



PARENT GUIDE

LESSON NINE: CHURCH

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LESSON NINE: CHURCH

OBJECTIVE: To help families understand the purpose and power of the Church and how we can belong to it.

FOCUS ON FOLLOWING JESUS

Jesus gave an important mission to the Church and if we are followers of Jesus we belong to this Church, and this mission is for us too!

(*Hebrews 10:25 “Let us not give up meeting together [...] Instead, let us encourage one another with words of family of hope.”*)

GRIP ON THE GOSPEL

God wants us to be part of his people. The Church is described as a family and a body of which we can be a part. We join this team through trust in Jesus and what he has done for us, which permits our entry into a new community.

(*Romans 12:5 “So also we are many persons. But in Christ we are one body. And each part of the body belongs to all the other parts.”*)

WHAT DO I DO?

- Read the [For Parents](#) article. Spend a few minutes thinking and praying.
- Read over the [Discipleship Lesson](#) and decide when you will do it with your family.
- Gather your family, a Bible and any supplies listed on the lesson sheet. Use the script provided to teach a [Discipleship Lesson](#) to your family, adapting as needed.
- Use the 5 mini-lessons as [Daily Bible Time](#) prompts through the week.
- Select one or more [Discipleship Activities](#) to incorporate into your week.



FOR PARENTS

As a kid I had one good Christian friend. I admired her a lot – she was the one telling other people about Jesus at school, she was better than me at memorizing verses and she even learned to play the guitar and wrote worship songs! We went to Sunday school and youth group together, worked at Christian camps in the summer, prayed with and encouraged each other. She gave out Bibles and went to all the retreats and trips, even though her parents weren't believers and it caused fights at home. I thought she was a model Christian and would be a missionary someday. But towards the end of high school, she began to question her faith. Other things began to be more important in her life, and the answers to opposition were not so certain anymore. By the end of university, she professed she no longer believed in God.

Does this story sound familiar to you at all? As a young adult, I watched many of my friends walk away from the Church. I know families, and I'm sure you do too, who did all the right things and still one child fell away or rebelled. Barna Research group suggests that about 50 percent of all youth group graduates will drift away from God after high school. If you think that only applies to under-resourced mainline churches without youth programs, think again – even within the 'evangelical, Bible-believing, full youth group program' churches the statistics are the same!

Does this thought keep you up at night? When you watch your young children pray and ask questions about Jesus, do you wonder how you can help them to keep their faith like a child?

One of my greatest fears is that something I will do will prevent faith from 'sticking' and my children won't know and follow Jesus as adults. From infancy, parenting energy has been spent helping our kids to have the tools to obey, to be kind, to be good people – to learn to read and write and work hard. Yet I know the most important thing I could pass on is a love and trust in Jesus Christ, one that causes them to stay close to God's people through the Church. Unfortunately, there are no guarantees. I know the book of Proverbs is a collection of principles and general truths for following the way of wisdom, not, necessarily, promises about how my child's life will turn out if only I 'train them up' along a certain path. But I also know my desire for each of my children to come to repentance and faith is shared by God, so I'm not in this alone.

Parenting is one of those things in life where we must do what we can, but not trust only in ourselves. Faith is something only God can put in our children, and the task and responsibility of discipleship is given to the whole church. That means that even though a formula can't predict the outcome, there is lots that we can do – all of us – to help our child's faith survive young adulthood. Some ideas are listed below:

- 1. Speak positively, be involved, put family first:** We might wish our children would just listen to us, but the truth is, they do – sometimes when we wish they didn't. Sometimes this is when we are venting to a spouse or friend about a conflict or something at church that isn't done the way we would do it. In this regard, we must be careful. When our children see us joyfully loving God's people, serving faithfully and speaking about the great things God is doing through His people, they will get a clearer picture of what belonging to the Church is all about. It's not about dutifully sitting quietly in our most uncomfortable clothes – Church is where God shows up in miraculous ways through His people!
- 2. Help your children connect to other adults:** Fuller Seminary conducted research into what makes a child's faith stick through young adulthood. The College Transition Project found very clear markers of kids whose faith lasted and, one of the biggest, was strong relationships with adults other than their parents. These could be grandparents, family friends, teachers, youth leaders or those they connect with through ministries who intentionally care for, coach and mentor kids in their faith. Fuller seminary



suggests that kids with at least 5 caring adults building into their faith were able to withstand seasons of doubt and difficulties. Help your children make connections to different generations at Church, and feel they belong to a community that is larger than just your family.

3. **Help your children know where they can go with their doubts:** There will be times when your kids face doubts and those who try their faith. We might dread the day our kids ask a question we can't answer, but doubt isn't necessarily a bad thing. Giving our kids a place to ask the hard questions and explore the 'why' behind beliefs helps faith grow stronger. While it might be difficult, prepare your children by letting them know that they might have big questions, but there are great answers out there and you can find them together.
4. **Teach them to see that no failure is bigger than God's love:** Our children will make mistakes. If they believe they are unable to admit them because of the shame and guilt, they might turn from God instead of going to him for forgiveness. Just as we hope others will have grace with us when we make mistakes or even intentionally sin, our children need to know our love for them is bigger than a mistake or time of rebellion, and God's love is even bigger than that. They cannot mess up so much that they cannot return to God.
5. **Encourage them to serve and lead:** The Fuller Group who conducted youth research into faith that sticks also noticed that young people who had any position of leadership or regular opportunity to serve in the Church community had a much stronger and more solid faith than those who didn't. Leadership opportunities offer an ability for youth to teach others, to hear and answer questions, to receive mentorship, to find identity and belonging, and also to see the transformative power of God's Holy Spirit alive as they serve.
6. **Share your own faith story:** Sometimes parents are reluctant to share their past failures with their kids. While not every story is appropriate, it is important to share with our children what made us decide to follow Jesus, and how being a disciple of Jesus has changed the way we face struggles and adversity in our life. We can also share with them the triumphs and joys as God has changed us. Your testimony has been given to you by God as the most powerful tool aside from God's Word for sharing the gospel. No one else has it – just you! So, don't be afraid to share what God is teaching you, and that while we will not live a perfect life, God loves us perfectly.
7. **Pray for your children's faith:** Pray that their faith would grow as they abide in Christ, pray that they will be delivered from temptation, that they would be captivated by Jesus and his gospel enough to commit to being disciples their whole life long. We need God's help to parent well and guide their hearts to God, and they will need God's help and grace every day of their lives in order to follow well.

Consider these Questions:

1. What are your experiences with friends leaving the church?
2. What other factors do you think contribute to a young person continuing in their faith past high school?
3. What do you do in your home to help children feel a positive view of Church membership?
4. What do you love about your Church community? How do you share this with children and friends?



DISCIPLESHIP LESSON

Instructions:

- Read or teach the text using your own words
- *Text in italics is a note to the adult leading*
- This icon indicates a question you should ask
- This icon tells you there is a Bible verse to read
- **Text inside a grey box is a tip or idea for you!**
- Text inside this box is a short activity or task

The lesson should take about **45 minutes** to complete

Supplies Needed:

- **Bible**
- Materials needed for beginning game, if needed

THE GREATEST TEAM EVER!



If doing a challenge together as a family is not possible in your situation, or time and interest might not make it successful, talk about a hypothetical situation in which your family might have to work together – if you were on a ship – who would be a good Captain? Navigator? Cook? Who would climb the rigging? Or with very young children talk about characters on a tv show who work as a team.

Gather your family for the family Discipleship Lesson. Remind your family that this is something exciting to do together, to look at the Bible and Jesus and learn what it means to be a disciple!

Start off with a short game that has your family work together as a team.

Challenge your family to work together to create something. What do you have at home that you could use to build a tower? Can you build a structure out of drinking straws and tape that reaches to your ceiling without falling over? Or one with marshmallows/playdough and toothpicks? Or challenge your family with a physical game that requires everyone to work together – such as having the whole family stand on a small blanket or rug, and trying to see if you can turn over the rug without anyone stepping off of it. It's trickier than it sounds!



What does it mean to be on a team?

Teams are great! When we play on a team, we need everyone to work together for a goal. Sometimes you have to try out or sign up to be on a team, sometimes we get picked to be on a team because we're really great at something, sometimes teams are just for very special people – but today



we're going to talk about a team that all of us can be on no matter whether we are big or little, young or old. No matter who we are!



Of all the people you know about in the world, who would you pick to be on your team – at a major sport event? At a math competition? On a cooking show? In a race around the world? At a music competition?



You can make these examples more specific – consider game shows or competitions your family knows about or watches.

Seems like you know a lot about teams already! But let's make sure we all know the important qualities of a team.



How could you tell a soccer team from any ordinary crowd of people? (They wear a uniform and special shoes, they are fit.)

Does everyone on a team have to do the same thing at the same time, like a group of dancers?

Can a person be on a team all by themselves?

On a team, who gets a prize if they win?

So we know a few things about teams! (*Brainstorm other features of teams if you need to. Teams might wear a uniform, if one gets a medal or award they all do, there has to be more than one of them, a team is the people not the place where they play their sport, etc.*)

Show a picture (from your phone is fine) of the inside of a hockey arena or soccer pitch.



Is this a team?

No, of course not! A building we play a game in is not the team, it needs a team or it's just a big room. You and I know that a team is the people.



This is really important to know because the team we're talking about today is a team called "Church!"

Sometimes we use the word Church to mean a special building, don't we? (*Talk about the church buildings your family goes to, knows about or can see in your neighbourhood.*)

But according to the way the Bible uses the word, the Church isn't a building at all! It's a group of people, a team who might get together in that building.

If this is a bit confusing, we can take a closer look together.

We usually mean we will visit a buliding when we say, 'we are going to Church this morning'. But we also say that we are a part of our Church. Does that mean we are walls and floors and windows? No, that would be silly! It wouldn't make a very strong buliding if it was just made up of people all stacked together! Here is what the Bible says:



Acts 9:31

Now buildings can grow, right? How do buildings grow? (*When people add stones and bricks and wood and cement.*) But that's not what this verse is talking about, is it? It's talking about MORE PEOPLE becoming part of the team!



Acts 15:22 and Acts 15:30



Can a building decide what to do? Can a building read a letter?

No, only groups of people can do that! In the Bible, we see the word Church refer to people who came together, out of their ordinary lives to be together, and work together and love one another. Kind of like a family! But of all the teams and groups they belonged to, the people in New Testament times knew that the Church-team was the most important team they were on. It came before everything else!

If we are going to be a family that follows Jesus, we need to know what it means to be part of the Church. What is being on this team like? Why do we



join this team? How do we join this team? What do we do on this team? That's what we'll talk about this week! But here are the three biggest things:

1. **We join the Church by being a Christian.**
2. **Being in the Church is like being in a family or part of a body.**
3. **On this team we have goals. Here are three: Grow God's Worship, Grow in being like Jesus and Grow God's Team!**

The Church is the one big team made up of EVERY SINGLE PERSON who is a Christian! A Christian is someone who has been changed and forgiven by God, has God's Holy Spirit inside them and follows Jesus.

 **First question – HOW does a person become a Christian?** (*Can your children answer this question? Help them answer together.*)

When we know we have done bad things and broken God's rules, we ask God to forgive us and we trust that what Jesus did to pay for our sins is enough. We can ask God to change us and help us be more like Jesus. The Bible says that when we're forgiven, when we trust Jesus, he begins to make us all new! And we join God's team!

Here are some important questions though:

 **Does having parents who are Christians make you a Christian?
Can you become a Christian just by being good enough to join God's team?**

No! We have to join the team ourselves. We will never be good enough on our own – so Jesus said he would be good enough for us!

God has a high standard of who can be on his team, because he is perfect. We need to have our sin gone to have a relationship with God and help God in his great big mission – but we don't qualify on our own. So Jesus qualifies for us! It's kind of like having a pro basketball player do our basketball try-out for us!

Jesus has qualified for us, so we don't have to. We just have to want to join His team! Can our family be a part of this team?



We must be careful as parents to walk the line of helping our children feel they are welcome and belong to the family of God, and welcome at Church, but also not giving them a false hope that they are truly saved just because their parents are Christians. You know your children, so adapt this content as necessary.



How many people do you think are needed to make up Church?



Matthew 18:20



Choose the questions that are best for your family composition. Some of these questions will be explored further this week in daily Bible time.

Questions for Younger Children

- Is our family a team? Why?
- What is the best thing about being on our family team?
- What do you like about going to Church?
- Who helps at Church? What do they do?
- How does our family help on God's team?

Questions for Older Children

- What has to happen for God to consider a group of people part of the Church?
- Have you ever felt like you don't fit in at Church or with other Christians? Does God want us to be all the same? How do we know?
- What are some ways that the Church helps people to be more like Jesus?

We are a part of the Church, even when we meet as just our little family. God wants us to be a part of his big team and work together. This week we'll be talking about this team – the Church – and just like any team, it has goals that we accomplish together. You and I, we can learn to follow Jesus by being part of his team, a team he qualifies us for and a team he leads!

Close by praying together that God would help your family to be disciples by being the Church.



DAILY BIBLE TIME

Take a few minutes each day this week to spend some time together reading from God's Word and discussing it together. Questions and verses are provided for you below. Use the Bible version your children are used to. NIRV is a good one for very young children.

1	<u>1 Timothy 5:1-2</u>	<p>Church is like a family. That gives us a picture of how this team works together.</p> <p>How do families treat each other?</p> <p>What do you think it means that we treat older people in church like moms and dads?</p> <p>Can you think of a way that you see this happening?</p> <p>What does it mean that kids can treat each other like brothers and sisters at church?</p> <p>Does it mean that you argue with each other?</p> <p>When we are on the same team as a family or as the Church it means that we don't have to compete with one another, fight with them or make ourselves look better than them. We don't use one another, we treat each other with love and respect. This is something even adults have to work at!</p> <p>In a family, everyone belongs. Should anyone feel left out at Church?</p> <p>How can you help people to not feel left out or unloved at church?</p>
2	<u>1 Corinthians 12:12-27</u>	<p>Church is like a body. What do you think is the best part of the body? Why?</p> <p>Each of our body parts has a different job, and not all are the same.</p> <p>If you were going to eat an apple, which body parts might you use?</p> <p>The way the Bible describes the Church, it is like we are all part of the body of Jesus!</p> <p>What would a hockey team be like if everyone was a goalie?</p> <p>What would happen if a band was only drummers? Or your school only had gym teachers?</p> <p>Groups of people who belong to the Church need to be different to help one another.</p> <p>What are some of the different jobs people do at church?</p> <p>Do we have to be the same as everyone else who is part of the church?</p> <p>How should we treat people who are different than us or do different jobs?</p>
3	<u>Hebrews 14:15-16</u> <u>Acts 2:42-47</u>	<p>One of the goals of Church is to grow the worship of God.</p> <p>Teams have goals, so does Church! Worship, Discipleship and Evangelism.</p> <p>What does it mean that we worship God together as part of the Church?</p> <p>In Old Testament times, people offered sacrifices to ask God to forgive their sins, but also to thank God for things he had done for them. Those thank-you gifts were called offerings, a kind of worship. But now God wants us to worship him in other ways.</p> <p>What are some of the things listed in the Hebrews verse that make God happy?</p> <p>What are some ways we worship God as part of the Church? What are the ways the early Church worshipped together? (see Acts 2 verses)</p> <p>How does being part of the Church help us worship God better?</p> <p>Worship is more than just singing, but something that comes from inside us!</p>



4	<u>Acts 9:31</u> <u>Ephesians 4:14-16</u>	<p>One of the goals of Church is to grow in following Jesus, discipleship.</p> <p>What do you think it means that the church was strengthened and grew larger. Did everyone get taller and grow muscles? Or did the building suddenly get bigger and was made out of super strong bricks?</p> <p>What are some ways kids grow? (grow taller, hair grows, more teeth, learn new things)</p> <p>There are lots of ways to grow! The Church can grow in number, but also on the inside. One of the purposes of Church is for each person to grow in their faith – to grow from Baby Christians to Grown-Up Christians. But babies and little children need help to grow and learn, don't they? What do these verses mean? How does the Church help us each to grow to be more like Jesus? How can you help others to grow to be like Jesus too?</p>
5	<u>Matthew 28:18-20</u>	<p>One of the goals of Church is to grow the team of Jesus, evangelism.</p> <p>Remember – how does a person become part of God's team?</p> <p>Yesterday we talked about how the Church grows by making disciples who grow in knowledge of God, but we also grow the Church by adding new people to the team! People find out what it means to be on God's team by watching us and hearing us talk about what God has done in our lives.</p> <p>What are some ways we can invite people to join God's team, the Church?</p> <p>What does it mean to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to obey?</p> <p>How does our church share the Gospel with others and show love and mercy? How can we be a part of that?</p> <p>Who do we know who does not follow Jesus yet and how can we invite them to?</p>



DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

Use any of the following activities to extend the learning and disciple your child in everyday life.

- **Pray Together:** Take time to pray for wisdom, understanding and knowledge.
- **Memorize:** Romans 12:5 or Matthew 28:18-20 together as a family. Talk about this verse in daily life.
- **Missions:** Pray for people in your life who are not yet on Jesus's team. How can you be a part of evangelism efforts and activities of your local church body? Can you learn about how church groups meet around the world?
- **Daily Life:**
 - If possible, visit a friend or relative's church to join them for worship. It is healthy to see other communities of believers who are a little different but still belong to the body of Christ.
 - Identify different roles in serving at church. Write thank-you cards or emails to people who serve behind the scenes or help in ways that are less public than the pastor or church staff.
 - Practice drawing animals together – find step by step instructions on the internet! It is much easier to do something when someone walks you through it step by step. Discipleship is like that! We can learn on our own, but it happens much better when we get help from others!