They Shared Everything

Acts 2:44-47

Kids will understand:
• The account of the early church in the book of Acts.
• That the early Christians shared everything. The church was alive and grew.
• That God desires that we share what we have and draw others to Him.

OBJECT LESSON

A prearranged volunteer will wait outside the classroom to deliver the blocks after a secret signal is given from the leader.

We have a fun activity to kick off our lesson, but I’m afraid we’re going to have to wait for the supplies to be delivered. What was the longest you ever had to wait on something? What were you waiting for? Allow several people to share briefly.

Look at the time. Okay, well, while we wait let’s talk about our lesson. Today, we have a very exciting lesson about the early Christian church in the book of Acts. After Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, Jesus went back to heaven—He ascended. But, right before He did, Jesus gave His disciples some instructions. He told them to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit to come to earth. So, many of Jesus’ followers waited in a room until the Holy Spirit came!

Check the time and look a little annoyed. You know it’s kinda funny that we’re waiting together for something to come, just like the disciples! Did you know that God’s Spirit still comes and lives inside everyone who believes in and follows Jesus? That is so awesome!
Look at the time again, a little frazzled. Yes, they waited and waited, just like we are doing right now, (check your watch) until the Holy Spirit suddenly came. Volunteer knocks on the door and delivers the container of blocks. The leader looks relieved!

Well, what a relief! I think we have a little better understanding now about waiting for something! Who the early believers waited on did not disappoint them! God’s Spirit empowered and united those believers in a common purpose—to worship and serve God and to share His love with others.

**ACTIVITY**

Give each kid one block. Choose 5 kids to come up front and instruct them to use their creativity to build whatever they want with the block they have. Obviously, they can’t build anything, much less use creativity!

What’s the problem? Ohhhh, I guess you can’t do a whole lot with the one block I gave you! Divide the kids into groups that will sit throughout the room. Give each group a supply of building blocks and a few minutes to put all of their blocks together to see what kind of structure they can build.

Admire each structure. Ahhhhh yes, that’s better! What made the difference? Discuss how sharing enabled them to accomplish more.

One of the cool characteristics of the early Christian church in the book of Acts was that they shared what they had with others. Because they shared, they were able to accomplish tons of stuff. Let’s learn more in our Bible account!

**BIBLE ACCOUNT**

The woman (Cher Freely) will be the main storyteller and the man (Will Steel) will be the goofy comic relief. The skit starts with Cher and Will sitting behind the table facing the class. In front and around Cher will be her script, an open Bible, bowl of grapes, bottle of water. Mr. Steel will be seated to her left with nothing around him and the gum in his pocket.

**Cher:** Hi, my name is Cher Freely and I am going to share our Bible story with you today. It’s a very exciting account of the early church in the book of Acts in the Bible. (looks over at Will) This is my … well … this is a guy that’s with me. (short awkward pause, looks over and elbows Will)

**Will:** (caught offguard, daydreaming) Oooow! (rubs arm) Uh, yeah, amen to what Cher said, I think. My name is Will Steel and I am here to take all … uh … to sit here with you.

**Cher:** (rolls eyes) Let’s get started! Jesus had risen and ascended to heaven. The Holy Spirit had come to empower and live inside the believers! Peter preached a bold message and 3,000 people … yes, 3,000 … were saved and added to the church!

**Will:** (looks around, takes a grape out of the bowl and pops it in his mouth)

**Cher:** (looks annoyed) The early church believers were devoted to what the apostles taught from the Old Testament and from Jesus’ teachings. To be devoted means to be committed to something. The believers also shared everything …

**Will:** (grabs another grape, throws it in air, misses, then pops it in his mouth)

**Cher:** (looks at Will) Excuse me. You just took one of my grapes without asking.
Will: That’s not true! I took one earlier, too, so I actually took two. I thought we were supposed to share!

Cher: (shakes head) Let’s continue. They shared meals, prayed and praised God every day in the temple and in their homes. They also shared the Lord’s Supper together to remember Jesus’ sacrifice and to remember that He was returning to earth again! The apostles performed many signs and wonders. The church was filled with awe at God’s power. Awe means incredible reverence and respect!

Will: (grabs the water bottle and takes a big swig of water, then gives it back to Cher) Ahhhh, that’s good! I like it a little warmer though, my teeth are a bit sensitive to the cold. Really, awe means respect? I’ve been using it wrong. I always thought awe meant something like shoot or shucks. Like I would say, “AWWWW, that’s too bad!” or, “Awww, isn’t that baby a cutie pie.” (shakes head) You learn something new every day!

Cher: (at a loss and frazzled, gives water bottle back to Will and makes a yuk face) Please keep the water now. And, yes, AWE in this account means reverence and respect, not shucks.

Will: (takes a big swig of water and pops another grape in his mouth) Thank you so much for sharing! I would have been right at home back in the early church!

Cher: (approaching the end of her patience) Let’s move on. The believers were single-minded and filled with joy. They happily and generously sold all they had and gave the money to those who needed it. The non-believers saw all the amazing things that were happening and wanted to be a part of the church! God added new believers to the church every day!

Will: That’s a great story! You know that part about where they gave the money to those who needed it? I need $5.00 for …

Cher: (stands up frustrated) That’s it Will, you just don’t get it! It isn’t about taking—it’s about giving! You’ve missed the whole point of the Bible account! Every believer shared what they had, because they were filled with God’s love! You just take and don’t give anything in return! That isn’t what the church is all about! It’s about praising and serving God by being generous with what God has blessed you with!

Will: (scratches head and reaches into pocket) I see what you’re saying, and I agree. I do have something to share. I was saving it for later, but here. (pulls gum out of his pocket and holds it out to Cher) I only chewed it a couple hours!

Cher: (motions “no” with hand and looks sick) Uhh, thank you Will. Please keep your gum for yourself. (turning to kids) Kids, in spite of Will, please try to remember the early church was a sharing church filled with God’s Spirit, love and generosity.
GAME

Prior to class, cut each paper plate in half. Place a masking tape line at one end of the room and a bowl on the floor at the other end of the room. Divide the class into as many teams as you like. Give the first 2 players on each team a half plate section and 2 grapes.

Two players from each team will press their 2 plate halves together to make a whole plate. They will then place 2 grapes on top of the plate. The players must press the 2 sections together as they carefully walk to the end and dump the grapes into the bowl. If a grape rolls off the plate, the players must start again from that spot. The pair that successfully gets their 2 grapes in their bowl first, wins the round and is asked one of the questions (below) about the story.

Return the plates to the next 2 players on each team and repeat the process. The team with the most points wins.

After all the questions have been asked, discuss the following questions:

• What was most difficult about this game?
• What did this game have to do with our lesson today?
• Would it have been more difficult to only have one-half of a plate and done this race by yourself?

Questions and Answers

• What does the word devoted mean? (to be committed to)
• Name two things the early church shared. (meals, belongings, possessions)
• Name one place where the early Christians met. (temple or their homes)
• Name another place the early Christians met. (temple or their homes)
• What did the Christians do with the money they made from selling their belongings? (shared the money with those in need)
• Many of the believers refused to share their belongings—true or false? (false, verse 44 says they all shared)
• The early Christians never witnessed signs, wonders or miracles—true or false? (false, verse 43 says the apostles performed many of them)
• Did the early church stay the same size? (No, God added to the church each day.)
• Name one of the leaders in the early church. (Peter)
• What is an important meal that the believers shared together? (the Lord’s Supper, communion)
• Name something the Christians did when they met, besides sharing meals together. (They prayed, praised God, and worshiped.)
• What does the word “awe” mean? (filled with reverence, respect)

MESSAGE

(show slide #1)

Have you ever wondered what the church is supposed to look like and do? Not the building, but the people inside! What is the church all about? The book of Acts in the Bible gives us a picture of the early church. It’s a blueprint of a healthy church. A blueprint gives instructions on how to build something. Let’s look at the picture or blueprint the Bible gives us to see what the church did.
The early church SHARED God’s Word.

The believers were devoted or committed to learning and living out God’s Word. Hold the Bible open at the center. The early church had only half of the Bible—the Old Testament to read. The apostles also taught Jesus’ teachings that He had shared with them while on the earth.

We’re so blessed to have the WHOLE book! We can read it anytime we want to! Not only that (hold up the smart phone, iPad or other tablet) we can listen to God’s Word in music or messages from teachers just about anywhere and anytime! Like the early believers, the church today needs to devote itself to God’s Word and model it to non-believers, too!

The early church SHARED their time with each other.

The early believers spent time with each other. In other words, they hung out; they were connected to each other! Why do you hang out with certain people? Because you share a common interest; you like the same things. It might be something like sports or video games, riding bikes, reading books or listening to music.

Hold up a few Lego blocks. Let’s say these blocks are people like you and me. These people have something in common, like playing soccer. They practice soccer, they play on a team together, watch soccer on TV, and they follow their favorite teams on the internet. Soccer (attach blocks) is what connects them.

For the early believers, their common interest or what connected them was their new life in Christ! They came together to encourage one another, to grow and to help each other. They were excited to hang out and fellowship together. They ate together, prayed, worshiped, praised God and studied God’s Word together. They weren’t selfish with their time. They genuinely looked out for one another and strengthened each other. Hold up the attached Legos. They watched out after each other so no one became discouraged and (detach one block from the others) fell away from the church. They wanted each other to stay connected! We need to watch out after each other, too!

The kids will look up Philippians 2:3-5. Read it as the kids follow along. “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.”

The early believers SHARED their belongings with each other.

The early believers weren’t selfish with their time or their possessions! They were generous with all that they had.

Hold up the personal pizza box. Now, if I showed up at your house with this size pizza, what would you think? Am I being generous? No! This is just enough for me! Hold up the large pizza box. How about if I showed up at your house with this size pizza? OH YEAH, PARTY TIME! There’s plenty for me, you and more! I came to your house ready to share.

The kids will look up 2 Corinthians 9:11. “Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God.”

Read the verse aloud with the kids. In this verse, the apostle Paul was telling the believers that God would enrich (give to them generously) so that they could be generous to others! And look what it says—those that receive the generous gifts, they will thank God! The church gave so that God would receive the attention and thanks!
The early believers SHARED their faith with others.

The early church enjoyed the goodwill or favor of NON-believers—the world! When these people, these people who didn’t believe in Jesus, saw and heard what was happening with the Christians, they (hold up blocks and attach a few more) got excited and were attracted to the church.

Matthew 5:16 says, “In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” When Christians are generous in sharing their time and belongings with others, God will get the glory! The result is (add some more blocks to the stack) the church grows!

The book of Acts gives us a picture of a healthy church. Are you ready to generously share what God has given with others, too?

SCIENCE - VIDEO

Beforehand, download the YouTube video, “Magnet Mania”, submitted by kipkay.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2QiyiWLM2FY

Give the kids some magnets and let them experiment with finding things that the magnet attracts. Now, show the video. A magnet attracts and draws metal to it. People were drawn to the early church by the way the believers shared and cared for one another. It was through the power of the Holy Spirit that people were drawn to God ... not through the power of a magnet! But, it wasn’t just a few people. Many people were drawn to God.

OBJECT LESSON

Raise your hand if you have ever been to a potluck. Most churches have a potluck lunch or dinner where everyone comes together for a meal. The great thing about a potluck is that everyone brings a different food to share. Rub your stomach and say “yum-yum” when I say a food that you like to eat at a potluck. (Suggestions: fried chicken, baked beans, mac and cheese, mashed potatoes, fruit salad, pie, tossed salad, potato salad, potato chips, bottled water, cake, corn casserole, noodles, iced tea) There are always a variety of delicious foods to choose from at a potluck! The best thing is that people bring tasty dishes that they make really, really well. It’s fun to sample all the different types of foods when everyone shares like this!

Now, in our next activity we’re going to find out about a very different kind of potluck where we can all taste and see that the Lord is good!

ACTIVITY

Display the PowerPoint slide of 1 Corinthians 14:26. The Bible tells us in the book of 1 Corinthians that when the followers of Christ met that they should all bring something to share. That kind of sounds like our potluck, doesn’t it? But, this potluck is with spiritual food instead of regular food.

Form 5 groups. Assign each group one of the following verses to look up. The group will discuss among themselves what the verse reveals to them about God.
Group 1 - 1 Timothy 2:5 (one God and one go-between—Jesus)
Group 2 - Jeremiah 32:17 (made everything, nothing too hard for Him)
Group 3 - Psalm 145:8 (gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, full of love)
Group 4 - 1 Timothy 2:4 (wants all to know the truth and be saved)
Group 5 – 1 John 1:9 (faithful to forgive us of our sins)

When they have done that, each group will read their verse aloud to the rest of the kids. Each group will then briefly share what they discovered about God in the verse. What does your verse tell us about God?

Each of you “brought something to the table” to share. The early church not only shared food and physical goods, they shared spiritual revelations and truths to build each other up and grow. As it says in the verse—everything is done so the church is built up. We just had a very tasty spiritual potluck where we shared something we learned about God!

ACTIVITY

Put 6 Teddy Grahams or Chez-Its per child in one bowl. (Depending on what small snack item you choose, the number may vary.) You want to make sure that if they take a full handful, you’ll run out of the small snack before you run out of kids. Show the kids the bowl and then call the kids to come forward, row by row or section by section. Each kid has permission to take as many Teddy Grahams as they would like. But, they are not allowed to eat them until you say it’s okay. When the bowl is empty and you still have kids who do not have any Teddy Grahams, start a discussion.

We seem to have a problem. What’s the problem? We don’t have any more Teddy Grahams, but we have more kids who don’t have any. What are some of our options of what we can do? The kids will probably come up with several plans of action you could take. Make sure the entire group hears what each option is. Which of these options sounds most like what the early church would’ve done? They shared because they felt like that’s what God wanted them to do. They shared out of gratitude for what God had done for them. They were not forced to share! That’s a real important thing to remember. They were not told that they couldn’t be part of the church if they didn’t share everything they owned. They just did it!

I’m going to give you a few minutes and let you take care of our problem. Each one of you will have to decide what you’re going to do with the Teddy Grahams you have.

PRAYER

Form groups of two or three kids. Each group will look up Matthew 18:20 and read it together in their groups. Matthew 18:20 (NLT), “For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them.”

The early church followers of Christ were single-minded with one purpose—to follow Christ. Jesus gives us a promise of His presence when we gather together as believers. When the church met, they prayed for one another and shared with one another, and God met their needs. They didn’t just share their food and belongings; they shared things that they needed others to help them pray about.

Encourage each child to share one way the other two people in their group can pray for them. (Examples: You can help me pray for my uncle who is in Afghanistan. You can help me pray that I have more patience with my younger brother. You can help me pray that I’m not afraid to stand up to the kid who’s bullying me at school.) Pray for each other in your little group of two or three, because “where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them.”
BLESSING

May you generously share in order to bring God glory.

TAKE HOME REMINDER

Give each of the kids 3 individually-wrapped candies. You can choose to keep all 3 of the candies, or you can share 1, 2, or all 3 of them with someone else. After hearing about the early church today, what will you do?

KNOW YOUR BIBLE

The word “fellowship” is used a lot in church life. But, what does it really mean? The word “fellowship” comes from the Greek word “koinonia”, which means communion or sharing in common. Can you say “koinonia”?

The early believers were united in spirit and shared a common interest in the things of God. Out of that unity in Christ they also shared with each other and held nothing back from each other.

SNACK

Give each child a small dinner roll and a cup of white grape juice. They will eat and drink these as you tell them how these two foods remind us of Jesus.

The early church shared many meals together. One important meal the church shared together was the Lord’s Supper. In the upper room right before Jesus was arrested, He took some bread and told the disciples to remember Him each time they ate the bread. The bread should remind them of His body that was killed for them. He also took some juice and told the disciples to remember Him every time they drank juice, because it should remind them that He shed blood for them. When the early church ate together, they would eat bread and drink juice, and be reminded of the sacrifice that Jesus made for them.

Today, we do the same thing, only we eat a small cracker and drink just one little bit of juice. But, they still remind us of Jesus’ sacrifice. We call it communion or taking the Lord’s Supper.

SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION

Psalm 34:8-9 (NLT)

“Taste and see that the Lord is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him! Fear the Lord, you his godly people, for those who fear him will have all they need.”

How does this verse apply to the believers in our Bible story? A place of refuge is a safe place where you can find shelter and protection. The early church became a place of joy and refuge for the early believers. It was not an easy time to be a follower of Jesus. Jesus had just been crucified and Christians were not safe from being arrested and persecuted.
To have a place that they could go to fellowship and worship God with like-minded believers brought joy and strength in troubled times. This place of refuge was also a place of sharing and giving to meet each other’s needs. Yes, this was a place to hang out with fellow believers to taste and experience the goodness of God!

Each group will need a large box. Prior to class, draw windows and a door on the front of the boxes and remove the flaps. Place the boxes at the other end of the room.

Give 2 paper plates to each kid. They will draw a happy face of themselves on both plate bottoms. The kids will put the plates together (faces out) to form a disc and staple the outside edges. The boxes represent the church and the faces represent the believers who came together in that place!

The first player from each team will stand at the starting line. All of these players will fling their Frisbee paper plate disc at their box. Anyone who gets a disc inside the box will lead their team in saying the memory verse. Each team brings up their next player to toss their paper plate disc. Continue doing this as time allows.

**MUSIC**

You are provided with some great Yancy songs for this quarter: “All I Need is You” and “Every Good and Perfect Thing.” For more information about Yancy, go to her website at yancynotnancy.com.