

## Lesson 1: The Big “C” Church

**What we want students to learn:** That the Church is made up of everyone who has, who does, or who will believe in God.

**What we want students to do with what they’ve learned:** To broaden their concept of the Church, and their place in it, and to begin to view all Christ-followers as their brothers and sisters in God’s family.

**Scripture Focus:** Deuteronomy 28:1-9, Galatians 3:26-29, Exodus 19:3-6, 1 Peter 2:4-10

**Overview:** If it’s one thing our students, and many of us, take for granted it’s the HUGENESS of God and His plan. Nowhere is this more evident than in how we see the Church. If your students have been blessed to go on mission trips outside of their communities, they *might* have a broader sense of the Church. But unless they have gone overseas and interacted with Christ-followers in other parts of the world, then their vision of the Church is still probably too small. But to take it a step further, unless we truly step back and intentionally consider the fact that the Church is by definition everyone who has ever or will ever be identified as God’s people, we simply can’t grasp how AMAZING the idea of the Church is! The Church is God’s people, His plan for engaging the world in His name. And this study is all about wrapping our brains around what this means.

In this study, your students will see the Church as the universal body of all believers, those past, present, and future people of God (Lesson 1). You’ll also focus on how Jesus reframed the idea of the Church as the Body of Christ (Lesson 2). And you’ll go deeper into the concept of the Church in the world, what its purpose is and the role your students play (Lesson3).

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## Teacher Prep Video

The *elements Teacher Prep Videos* are short videos designed to help you grasp the main points of the lessons as you prepare to teach.

To access your “*The Church Teacher Prep Video*,” click on the URL below.

- <https://youthministry360.com/the-church-teacher-prep>

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## Bible Background

The **Bible Background** is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you’ll be studying. *The Details* gives you background info for each book, while *The Main Point* gives you an overview of how the passages are used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by “context”?** In every **ym360** Bible study lesson, you’ll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By “context” we mean at the very least helping students know *who* wrote the book, *when* it was written, and *why* it was written.
- **What’s The Big Deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don’t get a “big picture” understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God’s plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

## The Details

### Deuteronomy and Exodus

- **Author:** While there's no specific author named within the texts, Moses is the accepted author for Deuteronomy and Exodus, with some editing and additions done after his death (such as the account of his death!).
- **Time frame:** The dating of these Books is a point of debate. The issue is that no one knows for sure when the Exodus occurred, whether it was in the mid-1400s BC or a later date around the mid 1200s BC. The writing would have occurred around those general dates.
- **Purpose:** Deuteronomy means "second law." It was a reminder of the law of God for the second generation of Israelites in the desert before they entered the Promised Land. It reminded the people that the Lord is God. He is faithful to keep his promises to His people. Exodus means "a going out" or a "departure." Exodus was written to be a record of God's great rescue of His people from slavery in Egypt, and His commands to His people guiding them to live for His purposes in the midst of a new land.

### Galatians

- **Author:** Paul, the persecutor-of-Christians-turned-missionary, is the author of the Letter to the Galatians (see Acts 7:57-8:3 and 9:1-31). After his conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul set out on several journeys to proclaim about the salvation that is available through Jesus and His death and resurrection. Several churches were planted as a result of Paul's leadership, including the church in Galatia.
- **Time frame:** Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians sometime between 48 and 53 AD, most likely by 49 AD.
- **Purpose:** The primary purpose for Paul's letter to the Galatians was to respond to a particular issue: a group of Jews—claiming to also be Christ-followers (many early Christians were Jewish Christians)—had begun to argue that Christians are not just saved by faith, but that they also were required to keep the Mosaic Law. This, of course, went against everything Paul knew to be true about Jesus. The main thrust of Paul's teaching was that there is no work we could accomplish to be saved (Ephesians 2:8), including the keeping of the Law (Galatians 2:16).

### 1 Peter

- **Author:** 1 Peter was written by Peter, one of Jesus' most trusted disciples and one of the key leaders of the growing movement of Christ-followers.
- **Time frame:** 1 Peter was likely written between 54-68 AD.
- **Purpose:** 1 Peter was written to a people under persecution, likely under the reign of Nero. Peter calls the Church to persevere under trials because eternal life awaits them. He encourages them that God's promises to His people will endure and should be the basis of their hope.

## The Main Point

You're going to help define the concept of the Church for your students. First, you're going to help them see that the Church is defined as everyone who has, who does, or who will believe in God. Then, you'll walk them through the following points, using the Scripture passages to back it up.

- You'll use the Deuteronomy passage to help them see that the foundations of the Church began when God called Israel as a people who would be uniquely His.
- You'll show students in Galatians how God's plan all along was to one day make inclusion in His family available to all people groups.

- Next, you'll reference the Exodus passage to help students see that the Church, this global body of Believers, is God's plan to impact this world in His name. This was true in Israel's day and it's true in ours.
  - Finally, you'll connect the dots between Israel as a holy nation and a nation of priests, and what Peter says about all Believers. You'll tie this to our mission as the Church. In Lesson 3 you'll really dig deeper into this one, but for now this is a good intro.
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## Lesson Plan

The **Lesson Plan** contains three elements: An introductory activity called *The Lead In*; the Bible study section called *The Main Event*; an application-focused segment called *The Last Word*.

### The Lead In

- **Goal:** Given three pictures or items, students will identify the object that is different from the others in the grouping.
- **Set-Up:** Before your lesson, you'll need to come up with groupings of objects where two of the objects have something in common, and one of the objects is different. Arrange to display these groupings for your class. There are a few options you can take to display each grouping. You could come up with groupings of actual objects you could bring to the class. You could do a Google image search for groupings and print your findings. Or you could arrange to display your groupings via digital means.

FIRST, explain to students that you're going to play a game where they must identify which object is out of place in a group of three things. Tell them you will show them these objects and they will need to point out the odd object and tell what makes it different.

Some suggested groups of items are:

- An apple, an orange, a cluster of grapes (the grapes are clustered)
- A bowling ball, a basketball, a tennis racket (the tennis racket)
- An iPod, an iPhone, and a Samsung Galaxy (the Galaxy)
- A drum set, a guitar, and a violin (the drum set)
- A sports car, a boat, and a monster truck (the boat)
- A ball cap, a hoodie, and a sock (the sock)

NEXT, lead students in playing the game. After all of the items have been identified, point out to students that even though one object didn't belong, there were reasons they were alike. There is a common element that bonds each group. For example, while the grapes are in cluster form, they are still fruit just as an apple and an orange are. Using the following questions, lead students in a brief discussion.

- **What are some characteristics we may use when describing someone to another?**
  - Answers will vary but may include hair color, personality traits, or height, for example.
- **Can you think of any things people may do in order to fit in with those around them?**
  - Answers will vary but may include certain popular trends.
- **What are some reasons people may want to fit in with or be like others around them?**
  - Answers will vary.

FINALLY, tell students that God has created each of unique in many ways. Transition to “The Main Event” by saying something like:

- **God takes these unique individuals He has created and puts them together to form the Church (yes, your local church but also the universal church). However, when it comes to the Church, there is one thing that binds it together. Do you have any thoughts as to what it is that unites the members of the Church? Let’s take a closer look to find out.**

## The Main Event

- **Goal:** The idea is for students to learn that the Church is made up of everyone who has, who does, or who will believe in God.
- **Set-Up:** None

FIRST, if you’ve worked through the “elements | *Evangelism*” or “elements | *God’s Mission*” study prior to this one, your students may remember learning about God’s creating a people, Israel, through His promise to Abram. See how much they can recall of God’s calling of Israel as a people. See if they can remember why God did this (to work through Israel to send Jesus as God’s rescue for all people). And, if they get on a roll, what the outcome was (that Israel experienced highs and lows, and was ultimately punished because of their disobedience).

THEN, tell your students that you’re beginning a series of lessons about the Church. Say something like:

- **Often times when we talk about the Church, we are referring to a building where we gather for Bible study or worship services. What we are going to see as we study the Scripture is that the Church is actually a group of people. The Church began very early, and continues to grow as time goes on.**

Instruct your students to open their Bibles to Deuteronomy 28. While they are doing this, use the Bible Background to share the context of Deuteronomy with them. Read or have a student read Deuteronomy 28:1-9, then begin a discussion by saying something like:

- **We can see the foundations of the Church begin when God called Israel as a people who would be uniquely His. The verses we just read talks about God beginning His Church with His chosen people. According to verses 1 and 2, what is required for God’s people to experience His blessings?**
  - *Answer:* Fully obey the Lord and carefully follow all His commands
- **What did God promise the people who would follow and obey Him?**
  - *Answer:* They will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country; the fruit of their womb would be blessed, and the crops of their land and the young of their livestock; their baskets and kneading trough would be blessed; they would be blessed when they come in go out; the Lord would grant that the enemies who rise up against them would be defeated; the Lord would send a blessing on their barns and on everything they put their hands to; the Lord would establish them as His holy people
- **In your own words, what does each of these verses tell us about how God will bless His chosen people who obey?**
  - *Answers may vary*
- **What does it mean in verse 9 when it says, “The LORD will establish you as His holy people?”**
  - *Answer:* His people will be set apart as God’s, consecrated for His purposes
- **Remember in question 1 we established the fact that obedience to God’s commands is strongly connected to His blessings. How do you think the two are connected?**

- *Answers may vary*, but consider with the group that following God’s commands and His ways will change our views of what His blessings are. We will begin to see things from His perspective and what we consider a blessing is based on fulfilling His purposes rather than our own desires.

NEXT, continue the discussion by saying something like:

- **What we read in Deuteronomy is just the foundation for God’s Church. His plan all along was to one day make inclusion in His family available to all people groups, not just the Israelites.**

Read or have a student read Galatians 3:26-29. The next lesson will take Christ’s role in building the Church deeper. But for now, introduce this idea of Christ’s role in building the Church by asking the following questions:

- **According to verses 26-27, what allows a person to become a child of God and a part of the Church?**
  - *Answer:* Faith in Christ Jesus.
- **Is there anyone who is excluded from this? How does verse 28 address this?**
  - *Answer:* There are none excluded (*point out to students that verse 28 covers the opposite “extremes” of each category: Jews and Greeks, male and female, slave and free...this further emphasizes that all who are in Christ are part of the Church.*)

THEN, remind students of the story of Abraham and the covenant God made with him. Say something like:

- **Abraham is known as a man of great faith. His righteousness came from this faith. In Genesis, God made a covenant, or oath, with Abraham saying all nations would be blessed through him. We know that Christ’s earthly lineage begins with Abraham. In other words, from the family line of Abraham, Christ was eventually born.**
- **Knowing this, what does verse 29 mean for those who are members of the Church?**
  - *Answer:* When a person places their faith in Christ, they become a child of God and co-heir with Christ. This means they are also part of the family of Abraham and will receive the blessings promised to Abraham and to all Believers. However, this is only true for those who are part of the Church, i.e. those who have placed their faith in Christ.

Begin to bring this lesson to a close by sharing this thought:

- **The Church, this global body of Believers, is God’s Plan to impact this world in His name. This was true in Israel’s day and it is true in ours.**

NEXT, have students find Exodus 19 in their Bibles. As they find it, remind them that Exodus, like Deuteronomy, is part of the story of God’s chosen people, the Israelites. Read or have a student read Exodus 19:3-6. Use the following questions to lead the discussion:

- **What are some things these verses have in common with God’s words to His people we read in Deuteronomy?**
  - *Answer:* They are to obey His commands and He will establish them as His holy people
- **During this time, the role of the Israelite priests was to bring the people into worship God. In verse 6, God tells the Israelites He plans to make them a “kingdom of priests.” If we apply this role of the priest to this group of people, what does it say about God’s desired plan for His people?**
  - *Answer:* As the priest led the Israelites to worship God, God’s people will become the method He uses to make Himself known to other nations

Have students turn to 1 Peter 2 in their Bibles. Remind them as they find it that as part of the New Testament, this was written after Christ came to fulfill the law. The way we come to God now is different than the



Israelites, however, His plans for His Church haven't changed. Read or have a student read 1 Peter 2:4-10. End your discussion with the following questions:

- **In verse 9, how does Peter's reference to God's people mimic what He says in the passage we just read in Exodus?**
  - *Answer:* just as the Israelites are a holy nation and a nation of priests, so are all who place their faith in Christ
- **Based on the role the Israelite priest played in leading the people to worship God, what does this mean for our lives?**
  - *Answer:* As part of this royal priesthood, God's plan for His children is to use them to make His salvation known. This is the mission of the church.

FINALLY, lead students into "The Last Word" segment with the following thoughts:

- **When we were adopted into the family of God through our faith in Christ, we became part of God's Church. We also became a part of His plan to make salvation known to the nations. As we mentioned earlier, the Church is not a building or a place of meeting. It is also not a group of people who come together once or twice a week to simply encourage one another, to learn about God's Word, to participate together in worship, and then leave to simply go about their lives. The Church is meant to spread the Gospel and we all have a part in that.**

## The Last Word

- **Goal:** The idea is for students to begin to view all Christ-followers as their brothers and sisters in God's family.
- **Set-Up:** None

FIRST, as you close this Bible study, have students look around the room at one another. Say something like:

- **As part of the family of God, we are brothers/sisters. Together we have the task of sharing the Gospel with others. However, the family of God extends beyond the walls of this room, the lines of our city and state, and the boundaries of our nation. Our spiritual family covers the globe! One of the greatest things we can do is pray for one another.**

While this may seem a bit "old school" to you, it can also be an effective way of praying for one another. If your group is not already sitting in a circle, have them do so. Lead them in a time of prayer for one another, first for the person on their left and then on their right. Close the prayer time by praying for each of them as they are part of this royal priesthood, that their lives will lead others to know Christ.

FINALLY, if you want to add a different element to this, you can provide a picture of a world map, or might display a globe. As you pray, consider using the globe or map to focus students' prayers on different parts of the world. You might even choose to have them pray for the Believers on different continents, especially those who experience persecution or other hardships. The idea is to help your students expand their understanding of the Church to include all the people who believe in Christ. It won't change overnight, but it can start through praying for Christ-followers across the world.

- Don't forget to distribute the "The Church Lesson 1" devotions to your students. If you're printing them, have them available for students as you wrap up class. If you're texting a link, posting them on Facebook, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.

- Consider texting students a couple of times during the week to encourage them to follow through with reading the devotions.
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## **We Want To Hear From You . . .**

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well you want to share?
- Something that didn't work you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns, at [feedback@youthministry360.com](mailto:feedback@youthministry360.com).

