

52. I am Alive: Church

Acts 2



Jesus said, "Where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

Matthew 18:20

I am Alive: Church

The early believers were very excited about their new faith. They got together every day. These Christians met in homes or at the Temple. They could not stay away from each other. Their love became like a magnet.

They shared bread as Jesus did at the Last Supper. They sang, prayed, and listened to teachings from God's Word. They shared everything with each other.

And God blessed these new followers. He sent miracles. Every day, more people became believers. It was the beautiful birth of the Christian church.

All over the world, the church of Jesus Christ is still growing. Most Christians meet in churches. Sadly, in some countries, Christians are not allowed to meet. But they keep meeting to obey God. They gather secretly in homes, fields, or caves.

When you became a believer, you became part of God's family. This is the worldwide church. All Christians need each other to grow strong.

Jesus promised to be with us where two or more gather in his name. He said, "I will build my church. Even the gates of hell itself will not destroy it." Jesus is keeping that promise.

Questions

1. What was the early Christian church like?
2. What is the Christian church like today?
3. Do you go to church each week? If not, would you like to?
4. How can you become an important part of your church?

Dear Lord Jesus,

You are the head of the church all over the world. Thank you for freedoms to go to church. Please help those who share my faith but not my freedom. Please help me to go to church each week.

Amen

Draw crosses all over the world map to stand for churches.



Show students where the story is in the Bible. Use the Bible references above the illustration.

Before you read:

Activate Prior Knowledge

- a) What is church? What do people do in church?
- b) Do you think church is more of a building or more about people?
- c) Does your family go to church? If not, would you like to?

Magnetic Love

Use a large magnet to symbolize the church. Write the names of children in your class on index cards. Put a paper clip on each index card. See how "Christians" are drawn to "church" and each other! How can you love others so that Jesus' love is a magnet?

Linked and Strong

When Christians stay together, they are strong. Alone, they often become weak. Play a game like Red Rover. Half of the class links arms and calls one person at a time to run and try to break through their chain. If they break through, they join the chain. (To stay safe, play this only on grass and not with young children.) Talk about things that come against Christians that try to break their bond: staying alone, not reading your Bible, not praying to God, thinking you are too cool for church, etc. Now link arms in a circle and pray that God keeps you linked and strong all life long.

Set Aside a Day for God

From the Old to the New Testament, we find believers together. They met in the Temple, by the river, in homes, and even hiding in an upper room. Look up Exodus 20:8-10 and memorize Hebrews 10:25. On a calendar, write "Go to Church" on every Sunday.

Secret Church

In more than 60 countries, Christians are persecuted. They are hurt just because they believe in Jesus. However, they still meet because they know how important it is for believing brothers and sisters to worship together. Create your own "secret church." Ask a few friends to meet you in your home or in a field or up in a tree! Have everyone bring Bibles or print some of the Easy Read English Bible stories. Print the song below or another song. Ask everyone to bring a snack to share. A church service can be as simple as a few songs, prayer time, Bible time and then talking about what you read. Remember to thank God for your freedom to worship him.

Get Up; Speak Up

The Bible tells us in Proverbs 31:8 to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. You be the speaker for those brave, persecuted Christians who are in prison. Go to this link and find a country. Show a map and tell your Sunday School class a few facts about the Christians there. Pray for them! There are enough countries to do this each week of the year. You will also find at this site amazing stories, downloads, recipes, crafts, games, videos, and more. <https://www.kidsofcourage.com/?cat=15>

The Best Day of the Week

Do you say to yourself on Sundays, "I have to go to church." or do you say, "I GET to go to church!" The song came from King David when he wrote Psalm 84. This mighty king preferred to even be a door keeper in God's house than in a tent! Read Psalm 84 together and then sing this song below while you are getting ready for church. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndVRcqzikWA>

Better is One Day by Matt Redman

How lovely is your dwelling place, Oh Lord Almighty.
For my soul longs and even faints for you.
For here my heart is satisfied within your presence.
I sing beneath the shadow of your wings.

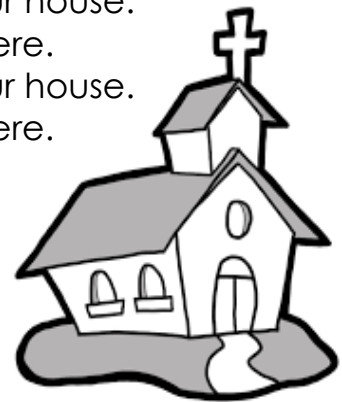


Better is one day in your courts.
Better is one day in your house.
Better is one day in your courts
than thousands elsewhere.
Better is one day in your courts. Better is one day in your house.
Better is one day in your courts than thousands elsewhere.

One thing I ask, and I would seek – to see your beauty.
To find you in the place your glory dwells.
One thing I ask, and I would seek – to see your beauty.
To find you in the place your glory dwells.

Better is one day in your courts. Better is one day in your house.
Better is one day in your courts than thousands elsewhere.
Better is one day in your courts. Better is one day in your house.
Better is one day in your courts than thousands elsewhere.

My heart and flesh cry out for you the Living God.
Your Spirit's water to my soul.
I've tasted and I see. Come once again to me.
I will draw near to you. I will draw near to you.



Better is one day in your courts. Better is one day in your house.
Better is one day in your courts than thousands elsewhere.
Better is one day in your courts. Better is one day in your house.
Better is one day in your courts than thousands elsewhere.

(song repeats)

My Own Church

Your church needs you! Even children can be important to help your church grow. But what can a kid do? A lot! Photocopy one of these pages each month for each child. Color in your state flag. Check the boxes as you become a key Christian at your church.

I can be an important part of my church by...

Month:

Year:

1. I will go to my church each week.

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2. I will go to my Sunday School class.

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3. I will bring my friends to visit.

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4. I will pray for my pastor, my church, and the leaders.

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What other ways can you think of to support your church???

5. I can help clean up after the services.

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6. I can tell my teachers thank you.

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7. I can give some of my money.

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8. I can ask my teachers how I can support my church.

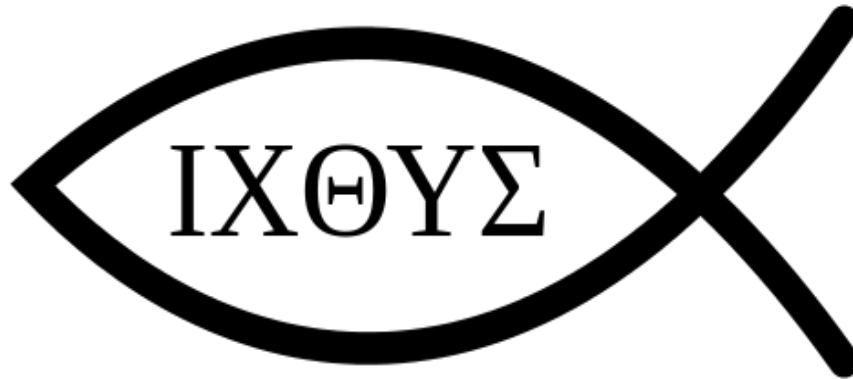
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Secret Symbol that Saves

As the church grew in the early years, Christians were often persecuted (hurt) for believing in Jesus and not worshipping the emperor of the Roman empire. But Christians always want to and need to be together. So, they met secretly, usually in homes. To make sure they were entering a safe, believing home, the Christians would draw a fish symbol on their door. The letters are an acronym: Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior.

Ichthus or ichthys (ick-thoos) is the Greek word for fish. It's still the historic Christianity symbol to show others we are believers. Look for it on businesses. The next time you see an ichthus, wave to your brother or sister in Christ!



<u>Greek Letter</u>	<u>Greek Word</u>	<u>English Word</u>
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I	Jesus	Jesus
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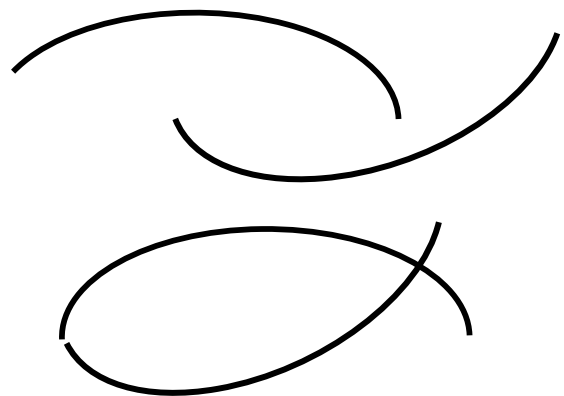
X	Christos	Christ
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Θ	Theos	God's
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Υ	Uios	Son
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Σ	Sotor	Savior
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To make sure they were entering a safe, Christian home, the believers came up with a plan. When the Christian opened his door, he would draw an arc with his toe in the sand. If the other person was indeed a fellow Christian, he would draw the bottom arch to complete the fish symbol. He would enter safely. Try doing this at your door with a cookie sheet filled with sugar. Welcome and enter, brother or sister!



The Gates of Hell

A Christian, and a church, can be going about doing good – feeding the hungry, putting clothes on poor people, and sharing the good news about Jesus. All of a sudden, they're attacked! Maybe someone will mock you. Maybe they will print something mean about your church in the newspaper. Don't be surprised. The Bible warns us this will happen (2 Timothy 3:12). Be encouraged. Jesus promised to be with us when we meet together. He also said that not even hell itself will stop the church from growing. Photocopy this page onto card stock and cut the images out. Use masking tape to stick them to the back seat of your car. Every time you pass a Christian church, ask God to protect it and keep it strong. Prayer is our first weapon of safety. Use it often.

