

Church Development

To the Leader:

This week's lesson is *Church Development*. There are seven traits for the Church of the Nazarene, and the fifth one is Church Development. These traits depict what we believe should characterize every church body.

Church Development means we create new churches around the world. A church is a group of people who gather regularly to learn about Jesus and share His love. Through this lesson, children will understand what a “church” is. Students will learn to define a church, what makes it healthy, and how to help it grow and multiply. In *Nazarene Essentials*, we find the following: “In the Church of the Nazarene, our definition of a church reads: Any group that meets regularly for spiritual nurture, worship, or instruction at an announced time and place with an identified leader, and aligned with the message and mission of the Church of the Nazarene may be recognized as a church and reported as such for district and general church statistics. In other words, a church is a cluster of believers, not a building or a property.”

As you prepare for this lesson, consider how God could use you, the children, and your church to be an extension of His hands, feet, and voice in the world.

Objective:

To understand what a “church” is. Students will learn to define a church, what makes it healthy, and how to help it grow and multiply.

Material Needed:

- Legos or other building block materials
- Copies of the “What makes a church great?” worksheet

Early Arrival Activity:

As students arrive, have them complete the “What makes a church great?” worksheet. After they have completed the worksheet, allow them to build church buildings out of building blocks or other materials. Help them decide if they will all work on one building together or if they will split up and work on separate churches.

What Is the Church? (5-10 Minutes):

Say: “Today we are learning about the church. We’re going to learn what church is, but we’re also going to learn about how important it is to grow and multiply the church. Sometimes when we talk about the church we are talking about all churches everywhere that believe in Jesus Christ. Other times we are talking about our local church in our community that we are a part of. Let’s start by talking about what a church is.”

In preparation for this part of the lesson, read the Church of the Nazarene’s Article of Faith XI, “The Church,” and the accompanying material in *Nazarene Essentials*. For the next few minutes, help kids parse the language and find real examples in your congregation of what a church is.

Say, “The Church of the Nazarene says that a church is a community of people that confess Jesus as Lord. The church is called together by the Holy Spirit. It should be united, worship together, hear preaching, participate in communion, baptize people, and help people.”

Invite kids to share about times when they’ve participated in worship, heard preaching, experienced communion, seen a baptism, or watched/participated in the church helping people, etc.

What Makes a Church Great? (5-10 Minutes):

Say: “Because there are lots of people in a church, sometimes there are a lot of different ideas about what makes church great. Let’s look at our worksheets and see what we thought makes our church great.”

Take some time to allow the kids to read off their top three ideas. Have the kids group together based on what their #1 idea would be. Did anyone come up with something not listed on the worksheet?

During this time, stress the importance that even though there are differences of opinions within churches about how we do things and what is most important, the church should still be united in what we believe. How do we feel when we are the only person who picks something as most important? Sometimes our opinions make us think some people or activities are not as important. But God asks us to recognize that each person is important. Jesus loves and values all people regardless of their gifts and talents. They are all important in the church.

Read Romans 12:6-8 (NIV) to really drive home the point that it’s okay to have different opinions and ideas, but that we should all strive to be united in what we believe and how we love each other:

⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith;⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach;⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Ask: “What do you think this scripture is trying to teach us about being a part of the church?” Let kids discuss this. **What makes a church great? (All of us working together!)**

Say: “Now, let’s all work together to build a really large church out of these blocks.” Help the kids build a large church out of blocks, you will use this in the next section.

Wrap-Up Object Lesson (10-15 Minutes):

Once finished building the church, place the church in front of you.

Say: “The Church of the Nazarene is focused on spreading the Good News about Jesus by developing new churches around the world. We like to plant churches in places where there are no other churches. We have missionaries who go into many different areas of the world and plant churches. But we can also plant churches right here in our country. How do you think our church could help build a new church?”

Take some time to talk about what it would take to build a new church. What jobs need to be done in a church? Where will the people come from? Where will the church meet? Where will the money come from?

Say: “To build a new church requires resources like time, money, and people volunteering. If our church wanted to build a church, it would require some of our resources.”

Take some of the blocks from the big church they’ve built, and use them to begin constructing a second church. Maybe kids will argue that you’re destroying their church, or that the big church doesn’t look good anymore. Talk them through some of those feelings and relate with them how important it is to build new churches. Continue taking blocks until you have two churches about the same size.

You can continue to ask questions, such as, “Is this church still as big as it was? How many resources did it take to build a new church? Was it easy to build a new church?” Close this time by reading Romans 10:14-15 (*NIV*):

¹⁴ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

¹⁵ And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring Good News!"

Ask: “What makes a church great?” (**Sharing the Good News of Jesus.**)

Memory Verse Activity/Review:

“One Body, Many Parts”: Romans 10:15

Take some of the building blocks. On each block, write one or two of the words from this phrase from Romans 10:15, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring Good News!” You can do this with a dry erase marker, or writing the words on tape on the blocks to remove later.

Say: “On these blocks are some words that make a sentence, can you help put them in order?” Have them build the blocks into a tower with the words in order.

Say: “Before, we only had one church, but now we have two. The people in the second church heard about Jesus from the people in the first church. How beautiful it is to see the Good News of Jesus spread! But it’s also beautiful to see that these two churches came from the same set of blocks. Even though there are two churches; together they are one. What makes the church great is that we are the body of Christ.”

Say: “Today, we need to remember that God calls us to make disciples in all nations. That means that we need to build new churches, both here in our own country and in other countries. As we work to spread the Word of God in our neighborhood, we’re working to bring people into the one body of Christ.”

Personal Challenge or Take Away Prayer:

Am I connected to my church? Our goal in attending church is not just to have fun, but to be connected to the body of Christ and be a part of spreading the Good News of Jesus. How am I a part? How can I be a part of this?

Is my church connected to the lost in my community and to other churches? How do we see this? Our goal as a church is to make disciples, which is easier when we work together.

Is my church able to plant another church?

Prayer:

Dear Father, help us to be united as a Christian body, to go and make disciples. Help us to be willing to use all our talents and resources to spread the Good News about Jesus and build Your church in all the world. Our church belongs to You. Show us how You want to use us. In Jesus' name, Amen.