

Persecution and Prayer

Lesson Objectives

- The students will hear about persecution and prayer in the early church.
- The students will name one way that a disciple is just like Jesus.
- The students will define the word "Christian."

Lesson Text

Acts 11:19-12:17

Scripture Memory Verse

The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

Acts 11:26

Lesson Plan

Greeting and Registration

Preclass Activity: Scripture Scramble

Welcome and Singing

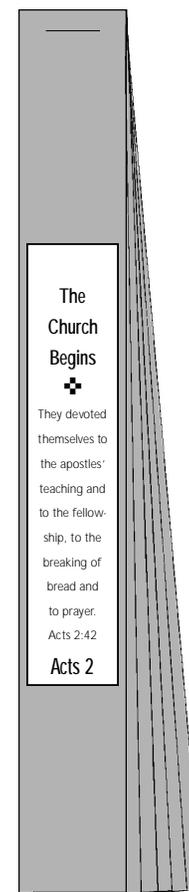
Centers:

Bible Story: Persecution, Prayer and Peter

Craft: Acts Bookmark

Scripture Memory: First Things First

NOTE: Allow time for a snack.



3rd and 4th Grades

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Persecution and Prayer

Scripture Scramble

The students will preview this week's Bible Story as they put together key words from the Scripture Memory Verse.

Materials

For each student:

- small seal-tight plastic bag
- pencil
- 1 piece of black construction paper, 9" x 12"
- 1 piece of white, lined paper

For the teacher:

- scissors

Reproducible Pages:

- Page A, 1 copy for each student

Preparation

For each student, cut out the words from the copies of Reproducible Page A, mix them up and put them in a plastic bag.

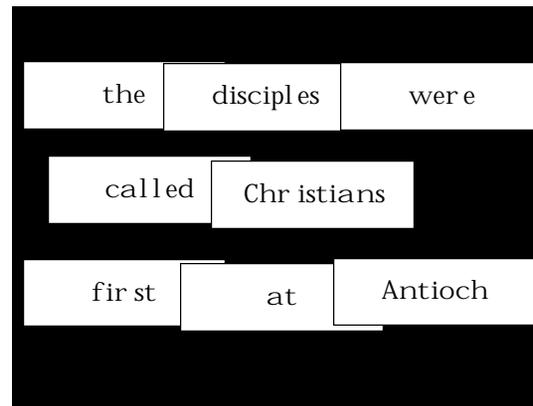
Instructions

1. Greet the students as they arrive. Explain that in today's lesson, they are going to learn about persecution and prayer in the early church. Tell them that in this activity, they will get to know this week's Scripture Memory Verse in a unique way as they prepare for the Bible Story.

2. Distribute the plastic bags you prepared, the construction paper, white lined paper and pencils. Tell the students to remove the words from their bags and place them on the black construction paper. Have them make as many sentences as they can, and write them on their white paper. After they have found all the sentences they can, have them look up Acts 11:26 to see if any of their sentences match the Bible verse. Make sure to show them that it is the second half of the verse. If they wrote it correctly on their paper, have them circle it and write in the reference. If not, then have them write the correct verse on their paper, including the reference.
3. Encourage the students to work together and help each other.
4. Circulate among the students to offer help and encouragement.
5. For students who finish early and want an extra challenge, have them read Acts 11 and 12 and count all the times that the word "disciple" appears.

Teacher Tips

- Try to work with the students who have difficulty reading, or find a student who is patient and encouraging to be their partner.



Persecution and Prayer

Persecution, Prayer and Peter

The students will actively listen to this story about persecution and prayer in the early church and the miraculous rescue of Peter.

Materials

For the teacher:

- large writing surface

Preparation

1. On the large writing surface, neatly print: persecution, church, prayer, Lord, Jesus, Peter, Barnabas, disciple, Christian, angel.
2. Practice telling today's story with dramatic enthusiasm.

Introducing the Bible Story

Tell the students to open their Bibles to Acts 11:19. Explain that today is the last lesson in their unit on the early church. They have learned about the beginning of the church at Pentecost up through the persecution and death of Stephen and James. Tell the students that in today's Bible Story they will actively listen and look for key words as you read. Each time they hear one of the words from the large writing surface, they should raise their hands. When you have finished, they will have a chance to retell the story using the same key words.

Presenting the Bible Story

Read the following passages while the students follow along. Stop to recognize when the students raise their hands.

NOTE: The key words are underlined for easy reference.

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. When he saw that this pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.

So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him. Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating."

When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer the door. When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!"



3rd and 4th Grades

Persecution and Prayer

"You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."

But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. "Tell James and the brothers about this," he said, and then he left for another place.

(Acts 11:19-26, 12:1-17)

Sharing with Others

Divide the students into pairs or groups of three. Give them two minutes to try and retell the events of this Bible Story using the words on the large writing surface. After two minutes, let each pair or small group tell the story as they remember it to the rest of the group. Encourage the students to share this story with someone in their family this week. Close with a prayer thanking God for the Bible.

Teacher Tips

- You may want to adapt the story of Peter's escape from prison into a skit.

Persecution

Prayer

Peter



3rd and 4th Grades

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Persecution and Prayer

Acts Bookmark

The students will make bookmarks to help them remember the major events of Acts studied in this unit.

Materials

For each student:

- 6 pieces of ribbon, 1½" x 12"
- glue stick
- crayons or markers

For the teacher:

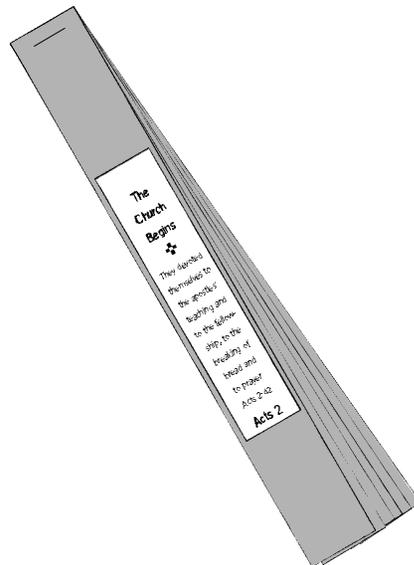
- scissors
- stapler
- invisible tape

Reproducible Pages:

- Page B, 1 copy for each student

Preparation

1. Cut out the strips from the copies of Reproducible Page B.
2. Make a sample of the bookmark to show the students.



Instructions

1. Introduce today's activity: In today's lesson you are learning about persecution and prayer in the early church. Your craft will help you review the stories you have learned recently. Show the students your bookmark. Read the words written on each ribbon. Show the students how to use their bookmarks to reference places in the Bible.
2. Distribute to the students the strips you prepared and crayons. Have them color their strips.
3. As the students are coloring, distribute the pieces of ribbon and glue sticks. Have them glue each strip onto a piece of ribbon, as shown in Figure A.
4. Have the students arrange the ribbons in order of the scripture reference. Circulate among them, and staple their ribbons at the top. See Figure B.
5. Give each student a piece of tape to wrap around the staple, as shown in Figure C.
6. Make sure the students write their names on their bookmarks.

Conclusion

Encourage the students to use their bookmarks in their Bibles. Close with a prayer for the students to be excited about God's plan for the church.

Teacher Tips

- Make sure that the ribbons are in the correct order before stapling them together.

Persecution and Prayer

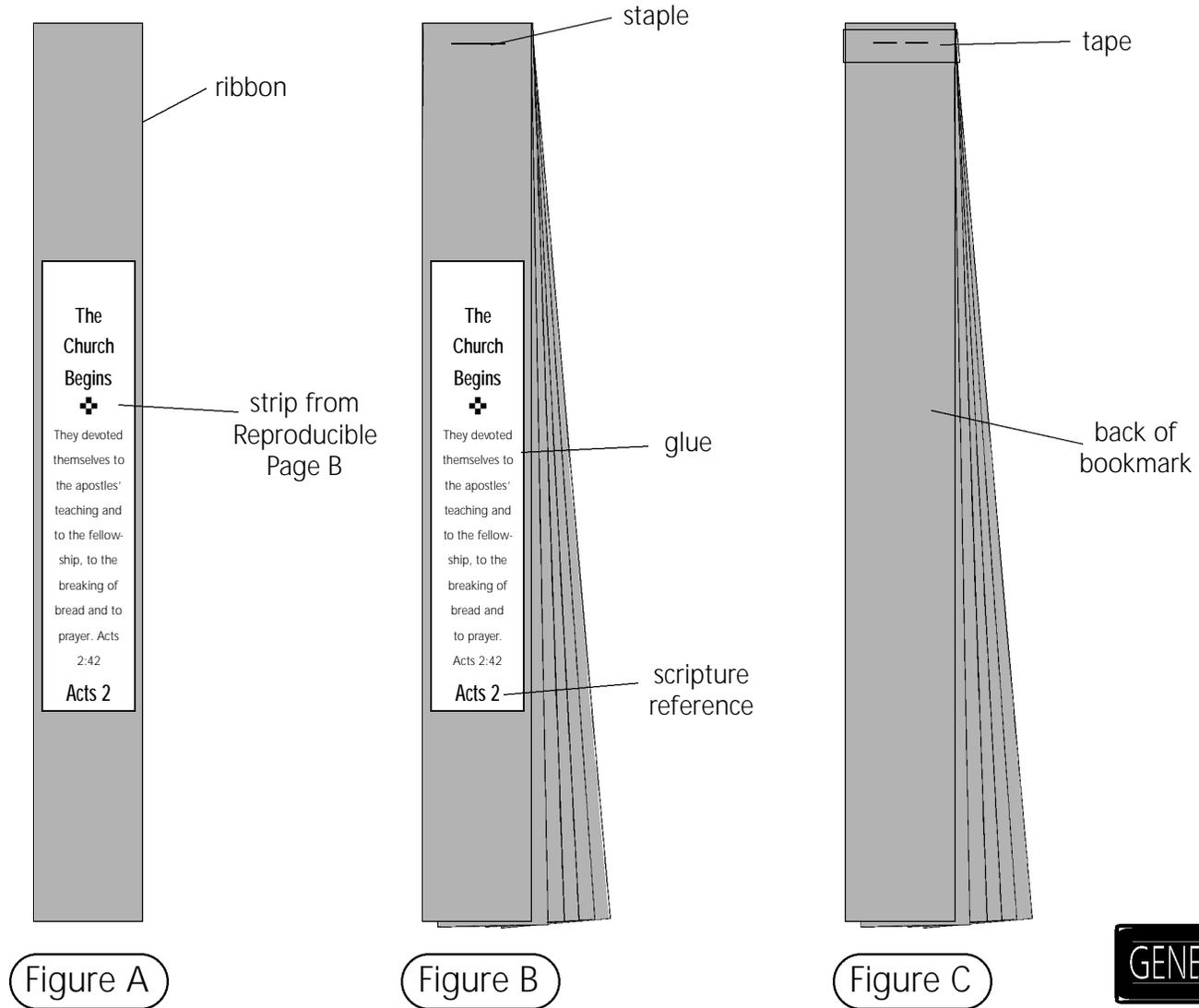


Figure A

Figure B

Figure C



3rd and 4th Grades

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

Persecution and Prayer

First Things First

The students will learn and memorize today's Scripture Memory Verse in this activity.

Scripture Memory Verse

The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.
Acts 11:26

Materials

For the teacher:

- small ball or bean bag

Preparation

Practice leading this activity.

Instructions

1. Introduce today's activity: In your Bible Story today, you are learning about persecution and prayer in the early church. You have already heard that Jesus was killed because the Jewish leaders were jealous and angry that he claimed to be the Son of God. After Jesus returned to heaven, his disciples prayed together and went out and preached to the people about Jesus—just as he told them to. Soon, the Jewish leaders realized that people were turning to the message of Jesus! Once again, the religious leaders decided to try and put a stop to the teaching of Jesus by killing Stephen. They thought this would stop the message—but it didn't! In fact, because of Stephen's death and persecution in Jerusalem, the disciples prayed even harder and then traveled to nearby Samaria and Judea. It was not long before the Jewish leaders realized that even though Jesus had died, his message was still alive! It was so strong that they started calling the disciples "Christians" which means "little Jesus."
2. Show the students the Scripture Memory Verse on the back of this Lesson Card. Say it to them three times as they follow along. Then ask them to say it together with you three more times.
3. Have the students sit in a circle. Toss the ball to a student and ask the student to say the Scripture Memory Verse together with you. Do this with every student.

4. Toss the ball to a student and have the student say the Scripture Memory Verse from memory. Encourage the students to help each other.
5. Tell the students to form a line. Explain that the first student will begin by saying the first word of the verse and then pass the ball to the student behind him. That student will then say the second word of the verse, and pass it to the next student until it reaches the last student in line. The last student will bring the ball up to the front of the line and then remain in the front of the line. The students will continue saying the verse in this manner until all the students have had a chance to be first in line.
NOTE: Be sure to include the reference, Acts 11:26 as the last "word" before starting the verse again.
6. Tell the students that they will do this activity a little differently. The first student in line will begin passing in the same way as before. The ball is passed until it reaches the student who says "first." That student will step out of line and come to the front of the line and then pass the ball to the next student who will say "at" and so on until the end of the verse. Passing continues until the next student to say "first" comes up to the front of the line. Do this until all the students have had a chance to be first in line.

Conclusion

Ask the students how it makes them feel when someone calls them a name or makes fun of them. Explain that when the disciples were called "Christians" it was not meant to be a compliment. It was meant to make fun of them and call them names. Help the students to understand that the early church had to face a lot of opposition but they never let it stop them from telling people about Jesus. Close with a prayer for the students to have a deep desire to follow Jesus like the early disciples.

Teacher Tips

- Help the students to see that persecution comes in all forms—from name-calling to physical harm. But however it comes, Jesus will be with his disciples no matter what people do to them.



3rd and 4th Grades

Persecution and Prayer

The disciples were called
Christians first at Antioch.

Acts 11:26

Lesson Objectives

- The students will hear about the role of persecution and prayer in the early church.
- The students will name one way that a disciple is just like Jesus.
- The students will define the word "Christian."

Lesson Text

Acts 11:19-12:17

Scripture Memory Verse

The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

Acts 11:26

Lesson Plan

Greeting and Registration

Preclass Activity: Just like Jesus

Welcome and Singing

Centers:

Life Application: Prayer Partners

Game: Christian Equations

Bible Skills: Random Acts

NOTE: Allow time for a snack.

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Just like Jesus

The students will review this week's Bible Story as they consider what it means to be just like Jesus.

Materials

For each student:

- pencil
- crayons and markers
- scissors
- glue stick

For the teacher:

- magazines with pictures of people, families, etc.
- 1 piece of banner paper, 6'
- marker
- large writing surface

Preparation

Along the top edge of the banner paper, neatly print "Disciples are just like Jesus."

Instructions

1. Greet the students as they arrive. Remind them that they are learning about persecution and prayer in the early church. Explain that they will make a mural with words and pictures of people doing things today that Jesus did, e.g. talking to people who were different than him, healing the sick, holding children, praying with his friends and praying alone, teaching people about God, worshiping God, reading the Scriptures, helping the poor, etc.

2. Use the large writing surface to help the students with spelling.
3. Distribute the pencils, markers, glue sticks, scissors and magazines. For ideas, tell them that they can use their Bibles to find verses in the gospels about Jesus.
4. Circulate among the students to offer help.

Teacher Tips

- Try to locate Christian family magazines that contain pictures of families praying together, going to church, and reading the Bible.



3rd and 4th Grades

Persecution and Prayer

Prayer Partners

The students will review this week's Bible Story as they have a time to pray about needs in the church today.

Materials

For the teacher:

- scissors
- small container

Reproducible Pages:

- Page C, 1 copy for the teacher

Preparation

1. Cut out the Scripture Strips from your copy of Reproducible Page C. Fold them up and place them in the small container.
2. Read Acts 11:19-12:17 to review the events from this week's Bible Story.
3. Practice leading this activity.

Reviewing the Bible Story

Open your Bible to Acts 11. In your Bible Story this week, you learned about persecution and prayer in the early church. You know that Jesus was killed because the Jewish leaders were jealous and angry that he claimed to be the Son of God. After Jesus returned to heaven, his disciples prayed and went out and preached to people about Jesus—just as he told them to. Soon, the Jewish leaders realized that people were turning to the message of Jesus! Once again, the religious leaders decided to try and put a stop to the teachings of Jesus by killing Stephen and the apostle James. Then they arrested Peter and put him in jail, but an angel of the Lord rescued him.

The religious leaders really thought they could stop the disciples, but they could not. In fact, the persecution made disciples pray even harder and then travel to nearby towns and cities to tell more people about Jesus. It was not long before the Jewish leaders realized that they could kill Jesus and his followers, but they could not kill the message! It was so strong that the religious leaders started calling the disciples "Christians," which means "little Jesus."

Life Application

Show the students the small container with the strips you prepared. Tell the students to each find a partner. Have the pairs take turns choosing one piece of paper and reading it to the group. Make sure the students understand all the words, and explain that each one describes a time in the book of Acts when disciples in the early church prayed. Continue until all the strips have been read.

Tell the students to take a minute to pray to God. Tell them that they can pray out loud or silently. Explain that they should try to pray about things the early church prayed about, e.g. strong faith, courage to speak, God's help to find people who want to know about Jesus, protection, safe travel, people in jail, healing, etc.

Conclusion

Encourage the students that they are learning to do what the disciples in the early church did by talking to God about the needs of the church. Suggest that they try and pray every day about the same thing they did today and see what happens.

Teacher Tips

- Do not force a student to pray or participate in the prayer time. Spend time with the students who choose not to pray by telling them about prayers for courage and boldness that God has answered in your life, e.g. I asked God to give me courage to talk to an important person at my job and invite her to church. When I did, this person was so happy. She said she was looking for a church!



Christian Equations

The students will review key ideas from this week's Bible Story as they play this game.

Materials

For the teacher:

- scissors
- Reproducible Pages:
 - Page D, 4 copies for the teacher



Preparation

1. Cut out all of the words from your copies of Reproducible Page D.
2. Practice leading this activity.



Instructions

1. Introduce today's activity: This week, you learned about persecution and prayer in the early church. Each time that the church was persecuted, they prayed to God for strength and continued to spread the good news about Jesus. The disciples were so much like Jesus that the religious leaders called them "Christians" which means "little Jesus." Although it was meant to be a nickname, it became the word that we use today to describe someone who follows Jesus. The Bible shows us that a Christian is a person who is just like Jesus. A Christian is a disciple or follower of Jesus. In the game today, you will make up some different equations to help us define the word "Christian."
2. Show the students the word cards you prepared and the spaces on the back of this Lesson Card. Explain that they will take turns turning over two cards at a time and placing them in the spaces. Then they will read the equation they have made.
3. Divide the students into two teams. Shuffle the word cards and place them face down in four rows of four. Then choose a team to go first. Have a student turn over two cards and place them in the two boxes and read the equation, e.g. A disciple of Jesus is a Christian. Then have them reverse the words and say the equation, e.g. A Christian is a disciple of Jesus. A team receives one point for each correct equation they make and they keep their cards. If a team turns over two of the same cards, they lose their turn and return the cards.



4. Play continues until all the cards have been turned over and all the equations have been made.
5. After all the cards have been turned over, ask the students if they can find any more equations that were not made during the game.
NOTE: there are twenty-four possible equations. These do not include equations such as: "A disciple of Jesus is a disciple of Jesus."

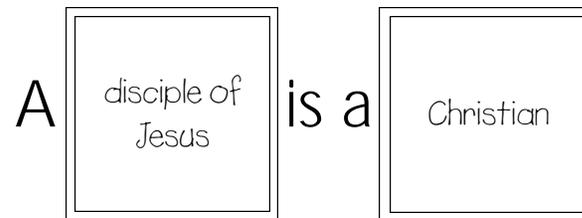
Conclusion

Tell the students that many people who call themselves "Christians" do not even know what the Bible says about being a Christian. Share briefly from your own life, if appropriate, e.g. I called myself a Christian because my parents took me to church but I never read the Bible and I did not even know that God wanted me to pray. I thought a Christian was someone who tried to be a nice person, I did not know that it meant being just like Jesus.

Close with a prayer thanking God for the early disciples in the Bible who show us what it really means to be a Christian.

Teacher Tips

- Be sensitive to new or visiting students who may not understand this concept. Explain that the students in your class have been studying for over a month about the early church and followers of Jesus.



3rd and 4th Grades

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Christian Equations

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Random Acts

The students will practice looking up verses in the book of Acts.

Materials

No additional materials are needed.

Preparation

Practice leading this activity.

Instructions

1. Introduce today's activity: This week, you learned about persecution and prayer in the early church. Each time that the church was persecuted, they prayed to God for strength and continued to spread the good news about Jesus. The disciples were so much like Jesus that the religious leaders started calling them "Christians" which means "little Jesus." Although it was meant to be a nickname, it became the word that we use today to describe someone who follows Jesus. The book of Acts is like a guide for the church to follow. It is a very important book to help us follow Jesus and teach others how to follow Jesus. In your activity today, you will see how quickly you can work together to find different verses in the book of Acts.

2. Divide the students into two teams. Make sure that each student has a Bible. Tell them that you will say a reference in Acts twice. The first time they may listen. The second time they may open their Bibles and find the verse. Once they have found it, they should put their finger on the verse. Encourage the students to help each other. The first team to have every student find the verse is the team to win that round. The verses are listed on the back of this Lesson Card.
NOTE: With each new round, have the students close their Bibles and place them in front of them, with their hands in their laps.
3. When all the students from both teams have located the verse, have them read the verse together out loud.
4. Continue until all the verses have been located and read in this way.

Conclusion

Ask the students what they think it was like to be a disciple of Jesus in the early church. Close with a prayer thanking God that his church has continued growing from the first century until today.

Teacher Tips

- Have extra Bibles on hand.
- Provide some simple incentives or prizes for the students at the end of this activity.

R A N D O M A C T S



3rd and 4th Grades

Random Acts

For the Teacher: Read each of the following references out loud twice for the students to find. The first team to have everyone find the verse will then read the verse together out loud.

1. Acts 2:38
2. Acts 12:5
3. Acts 27:23-24
4. Acts 19:11-12
5. Acts 10:35
6. Acts 2:41
7. Acts 4:32
8. Acts 4:31
9. Acts 17:24
10. Acts 28:30-31

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<p>The Church Begins ✦</p> <p>They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42</p> <p>Acts 2</p>	<p>The Church Grows ✦</p> <p>Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord. Acts 3:19</p> <p>Acts 3-5</p>	<p>The Church Scatters ✦</p> <p>Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Acts 8:4</p> <p>Acts 6-8:3</p>	<p>Samaria Receives the Word ✦</p> <p>Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. Acts 8:35</p> <p>Acts 8</p>	<p>Gentiles Enter the Church ✦</p> <p>God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean. Acts 10:28</p> <p>Acts 10-11:18</p>	<p>Persecution and Prayer ✦</p> <p>The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. Acts 11:26</p> <p>Acts 11:19-26</p>
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Supplement/Life Application

1 copy for the teacher

Scripture Strips

<p>Acts 1:14 They all joined together constantly in PRAYER, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.</p>	<p>Acts 4:31 After they PRAYED, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.</p>	<p>Acts 10:2 He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and PRAYED to God regularly.</p>	<p>Acts 12:5 So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly PRAYING to God for him.</p>	<p>Acts 14:23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with PRAYER and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.</p>	<p>Acts 16:25 About midnight Paul and Silas were PRAYING and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.</p>	<p>Acts 21:5 But when our time was up, we left and continued on our way. All the disciples and their wives and children accompanied us out of the city, and there on the beach we knelt to PRAY.</p>	<p>Acts 26:29 Paul replied, "Short time or long—I PRAY [to] God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains."</p>
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disciple of Jesus	Christian
person just like Jesus	follower of Jesus