

Unveiling the Plan

Lesson 10

Unit Three: Building According to Code

Scripture: Acts 1:1-5; 2:1-6, 12-14, 16, 17, 22-24, 36-39

Life Focus: The same God who was at work in the birth of the church works in the church today.



Today's Challenge

How did the church begin? Why does it matter? Let's explore those questions with these activities.

Step 1

Setting the Stage

Explain the importance of starting at the beginning.

Step 2

Searching the Word

Summarize the events that led to the beginning of the church.

Step 3

Making It Real

Discuss the implications of being a part of this organization founded by God.

Step 4

Living It Out

Plan to do something that demonstrates a personal commitment to God's church.

First Things First

Which came first: a movie projector or an X-ray? the Model A Ford or the Model T Ford? the electric toothbrush or modern toothpaste? The movie projector was invented in 1879 and the X-ray in 1902. The Model T arrived 19 years before the Model A (1909 and 1928), and 80 years passed between the invention of modern toothpaste (1800) and the first electric toothbrush (1880).

But understanding how something began is good for more than trivia challenges! When we understand how the church began, we can learn much about what God intends it to be today. We see that the early days of the church were marked with *instruction, initiation, and invitation.*

Continued on next page. ➤

Hide It in Your Heart

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

—Acts 1:8

For a pre-session or take-home activity, lead kids in memorizing this key verse, using the puzzle found on your *Young Teen Resources* CD.

Acts 1:1-5

¹In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach ²until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ³After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. ⁴On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

Acts 2:1-6, 12-14, 16, 17, 22-24, 36-39

¹When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken.

¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

¹³ Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

¹⁴Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say."

¹⁶"No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams."

²²"Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him."

³⁶"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."

³⁷When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

³⁸Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

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Encountering God's Word

INSTRUCTION Acts 1:1-5

Luke begins Acts by stating that it is a continuation of what "Jesus began to do and to teach" (Acts 1:1). Between the resurrection and His ascension (40 days later), Jesus gave His disciples "convincing proofs" that He was alive again—appearing among them, talking with them, eating, and letting them touch Him (v. 3). Since the resurrection would be the center

After His resurrection, Jesus continued to teach His disciples about founding His church.

of the apostolic message, Jesus wanted there to be no doubt to the truth of this event (1 Corinthians 15:1-6, 14).

During that time Jesus gave further instructions, which included the commands to preach to all nations (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-19; Luke

24:46, 47) and further explanation of the kingdom of God. The apostles were told not to worry about the lingering popular hope for a restored earthly kingdom. Their job was to get busy spreading the gospel (Acts 1:6-8). The promised coming of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-32) would empower them and help them as they began in Jerusalem and spread outward into Judea, Samaria, and the rest of the world (Acts 1:8). The apostles were required to wait in Jerusalem a few more days for the Spirit (vv. 4, 5).

If we were to ask average people on the street to describe the message of the church of Jesus Christ, what might they say? Would they talk about following the 10 Commandments? Would they mention a stance on a political or social issue? Would they describe a distinctive doctrine of one denomination or another? The church today should be clearly teaching what Jesus wanted His apostles to know during those 40 days after the resurrection. The heart of our message must be that God raised Jesus from the dead and has given us the right to be a part of a kingdom that He rules!

INITIATION Acts 2:1-6

One of the three annual feasts of Judaism (Deuteronomy 16), Pentecost (the Festival of Weeks) came 50 days after Passover. The apostles were together in a house when the Spirit came on them with the sound of wind and the visual sign of tongues of fire. The Holy Spirit empowered them to speak in foreign languages (Acts 2:1-4).

Faithful Jews from all over the world would come to Jerusalem for Passover and stay until Pentecost. This multiethnic crowd was drawn to this commotion and "came together in bewilderment."

God poured out His power on the disciples in a miraculous way.

They realized that they could hear the message these Galilean apostles were speaking, each in the language/dialect of the land from which they had come (vv. 5-8)!

Now that the power of God had gotten the crowd's attention, Peter offered an explanation. What they were seeing was the beginning of the long-awaited fulfillment of Joel's prediction about the coming of the Holy Spirit to all mankind (Joel 2:28-32).

The story is told of a church building that caught on fire. As the fire department battled the blaze, the town folks gathered to watch the spectacle. A self-righteous member of the congregation that met in that building was outraged when he saw the town outcast watching the conflagration. He approached the outcast and said, "Hmmp. I've never seen you at church before." The other man responded, "I've never seen the church on fire before."

The early church drew crowds because the apostles were "on fire"! Because they saw something miraculous happening, the crowds were willing to listen to the message of the apostles. The world today may not see tongues of flame, but they should be able to see miraculous evidence of the Spirit of God working within Christ's church.

INVITATION Acts 2:12-14, 16, 17, 22-24, 36-39

Peter continued, reviewing Jesus' ministry, miracles, and death, burial, and resurrection. Remember, most of this crowd was in Jerusalem two months earlier. Many present then were among that crowd that called for Jesus' crucifixion! Conviction and fear gripped those who realized that they had rejected the very one they had been waiting for (Acts 2:37). Peter's response simply echoed what Jesus had commanded in the Great Commission—preach the gospel, with belief, repentance, and baptism as the necessary human responses. Repentance and immersion in Christ's name result in forgiveness and reception of the promised Spirit (v. 38).

The church today must also be marked by evangelism. The good news the apostles shared is the same good news we have as well.

Peter introduced thousands to the church with a sermon.

Life Focus: The same God who was at work in the birth of the church works in the church today.

Use one of the following activities to help your students explain the importance of starting at the beginning.

QUICK STEP Which Came First?

As students arrive, turn with them to page 40 in their student books. There they will find a trivia quiz in which they will guess which of two events came first.

After all students have arrived and have had time to complete the quiz, ask them to share their answers. The correct answers are: 1=Model T; 2=Coca-Cola; 3=Kentucky; 4=Korean War; 5=Toothpaste; 6=Microsoft; 7=Pierce; 8=Slinky; 9=LEGO; 10=projector.

Discuss the quiz with these questions:

- Does it matter which came first in any of these pairs? In other words, in which cases did the one that came second depend on the one that came first?
- What are some other situations in which knowing how or when something began is important?

Lead into Bible study by saying: **Everything that exists today had a beginning point. Do you know how the church began? Today we're going to see the steps God took to establish the church.**

"How Will History Remember You?"

Begin the video clip at the point when Professor Hundert says, "Your name, sir?" End as he says, "Their story is our story." In this clip, Professor Hundert talks about great leaders whose legacies lasted through the generations. (Note: At the time of publication, this video titled "How Will History Remember You?" was available from www.wingclips.com.)

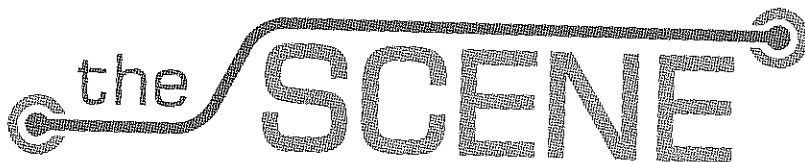
You may wish to show our classic TV clip "Important History" instead. Discuss either clip with these questions:

- The history of an item can be very important. How did history make a big difference in this clip?
- Would you be more willing to eat at a restaurant founded by a famous chef or by a famous politician? Would you be more willing to buy clothing designed by a tailor or by an auto mechanic? Explain why understanding how an organization began can be important.

Lead into Bible study by saying: **Everything that exists today had a beginning point. Do you know how the church began? Today we're going to see the steps God took to establish the church.**

The Scene

For an opening activity based on a current events, download The Scene online. Go to <http://www.21stcc.com/> and click on "Downloads." There you'll find a free article with discussion questions to begin this week's lesson.



Time
10 minutes

quiz

Materials
Young Teen Student, pens



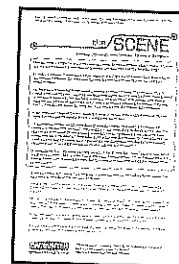
Time
10 minutes

video

Materials
copy of *The Emperor's Club* (2002)
(or *Young Teen Resources CD*),
audiovisual equipment



news



Step 2 Searching the Word

Life Focus: The same God who was at work in the birth of the church works in the church today.

Use one of the following activities to help your students summarize the events that led to the beginning of the church.

Time

20 minutes

creative
writing

Materials

Bibles, *Young Teen Student*, paper, pens



QUICK STEP The Early Days of the Church

Divide your students into three groups and give them pens and paper. Turn with them to page 41 in the student book and give each group one of the writing assignments there.

As teens work, move among them to help with their writing assignments and to explain the Bible text. *Encountering God's Word* will help you.

When group work is complete, have groups share and explain their writing. Comment as necessary to make sure each point is made completely and accurately.

Lead into the next section of the lesson by saying: **God was really at work when He established the church. When we understand how the church began, we can learn much about what God intends it to be today. We see that the early days of the church were marked with instruction, initiation, and invitation. How would we expect to see those characteristics in congregations of believers today?**

Time

20 minutes

research

Materials

Young Teen Student, pens



Circles, Boxes, Lines

Divide the class into groups of three to five students and turn with them to the printed lesson text on page 39 of the student book. Give each group pens and ask them to do the following:

- **Read Acts 1:1-5.** In the first two verses, circle verbs that tell about Jesus giving information to His disciples. In verse 3, underline two phrases that describe what was being taught. Draw a box around a phrase in verse 3 that describes the length of that instruction.

- **Read Acts 2:1-6, 12.** In the first four verses, circle what the apostles heard, saw, and experienced by the Holy Spirit. Read verses 5, 6, 12 and underline who else heard this event, what they did, and how they felt.

- **Read Acts 2:22-24, 36-39.** In verses 22-24, circle facts about Jesus that Peter told the crowd. Mark with an * the fact you believe is most important. Draw boxes around phrases that tell how the audience felt and what they said. Underline two commands Peter gave to the crowd and two promises that would result.

When marking is done, allow groups to share what they have marked. Responses may vary. Give additional explanation as necessary, using *Encountering God's Word* to help you.

Lead into the next section of the lesson by saying: **God was really at work when He established the church. When we understand how the church began, we can learn much about what God intends it to be today. We see that the early days of the church were marked with instruction, initiation, and invitation. How would we expect to see those characteristics in congregations of believers today?**

Life Focus: The same God who was at work in the birth of the church works in the church today.

Use one of the following activities to help your students discuss the implications of being a part of this organization founded by God.

QUICK STEP Never the Same Old Thing

Divide the class into groups of three to five students, giving each group a piece of poster board and markers, magazines, scissors, and glue. Review the three main points of the Bible lesson:

- **Instruction**—After His resurrection, Jesus continued to teach His disciples about founding His church.
- **Initiation**—God poured out His power on the disciples in a miraculous way.
- **Invitation**—Peter introduced thousands to the church with a sermon.

Have groups design an advertising poster for a present-day congregation that has these same characteristics: Bible teaching, evidence of a powerful God working among them, and outreach to others.

As groups work, move among them to help with their posters. Post (or project) Sheet 5 to show your class a designer's take on this assignment.

Have groups share and explain their finished posters.

Lead into the final lesson step by saying: **It's exciting to know that we're part of God's church—something He founded years ago to offer community to believers and to serve as His witnesses to the world. And it's still active today! Let's think of things we can do to be more active in the body of God's church.**

"A Particular Pet Peeve"

Distribute copies of this week's issue of ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine* and have your students turn to the article titled "A Particular Pet Peeve." Allow time to read the article. Then discuss the three questions posed near the end of the article, along with this question: **What's your role in God's story?**

Lead into the final lesson step by saying: **It's exciting to know that we're part of God's church—something He founded years ago to offer community to believers and to serve as His witnesses to the world. Let's think of things we can do to demonstrate the power and nature of God in our lives and in our congregation.**

Time
20 minutes

art

Materials

Young Teen Resources Sheet 5 (or *Young Teen Resources* CD, projection equipment), poster board, markers, magazines, scissors, glue



Time
20 minutes

discussion

Materials

ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine* for each student



Step 4 Living It Out

Life Focus: The same God who was at work in the birth of the church works in the church today.

Use one of the following activities to help your students plan to do something that demonstrates a personal commitment to God's church.

Time

10 minutes

challenge

Materials

Young Teen Student



Time

10 minutes

drama

QUICK STEP One Foot Forward

Have your students turn to page 42 in their student books. Say: **Today we read about three major steps to God's forming the church. God gave instruction to the disciples through Jesus, initiation to the church by sending His Spirit, and an invitation for all to join through the apostles' message. You can take part in God's church today through those same three steps.** Encourage your students to think about specific ways they can use their abilities in and show their commitment to God's church. Give them time to answer the three questions on the student page. (If they need help getting started, share the following examples or something similar. Step 1: teaching children in Sunday school or helping a youth minister start a Bible study; Step 2: encouraging friends to get involved in church or use their talents for God; Step 3: talking to a friend who questions Jesus or inviting a friend to church services.)

After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share the steps they plan to take in participating in the church. Close in prayer.

Distribute ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine*. You can either print these articles and hand them out or e-mail them to your students each week.

Acting Out

Divide your students into small groups. Say: **We've learned how God was at work in the early church. We've seen how He is at work in the church today. But how can we be more active in and show our commitment to God's church?** Have the groups come up with a short one-scene skit or charade-type action that depicts one way they can be active in the church today. (Ex: teaching children in VBS, preparing Communion, mowing the church lawn, sharing Christ with friends, praying regularly for the lost, etc.) Allow groups a few minutes to prepare. Then allow each group to present its skit for the rest of the class. Encourage their creative ideas. Then close in prayer.

Distribute ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine*. You can either print these articles and hand them out or e-mail them to your students each week.

ENCOUNTER™

Here's what's in ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine* this week:

- "A Particular Pet Peeve"
- "Handling Criticism"
- "No, It's Not Christmas"