —Pray for one another, and sing a song.	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 what they learned last week. Use questions such as “Did you and your friends share this week the way the early church did?” and “What did you share at home this week?”
- Say: **Today we’re going to learn that ► we are the church, and we pray together.**
- Hand out the Easter lily name tags children made during Lesson 1, and help them attach the name tags to their 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 photocopyable handout.
- Direct children to the Let’s Get Started activities you’ve set up.



◀ BIBLE POINT



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.

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 can we do when someone is sick?” or “When do you pray?”

■ Option 1: In and Out of Jail

SUPPLIES: blanket

Drape a blanket over a small table to make a “jail.” Have children form a circle and walk around the jail. Every few seconds call out “Stop!” and use one of the following reasons to send children to jail.

- Anyone who is wearing shoes that tie.
- Anyone who has a pet at home.
- Anyone who is wearing red.
- Anyone who is wearing shoes that slip on.
- Anyone who is wearing blue.
- Anyone who watched TV yesterday.

Each time a group of children goes to jail, have the rest of the children march around them one time. Then choose a child to pull the blanket off the table and set the jailed children free.

Explain that, just like in the game, today’s Bible story is about a time when Peter was put in jail even though he hadn’t done anything wrong. Tell children that they’ll hear about how an angel set Peter free.



■ Option 2: Prayer Rhyme

SUPPLIES: none

Teach children the following action rhyme. After you've gone through the rhyme several times, invite children to take turns leading it.

We pray in the morning. (*Make a circle over head with arms.*)

We pray at night. (*Lay cheek on hands as "pillow."*)

We pray to God (*fold hands in prayer*)

When the sun shines bright. (*"Twinkle" fingers overhead.*)

You are my sister. (*Point to girls.*)

You are my brother. (*Point to boys.*)

Here at church (*touch fingers over head to make a roof*),

We pray for each other. (*Fold prayer hands.*)



BIBLE POINT

Explain that in today's Bible story, they'll learn how Peter's friends prayed for Peter to get out of jail. Remind children that just as in Bible times, **we are the church, and we pray together.**



If time permits, let children color these pictures.

■ Option 3: Time to Pray

SUPPLIES: "Time to Pray" handout (p. 159), scissors

Before class, photocopy the "Time to Pray" handout and cut out the pictures.

Tell children that today's Bible story is about a time Christians prayed together. Explain that we can pray to God anytime. Hold up the "Time to Pray" pictures one at a time, and ask children, "What would you pray if you were here?" For example, children might pray, "Thank you for our food" when you show them the picture of the family eating or "Please help me feel better" when you show them the picture of the sick child.

Encourage children to think of their own prayers, but be ready to offer help if they need it. If you have time, repeat the activity and have children take turns holding up the pictures for one another.

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.



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: Bible, bowl of water, pennies

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?** (Went to jail and got free; learned a rhyme; said prayers.)

Say: **Some of you played a game where you went to jail and got set free, some of you learned a fun rhyme about praying together, and some of you looked at pictures and practiced praying. You were all learning important things about our Bible story. Today we're going to learn that ► we are the church, and we pray together. We'll hear how Peter's friends in the early church prayed for him while he was in jail. But first let's play a game to learn more about prayer.**

Place a bowl of water in the center of the story area, and have the children gather around it. Have them scoot back so they're sitting a few feet away from the bowl. Say: **Let's pretend this bowl is a wishing well. Sometimes people make wishes and then throw pennies into a wishing well. They think their wishes will come true if the pennies land in the well. I'm going to give you a penny. Then you can make a wish and toss the penny into the well.**

Demonstrate by tossing a penny into the bowl. Then go to the children one by one, give them each a penny, and coach them as they toss their pennies into the bowl. Carefully supervise the children so they don't put the pennies in their mouths.

Say: **I see a lot of pennies in our wishing well. Do you think the wishing well can really hear and answer your wishes? Why or why not?** (Yes, because my penny went in; no, because wishing wells don't really work; maybe.)

Wishing wells are pretend. It's fun to throw in pennies and make wishes, but the wishing well can't really hear us. But I know someone who does hear us. Listen to what the Bible says about how God hears our prayers.

Read Psalm 91:14-15a from an easy-to-understand translation. Say: **The Bible tells us that when we call on God, he will answer. When we pray and talk to God, God always hears us. Wishing wells are pretend. They can't hear us. But God is real, and he answers our prayers. ► We are the church, and we pray together.**

■ 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.



◀ BIBLE POINT



◀ BIBLE POINT



teacher tips

You can also choose children to be the Bible-Replacer (to put the Bible away) and the Cheerleader. Just be sure to keep track of who fills your roles each week, so each child gets a chance to feel special.



**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."



**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



Take out Poster 2 from the "We Are the Church" poster pack. Cut the puzzle along the dotted lines on the back, and place the pieces in a plastic bag.

Bring out the puzzle from last week. If you had to take last week's puzzle apart, be sure to put it together before class.

Open the Bible to **Acts 12**, and show it to the children. Say: **Our Bible story comes from the book of Acts in the Bible. Let's hear what happened when Jesus' friend Peter was thrown in jail. Listen carefully to hear how Peter escaped from jail.**

You can help me tell our Bible story today. I'm going to say some words and do some motions. You repeat the words after me and do what I do. Have children stand. Read the following story, "Peter Escapes From Jail." Have children echo and imitate what you say and do.

This Bible story is featured in *My First Hands-On Bible™*. Order several now for your ministry at group.com.



Peter Escapes From Jail (An Echo Pantomime Paraphrasing Acts 12:1-17)

Words

Actions

My name is Peter.

(Both hands point to self.)

I'm a follower of Jesus.

(Point toward heaven.)

Sometimes people get mad at me when I tell about Jesus.

(Look mad.)

But I love Jesus so much!

(Cross hands over heart.)

I have to talk about him!

(Nod.)

One day bad people came and grabbed me.

(Grab wrist.)

They wanted me to stop talking about Jesus.

(Cover mouth with hand.)

They made me run through the streets.

(Run in place.)

Then they threw me in jail!

(Drop to the floor.)

They put chains on my hands.

(Wrap fingers around each wrist.)

It was cold and dark in the jail.

(Hold arms and shiver.)

I was hungry.

(Rub stomach.)

I didn't even have a bed to sleep on.

(Shake head no.)

At first I was afraid.

(Look scared.)

But then I thought about Jesus.

(Point toward heaven.)

Then I wasn't afraid anymore.

(Shake head no and smile.)

I felt brave!

(Put hands on hips.)

I sat down to sleep.

(Sit down, rest head on hands, close eyes.)

There were guards everywhere.

(Spread arms to indicate "everywhere.")

I fell asleep.	<i>(Fold hands and lay head down on hands.)</i>
But then an angel came and shook me awake!	<i>(Open eyes wide.)</i>
There was a bright light in the room!	<i>(Shade eyes.)</i>
My chains fell off!	<i>(Shake hands.)</i>
The angel told me to get dressed.	<i>(Pretend to put on clothes.)</i>
He told me to follow him.	<i>(Walk in place.)</i>
We walked past one guard,	<i>(Walk and hold one finger up.)</i>
Then another guard.	<i>(Walk and hold two fingers up.)</i>
They never saw us!	<i>(Shake head and shrug.)</i>
We walked through the town.	<i>(Walk in place.)</i>
When we came to the gate, it opened all by itself!	<i>(Stop in place. Make sweeping motion with one arm.)</i>
Then the angel left, and I was alone.	<i>(Look around.)</i>
I went to see my friends.	<i>(Walk, and then pretend to knock.)</i>
They were happy to see me.	<i>(Hug each other.)</i>
They had all been praying for me!	<i>(Fold hands in prayer.)</i>
God answered their prayers and set me free!	<i>(Spread arms out wide.)</i>
God will answer your prayers, too!	<i>(Point to several children.)</i>

Have everyone sit down, and then ask:

- **How do you think Peter felt when he got put in jail?** (Sad; scared; lonely.)
- **How do you think Peter felt when he saw the angel?** (Surprised; scared; he knew that the angel came to help him.)
- **How did Peter get out of jail?** (God helped him; the angel helped him; he walked out; the gate opened by itself.)

Say: **Peter's friends from church prayed for him while he was in jail. God answered their prayers. We can be like Peter's friends and pray for one another because ► we are the church, and we pray together.**

Point to the puzzle pieces from last week's story. Say: **Let's put the next puzzle together and find out more about praying.**

Point to the children on the puzzle who are praying. Then put this week's puzzle together during the following discussion. Say: **Sometimes we pray alone the way these children are doing. When do you pray alone?** (Before bed; when I'm scared.)



BIBLE POINT ►

But sometimes we pray together the way Peter's friends did. When do you pray with other people? (Before we eat; when my mom helps me say prayers at bedtime; when we pray in our class.)



When the children have put all the pieces in place, say: **There's a special promise in the Bible about praying together. Jesus said that anytime we pray together, he'll be here with us. And he'll hear and answer our prayers anytime we pray. Jesus is our best friend, and we can talk to him anytime or any place. Let's talk to him now!**

Let children pray aloud as they like, sharing with Jesus anything that's on their hearts. Close by thanking Jesus for hearing us when we talk to him and for loving each of the children.

Say: **When Peter's friends prayed together, God answered their prayers. Peter got out of jail! Like Peter's friends, ▶we are the church, and we pray together.**

Review last week's puzzle section, and remind children that we are the church, and we share with each other. Set the puzzles aside until next week.

■ Do the Bible Story

SUPPLIES: Bible

Choose one child to be Peter and one child to be the Angel. Have the other children be guards and stand in a line with their arms folded. Ask Peter to sit on the floor behind the line of guards, and ask the Angel to stand with you.

Say: **Let's pretend we were there when Peter escaped from jail. When I dim the lights, Peter will lie down and pretend to go to sleep. The guards will stand still. The Angel will stay with me.**

Dim the lights, and whisper to the Angel: **We need to help Peter get out of jail. Let's quietly tiptoe into the jail and tap Peter on the shoulder. We'll have to be quiet so the guards don't hear us.**

Make sure all the guards stand still. Then lead the Angel behind the guards to "wake up" Peter and lead him out of jail.

Repeat the game several times with different children playing the roles of Peter and the Angel. Before you move on to the next activity, show children **Acts 2:44** in your Bible and say: **Our Bible verse says, ▶"The believers met together...and shared everything they had." We know they shared their food and money, but they must have also shared their worries and the things that made them feel afraid. Peter must have felt scared and alone when he was in jail. When he told his friends how the angel helped him escape even though there were guards all around him, everyone felt surprised and happy. They had shared his problems with God when they prayed. They knew God had answered their prayers. No matter what we're feeling, we can pray and tell God about it. We know God will hear us, just as he heard Peter's friends. ▶We are the church, and we pray together.**



Most 3- and 4-year-olds have a 5- to 10-minute attention span. The activities in "Do the Bible Story" allow them to jump up and wear out the wiggles without wiggling away from the lesson!



Closing

■ Prayer Anywhere

SUPPLIES: none

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



Whiskers: (*Sadly*) Hi, everybody.

Teacher: Hello, Whiskers. You sound sad. Is something wrong?

Whiskers: My cousin Joey is sick.

Teacher: I'm sorry to hear that, Whiskers.

Whiskers: I'm also sad because my brother and I want to do something to help him. We asked if we could go see him, but our mom wouldn't let us. She said we might get sick, too.

Teacher: Oh, I see, Whiskers. Maybe your friends could help you think of some other ways to help your cousin Joey. Children, can you think of something Whiskers and his brother could do to help their cousin? (*Let children respond. They might suggest drawing him a picture, calling him on the phone, and praying for him.*)

Whiskers: Those are good ideas. But I wish I could take the sickness away so my cousin Joey could get up and play with us.

Teacher: There's only one person who can do that. That's God. We've been learning today that ►*we are the church, and we pray together.* We heard how God answered Peter's friends' prayers when Peter was in jail. Why don't you and your brother pray for your cousin Joey?

Whiskers: Will God hear us even though we're not at Joey's house?

Teacher: Whiskers, God can hear our prayers anytime, no matter where we are. And God will always answer. Sometimes God says yes, sometimes God says no, and sometimes God wants us to wait and trust him.

Whiskers: That's really great! I'm going to go tell my brother right now. Maybe my mom would even like to pray for Joey with us. Thanks for telling me about praying together. Goodbye.

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■ *Praying Together*

SUPPLIES: CD player



Say: **Whiskers wanted to pray for his cousin Joey. What would you like to pray about?** Let children respond.

Let's pray together the way Peter's friends prayed for him. ► We are the church, and we pray together.

Encourage children to pray if they want to; then pray for all the children's requests. After you pray, say: **God always hears and answers our prayers. When we come to church next week, we'll see how God answers our prayers. ► We are the church, and we pray together.**

While we're waiting for our parents to come, let's sing a song to help us remember that we are the church.

Lead children in singing and doing the motions to three verses of "We Are the Church" (track 19) with the CD to the tune of "Ten Little Indians."



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.)

We are the church. We pray together. (Point to self; on the word "church," touch hands over head; fold hands.)

We are the church. We pray together. (Point to self, touch hands over head, fold hands.)

We are the church. We pray together. (Point to self, touch hands over head, fold hands.)

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



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: Prayer Walk

Form pairs and take children on a prayer walk around the church building or grounds. Have pairs of children gather around you, rather than walking in a long line. If children are walking in a group, they'll be less likely to wander off.

As you walk, stop and thank God for things you see. Pray for other classes that are meeting and for teachers and students. After you return to the classroom, have children help you name all the things you prayed for on your walk. Remind children that ► *we are the church, and we pray together.*



If you plan to do this extra-time activity, be sure to tell parents that you'll be taking the children outside for a prayer walk.

■ Make to Take: We Are the Church



Before class, photocopy the "We Are the Church" handout (p. 160). You'll need a copy for each child.

Give each child a copy of the handout. Show the children how to cut the doors along the dotted lines and fold back the flaps. Help each of them use glue sticks to carefully glue the church shape onto a sheet of construction paper. Make sure children don't get glue on the doors so they'll be able to open and close the church doors later.



Set out the *ink pad* from the Learning Lab, and have children press their thumbprints inside the church doors. Encourage them to collect thumbprints from everyone in the class. When children have collected everyone's thumbprint, show them how to draw smiling faces on the prints. As children work, remind them that ► *we are the church, and we pray together.*

■ Treat to Eat: Pretzel Jail

Before class, make candy modeling dough by mixing 1 pound powdered sugar, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup corn syrup, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup softened margarine, and 1 teaspoon vanilla flavoring. Knead, adding more powdered sugar if the dough is too sticky.

Have children clean their hands with baby wipes or at a nearby sink. Give each child a paper plate, a candy dough ball, and several pretzel sticks. Show the children how to press the candy dough balls flat on the plates and form "jails" by poking pretzel sticks into the dough. Have each child put one pretzel stick in the middle to represent Peter and then eat the pretzel-stick bars to free "Peter" from jail.

As the children eat, ask questions such as "How did Peter get out of jail?" Remind them that ► *we are the church, and we pray together.*



■ Story Picture: An Angel Helps Peter Escape From Prison

Give each child a copy of the "Today I Learned..." handout (at the end of this lesson). Have children color their pictures. Then show children how to glue cereal loops onto the chains in their pictures. As children work, review how the angel helped Peter get out of prison. Remind children that Peter's friends were praying for him.

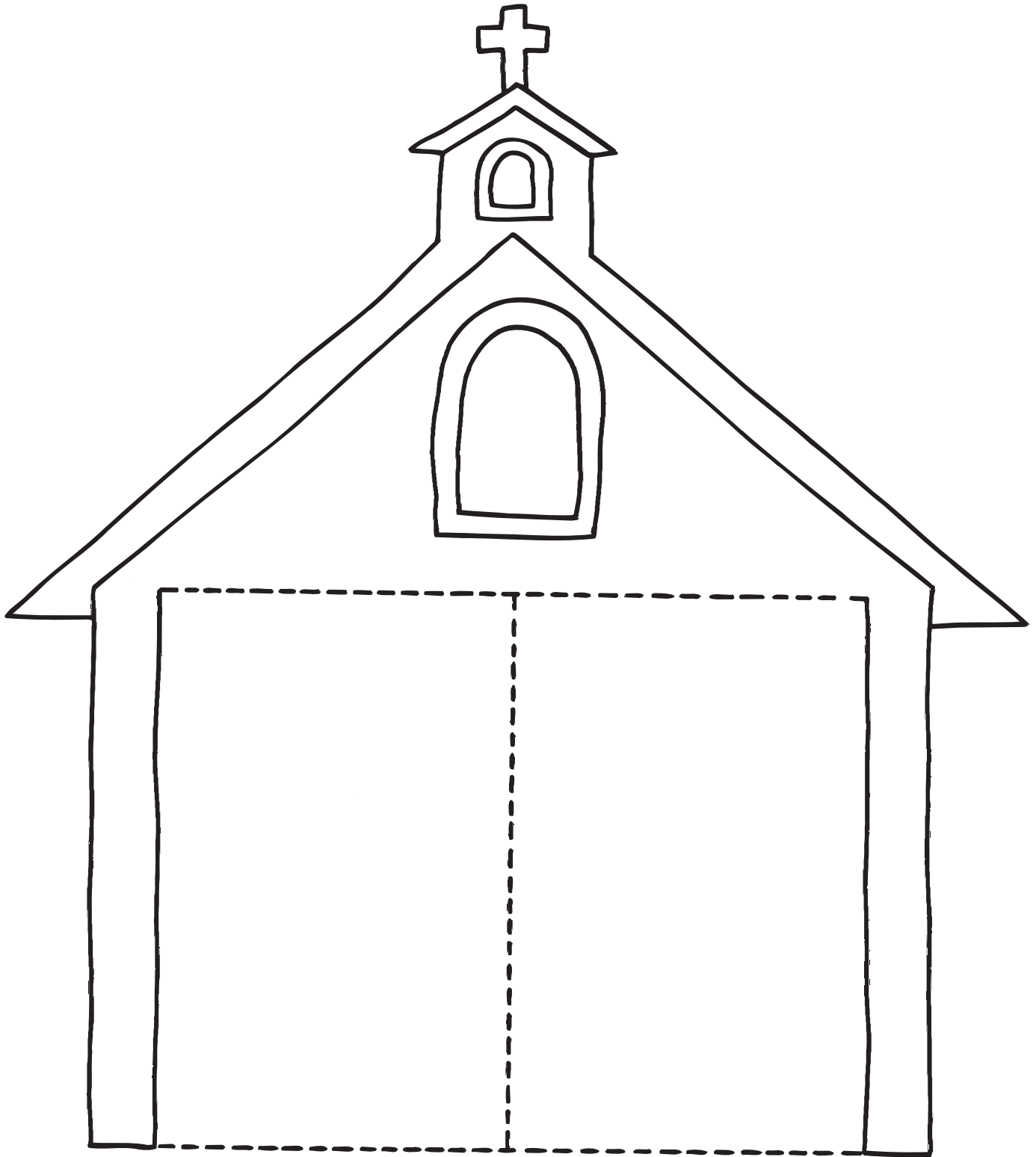
Time to Pray

Photocopy and cut out the pictures.



We Are the Church

Make a photocopy for each child.



Today I learned... We are the church, and we pray together.

Help me learn this:

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

Ask me:

- How did God answer the prayers of Peter's friends?
- When has God answered your prayers?
- What can our family pray about this week?

Family Fun

- Have a family prayer time. Ask each family member to name a prayer request. Have an older child or adult write these down. Pray for each thing on the list together. Post the list to remind family members to pray and watch for God's answers to prayer.

Lesson 11

Today your child learned that
**WE ARE THE CHURCH,
AND WE PRAY TOGETHER.**
Children heard how Peter's
friends prayed for him while he
was in prison. They shared prayer
requests and prayed together.

An Angel Helps Peter Escape From Prison (Acts 12:1-17)

