

Value the Church: *My Church*

LESSON AT A GLANCE	
<p>Facilitator Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep in mind, as you discuss and teach today’s lesson: We come together on Sunday as a community of believers, to hear the Word, celebrate the sacraments, and to worship together. 	<p>I wonder...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Why is fellowship essential for the church? ➤ How does prayer value the church? ➤ Why should I share my faith with others? <p>I believe...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ God created us to live, worship, and grow in faith as a community of believers. ➤ Praying for others demonstrates our commitment to love and serve others. ➤ Christians have a responsibility to profess their faith in Jesus Christ. <p>Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ IGNITE Bible ➤ Catechism ➤ For Your Journey: Episode 5 What is true Christian Fellowship, Episode 7 Why go to church? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For Your Journey episodes can be found on the NAC USA mobile app and at the NAC USA YouTube channel <p>References:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bible: Acts 2:42-47, 1 Corinthians 12:25-27, Hebrews 10:25, 1 John 1:3 ➤ Catechism Q & A questions: 365-367, 472, 473, 618, 619, 724, 727, 728
PRE DISCUSSION MESSAGE TO PARENTS AND STUDENT (TO BE SENT VIA EMAIL OR TEXT)	
	<p>The definition of community is: a group of people with a common characteristic or interest living together within a larger society. Think about the different “communities” to which you belong and the benefits of that membership. Join us tomorrow for small group at _____.</p>
POST DISCUSSION MESSAGE TO PARENTS (TO BE SENT VIA EMAIL OR TEXT)	
<p>Facilitator Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please customize the information as necessary. This week’s “Call to action” encourages students to watch one of the referenced For Your Journey episodes with someone from their family. Consider including links to the episodes. 	<p>Dear Parents,</p> <p>This week the “I wonder...” questions are about the Church, our journey of faith together, the benefits of fellowship, and the value of prayer. Discuss with your son or daughter ways in which congregational life strengthens you as a believer, and ways you can help to strengthen other believers. As always, if you have any question about the topic, feel free to contact us.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Your Youth Leaders</p>

SUNDAY SERMON REFLECTIONS (up to 10 minutes)

<p>Facilitator Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow 2-3 students to share their reflections. For larger groups, vary who shares from week to week. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What Bible verse was used for the basis of last Sunday’s sermon? ➤ What were some of the main takeaways? What did you learn? ➤ So far this week, how have you applied what you learned from the sermon last Sunday? ➤ Going forward, how will you apply what you learned from the sermon last Sunday?
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HOOK (up to 10 minutes)

<p>Facilitator Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Allow 2-3 students to share their reflections. For larger groups, vary who shares from week to week. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How are you and how are you feeling today? ➤ Who would like to share their point to ponder or call to action from last week? ➤ Have the students list the different communities to which they belong and the benefits they receive from their membership (ex. school community, neighborhood, sports team, youth group etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Common interests, learn from each other ○ Support, protect each other ○ Contribute to the common good
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SET THE STAGE (1 minute)

<p>Facilitator Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Preview the “I wonder” questions with the students. 	<p>I wonder...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Why is fellowship essential for the church? ➤ How does prayer value the church? ➤ Why should I share my faith with others?
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LESSON (up to 25 minutes)

<p>Facilitator Notes:</p>	<p>Ask the students something like: What do you think of when you hear the word “church”?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Consider writing their answers on a whiteboard or flip chart ➤ Summarize the student’s answers using Catechism Q&A question 365 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The term “church” has three different meanings in general usage. On the one hand, it is used in reference to a Christian place of worship (e.g. the local parish) in which the believers gather for divine service. Another meaning of “church” refers to the congregation in a particular place. Beyond that, “church” can be used in reference to a Christian community (denomination), for example the New Apostolic Church or the Catholic Church. (Catechism Q&A question 365)
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- Consider watching [Episode 5 of For Your Journey | What is true Christian Fellowship?](#)

Say something like: God made us for community. This is evident already in Genesis when God says “It is not good that man should be alone;...” (Genesis 1:18). At our most fundamental level, God created us to desire community with Him and each other.

Even the Holy Trinity, God, the Father, God, the Son, God, the Holy Spirit, are constantly in community with each other. God invites us into this community and togetherness so that we are not isolated.

In the church, believers have fellowship with one another. The focal point of church life is the divine service. In the divine service, believers bring worship and praise to God and God turns to believers in both word and sacrament. (Catechism Q&A 366)

It is important to emphasize that when talking about ‘fellowship’, it is not in reference to refreshments or a meal. While sharing something to eat creates a space for sharing life together and the opportunity for fellowship to take place, simply eating together and talking about the weather or current events does not automatically constitute Christian fellowship.

Student Question #1 – When we gather together at church we have the opportunity to contribute to and experience fellowship. Why is fellowship essential for the church?

- Our corporate worship, hearing God’s word, prayer, and partaking of the sacraments are the elements when true Christian fellowship is shared.
- As a whole, these elements are indispensable for attaining salvation.
- From this we derive the basic elements of the divine service: the Apostles’ doctrine, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. (Catechism Q&A question 618)

Student Question #2 – When we gather together at church we have the opportunity to worship God together. Why do you think worship is a vital element of both the early church and of congregational life today?

- The knowledge of the majesty of God prompts human beings to worship and adore Him.
- In the early church public worship was not always safe, some congregations had to meet in secret. These moments of worship and praise were personal proclamations of God’s omnipotence.
- Worship and praise was strengthening, and motivated the early believers to continue to share and spread the gospel message.
- Worshipping God together with other believers allows us to express to God what He means to us.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the students have already gone through the “Help spread the gospel” semester of the Youth THRIVE Small Group curriculum, remind them that telling others about their faith in Jesus Christ is a component of helping to spread the gospel. ➤ Consider watching Episode 7 of For Your Journey Why go to church? 	<p>Student Question #3 – As a body of believers, we have a responsibility to pray and pray for one another. What are the effects of prayer on the church/congregation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Prayer is communication with God, and because God is personal, all people can offer prayer, individually or communally. ➤ We can worship, praise, and adore God through prayer. ➤ Prayer can make a difference in the lives of others. Love for one another inspires us to pray for each other so others can experience God’s fullness, knowledge of Christ’s love, discernment, filling with the fruits of righteousness, knowledge of God’s will, spiritual understanding, comfort, love for God, and equipment for every good work that is pleasing to God. ➤ Not all prayers are answered. God answers our prayers according to His will, in the way that is best for us and for those we pray for. <p>Student Question #4 – Why should I share my faith with others?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Just like the word “church”, the word “faith” has multiple meanings as well. ➤ “Faith” can mean one’s church, like the New Apostolic Church, and also mean one’s belief in Jesus Christ. ➤ As believers we want to share our belief in Jesus Christ with those in a circles of influence (our families, congregations, communities). When sharing our belief in Jesus Christ, it isn’t just sharing THAT we believe in Jesus Christ, but also how a deepening relationship with Jesus has impacted your life. ➤ Additionally, when we value the church and the elements encompassed in the church (the preached word, celebrating sacraments, true fellowship, true worship), we can feel compelled to share with others that we have experienced Jesus Christ in the New Apostolic Church. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Those that have received the gift of the Holy Spirit are to testify of the occupied Apostle ministry and it’s function. <p>Ultimately, when we see the importance of the church, and coming together, we can better value the church.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The writer of Hebrews emphasized the need for coming together, - <i>“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”</i> Hebrews 10:25
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WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME? (up to 10 minutes)

Facilitator Notes:

- The Vision and Mission statements of the New Apostolic Church:
 - In the first few pages of the Catechism
 - In the first few pages of the Catechism Q&A
 - On a placard at the church
 - In "About" tab of the NAC USA mobile app
 - In the THRIVE Membership Expectations booklet
- It may seem like the Vision and Mission statements of the New Apostolic Church are brought up a lot in the Youth THRIVE Small Group curriculum. This is intentional. It is important for students to know why the church exists, what the church is trying to achieve (Vision), and how the church plans on achieving it (Mission).

Wrap up the lesson with the New Apostolic Church Vision statement:

- *A church in which people feel at home and, inspired by the Holy Spirit and their love for God, align their lives to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and thus prepare themselves for His return and eternal life.*
- The students don't have to share these answers to the following questions, but should genuinely ponder their answers after contemplating the questions:
 - Do you value your home (where you live)?
 - Do you feel at home in this church/congregation?
 - Why or why not?
- Remind the students that you are available to answer any questions they may have and if there is something, whether specific or general, that has prevented them from feeling like the congregation is their home, that you are happy to listen to them and process that together.

Close with the "I Wonder..." questions

- Ask a student to read an "I Wonder..." question, and invite another student to answer with an "I Believe..." statement or an "I Believe..." statement in their own words.
- As you review each question and answer, stop and check in with the group to be sure there are no misunderstandings or misconceptions.
- Remind the students that on their Confirmation day, they will or have already promised and committed to surrendering themselves to God in belief and obedience. The church is a place to strengthen them on their life-long journey of surrendering to God and aligning their lives to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I wonder...

- Why is fellowship essential for the church?
- How does prayer value the church?
- Why should I share my journey of faith with others?

I believe...

- God created us to live, worship, and grow in faith as a community of believers.
- Praying for others demonstrates our commitment to love and serve others.
- Christians have a responsibility to profess their faith.

Point to Ponder...

- In addition to seeking fellowship, worshipping God, and praying, how else can my attitude and actions demonstrate that I value the church?

A Call to Action...

- Watch either Episode 5 | What is true Christian fellowship? Or Episode 7 | Why go to church? With someone from your family. Discuss which point stood out the most to you.

Weekly Reflections

What Bible verse was used for the basis of last Sunday's sermon?

What were some of the main takeaways? What did you learn?

So far this week, how have you applied what you learned from the sermon last Sunday?

Going forward, how will you apply what you learned from the sermon last Sunday?

Point to Ponder...

Call to Action...

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1. When we gather together at church we have the opportunity to contribute to and experience fellowship. Why is fellowship essential for the church?

2. When we gather together at church we have the opportunity to worship God together. Why do you think worship is a vital element of both the early church and of congregational life today?

3. As a body of believers, we have a responsibility to pray and pray for one another. What are the effects of prayer on the church/congregation?

4. Why should I share my faith with others?

Point to Ponder: In addition to seeking fellowship, worshipping God, and praying, how else can my attitude and actions demonstrate that I value the church?

A Call to Action: Watch either Episode 5 | What is true Christian fellowship? Or Episode 7 | Why go to church? With someone from your family. Discuss which point stood out the most to you.