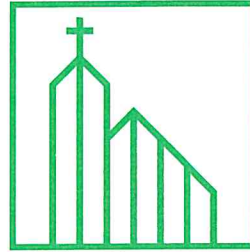


Question 48

What is the church?



Answer

A community elected for eternal life and united by faith, who love, follow, learn from, and worship God together.

Big Idea

God has called people with saving faith in Jesus to unite together as a body called the church.

Aim

To help the children to understand what the church is as well as its purpose.

Bible Passage

2 Thessalonians 2:13–17

Memory Verse

“But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.” (2 Thess. 2:13)

Virtue
Love





Notes

Leader's Notes

If you ask children what the church is, most will describe a building. Many children have an undeveloped understanding of the church. Adults often inadvertently aid the confusion by speaking about going to church or an event happening at church. However, the church is not a building! It is a people chosen by God and called together into one body. In order to love and serve the people of God, otherwise known as the church, children need to have a rich and robust understanding of it. This lesson aims to help correct any misunderstandings children may have about church and also to help them see the importance of the church for God's plan.

Things to remember when planning and teaching:

- Use language that encourages children to think of the church as people rather than a building.
- Endeavour to help the children understand that the church exists for God, its members, and those outside.
- Communicate to the children that the church is for all those who have put their faith and trust in Jesus—and that includes children!
- Remember to mix and match the activities in the lesson to fit your time frame (see p. 12 for some sample outlines). You won't have time to do them all. Feel free to adapt each activity based on your class's strengths and weaknesses.

Leader's Prayer

Sovereign God, thank you for instituting the church for your people on earth. I praise you for uniting believers together in both the universal and local church. Thank you for the church that I am privileged to belong to, for the opportunity to enjoy fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ, and the gift of

being disciplined through your Word. Grant understanding to the children who will hear this lesson. May they develop a deeper and richer understanding of what the church is and rejoice in being part of a church family. In Jesus's name. Amen.



Leader's Tool Kit

- Lots of different individual types of candy, one piece for each child in the class (it is probably best to avoid candy with nuts in case a member of your class is allergic).
- Q48 Illustrations of the Church (RB), cut out
- Paper doll chains made from Q48 Paper Chain Template (RB), at least one per child
- Shoebox or similar size box
- Markers
- Whiteboard and marker
- Sticky notes, two different colors
- Scotch tape

10

Catechism Recap

Put as many different types of candy as you can in a bucket; ideally there should be a different type of candy for each child in the group. Give each piece of candy a number. Make a key, but don't show it to the children.

Invite each of the children to pick a piece of candy from the bucket. Give the children the opportunity to swap with other people. Once all the children have settled on the piece of candy they'd like, tell them that they can keep the candy if they can correctly remember the question and answer that is linked to that particular candy:

For example:

Hershey Bar = 1 What is our only hope in life and death?

Sweet Tart = 2	What is God?
Peppermint = 3	How many persons are there in God?
M&M's = 4	How and why did God create us?

Surprise the children by allowing them to ask for help from the other children in the class; this will link nicely into the concept of the church and the unity that is found in the body of Christ. Make sure every child has a piece of candy at the end of the recap (to be eaten later, only with parents' permission).

**5 Introduction to Question 48**

Cut out the Q48 Illustrations of the Church (RB) and pass them around. Hold back the illustration of a church building.

Ask the children to examine the first set of pictures (body, bride, group of people, flock of sheep) and see if they can find anything in common in the pictures (be prepared for some odd answers!).

Introduce Question 48: “What is the church?” Explain to the children that the

commonality between the pictures is that the Bible uses each of the pictures to describe what the church is like: a body, a bride, a chosen people, and a flock.

Explain to the children that we often think about the church as a building—now show the picture of the church building—but when we look at what the Bible says about the church, it definitely isn’t talking about a building. The Bible always talks about the church as people rather than a place.

10 Activity

Using Q48 Paper Chain Template (RB), make lots of paper doll chains (enough so that each child can have at least one chain), and place them in a box along with lots of markers.

Tell the children that they are going to make a model of a church, and that you have all the supplies they will need in the box. Ask them to guess what kind of supplies you have in the box.

They may guess popsicle sticks, glue, or other supplies you would need to model a building.

Open the box and explain that, since the church is made of people, a model of the church needs to be made of people.

Pass out paper chains and markers to each child, and ask them to draw faces and clothes to represent the people who make up a church. They should include young and old and people of every ethnicity. (If the children get detailed in their work, you may need to set the project aside and come back to it after the lesson.)

15 Teaching Outline

Begin the teaching time by asking for God’s help. Ask that the lesson would be taught faithfully and that the children might listen well.

Ask the children if they enjoy the process of being chosen to be on a team. Some children

love it because they’ll be picked first; others despise the process because they know they’ll be chosen last. The process of being chosen for a team is usually influenced by athletic ability, popularity, or relationships—that’s what makes it such a tricky process. The Bible tells us that the way God builds



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his church is by choosing people to be on his team, to become members of his family. But being on God's team has nothing to do with how good we are at anything, how popular we are, or who our friends are. It has everything to do with Jesus Christ and his sacrificial death and resurrection on our behalf. God calls us to put our trust in Jesus for forgiveness of sin and the gift of new life; when we do that, we automatically become members of God's church.

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:13–17.

Provide Bibles for the children to read along with you.

Introduce the children to Paul's letter to the Thessalonians; explain that Paul was writing to the church in Thessalonica, and that meant he was writing to the people and not to a building!

Tell the children that God's purpose in his world is to draw together a people for himself. In this passage, we can see how God works. The first thing to notice in verse 13 is that God chose the people who became part of his church in Thessalonica, and he chose them to be saved. They are saved from God's anger and judgment; they are saved to faith in Jesus and the hope of eternal life. Paul says this process occurs as the Holy Spirit works in their hearts as they hear the truth of the gospel and realize they need a personal Savior. This is God's gospel call to share in the joy and hope of being a member of God's family. God is still building his church today. He is gathering together a

chosen people for himself, and the process is just the same. God chooses and calls people, and by his Spirit opens their eyes to the truth of the gospel.

Explain to the children that when we are united to Jesus, we become united to one another in the church. This means we get new brothers and sisters! As Christians, we have brothers and sisters all over the world, most of whom we'll never even meet. That's the big *universal* church that includes all Christians. Members of that universal church meet in smaller groups where we live, and that's called the *local* church.

Ask the children what kind of people, then, are members of the church. The answer is, all sorts! Young and old, rich and poor, people from all different ethnicities, and people with different jobs. The church is like a big family Christmas dinner, where there are children and old folks, teenagers and young adults all gathered together around the one table.

In a letter that Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, he described the church as a body (1 Corinthians 12). A body is made up of all different parts, but each part is essential for the body to work well. The church is just the same; we are all different, but when we come together to love each other and serve with the gifts God has given us, the church works well.

God desires for his church to do three things:

**Notes**

1. To love and worship God
2. To love and encourage each other as we live for God
3. To love those outside the church and show them the grace of God

Help the children to understand that coming together as members of God's church is really important. The church is where we learn to love God more, where we can love and encourage one another well, and where we can understand how to love

those in the world in the same sacrificial way that Jesus loved us.

Finish the teaching time by helping the children commit Question 48 and the answer to memory.

(These notes are just for guidance. Please expand or amend them to suit your own children and context. Write out your talk in your own words and include illustrations and applications that you know will connect with your children.)

**Activity**

Give the children pieces of paper and markers.

Ask the children to design the cover of a book about the church. They can choose the title

and create the cover art. Encourage them to think about the way the Bible portrays the church and depict that in some way.

**Discussion and Question Time**

Some questions that might arise include:

? Can people who do not trust in Jesus be members of God's church?

Explain that people who do not trust in Jesus can come to the church building and discover more about Jesus and God. They may even pretend to be a Christian. But for God to consider people members of his church, they must trust in him for salvation.

? Aren't there some countries where it's illegal for Christians to meet together?

Tell the children that when it is illegal for some Christians to meet

together, they often do so in secret. This is how important it is to come together as the church.

Also use this opportunity to help the children think about their own lives and how this question and answer affects them personally.

- How can they better love the brothers and sisters in their church?
- How might they explain to someone what the church is?
- How might they pray for their church family?



Virtue Vision



Love

Create an ideas board. You can make it on a whiteboard by drawing a large light bulb.

Have ready two different colors of sticky notes and some pens.

Ask the children to think of ways they could love their church family better.

Encourage them to write down their ideas on a sticky note, and then stick it on the ideas board. Remind them that there are

all different types of people at church and that they should think of ways to love all kinds of people.

On a different color sticky note, ask the children to write down some ways they might be able to show God's love to those outside the church. Have them stick their ideas on the ideas board.

Thinks of ways you can help the children to put some of their ideas into practice.



Memory Activity

Cut the memory verse or catechism question and answer into individual words. Put Scotch tape on the back of each word, and stick the words up on the wall in order.

Invite the children to read through the memory verse or catechism question and

answer with you. Take one word away, and invite the class to read the verse again. Remove one word at a time until there are no words left. Say the verse together from memory!



Closing Prayer

Encourage the children to thank God for his church and ask him to help them love and serve his people in the church more.

Notes
