

# The Early Believers

Grades  
5-6

## SHARE

ACTS 4:32-35

### What's happening in this story?

This text gives us a peek into the earliest days of the Christian church. The first believers to follow Jesus were Jewish. But Acts gives us glimpses of what happened when Gentiles joined the fold. Early Christians gathered in homes, in common rooms, by the river, etc. They prayed. They worshipped. They learned the stories of God's acts recounted in the Hebrew Scriptures—what we now call the Old Testament—and the stories of Jesus. And they shared—to such an extent that no one was in need.

### What does this story mean for kids?

This story describes a pretty radical community: They share *everything*; nobody is in need. It might sound a little threatening to kids—share *everything*? But we can point out places where this is already the case, and where we are all better for it: the board games we share and enjoy as a family, and the park and playground shared by our whole community.

### Why this theme?

Sharing is hard, but kids innately know that it is a part of God's plan for us. We share not because it's the right thing to do (even though it is!), but because we have been given so much by God that it spills over into other people's lives.

### AGE LEVEL TIP

Kids this age are often proud of and attached to their possessions. The goal is not to make them feel guilty for having material possessions, but rather to help them see how “holding things in common” can free them to care for others.



### GENERAL SUPPLIES

- Markers
- Colored pencils
- Pens

### LESSON SUPPLIES

- Sandwich bags
- Jelly beans
- Mural paper or whiteboard with markers

## Do some kids arrive early? Try this.

Hang two pieces of mural paper on the wall (or use a whiteboard). With a marker, label one “Things that are easy to share,” and label the other “Things that are hard to share.” Ask kids to add their ideas to the pages, using markers.

## Circle up with kids for an opening conversation.

Imagine it’s dinner time, you are hungry, and you have a small pizza with all your favorite toppings in front of you. If a hungry family member joined you, would you share? What if a friend then joined you? Then your favorite teacher? Then your least favorite teacher? Then someone you didn’t know at all? Give kids time to discuss how much they would be willing to share a pizza. **Would it surprise you to hear that the early Christians—the people who followed Jesus shortly after he ascended into heaven—shared everything? God gives us gifts to share and wants us to care for each other’s needs.**

Pray together: **Dear God, give us the strength to do our part and share what we have to help others. Amen.**

## Pass out leaflets and colored pencils.

Draw a detailed map of your living room at home. Be as accurate as you can, including as much detail and as many items as you can remember. When you’re finished, use a marker to draw a circle around the things in the room that belong to you. Use a different color marker to draw a rectangle around the things that belong to your family. Are there more circles or rectangles on your map? What do you think that says about your family? Generally, we share the most with the people we live with. It’s easy to share with the people we love and those that care for us. When is it hard to share in your home?



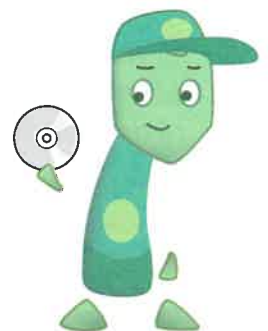
## Gather kids around the screen where you’ll watch the video.

Let’s watch Gabe experience an attitude adjustment in today’s video.

View Episode 11, “The Carpool,” on the Year Gold Spring Grades 3–6 DVD.

Ask kids these questions about the video:

- What word would you use to sum up Gabe’s attitude in the beginning?
- How did Gabe’s attitude change by the end? What caused this change?
- When have you acted like Gabe?
- What do you think about putting yourself in an uncomfortable situation in order to help other people?
- What does a carpool have to do with sharing? What other things can you think of that make life a little better when they’re shared?



## Open your Whirl Kids Study Bibles.

Today's passage is from the book of Acts. It's in the New Testament in the Gospels and Acts section of the Bible. If this is your first time reading from Acts, invite kids to check out the book introduction and comic on page 1303.



**The early believers hadn't yet formed a church the way we think of church today. They met in homes and public spaces to learn about Jesus. This short passage describes one way that the early believers took care of each other: by sharing what they had and holding everything "in common."**

Help kids find Acts 4:32-35 and read it in this creative way together: Select a single person to begin the reading, and divide the rest of the class into three groups. After each verse is read, have another group join in so that by the end, everyone has added their voice to the reading.

Invite kids to check out what Gabe says about Acts 4:32.

Ask these questions after you read the story:

- **What does it mean to you when you hear that the whole group was "of one heart and soul"?**
- **If people sold their homes and property, where do you think they lived?**
- **How did money and belongings get distributed?**
- **Why would you give up something you owned in order to benefit someone else?**
- **Think about how your family works. In what ways were the early believers like a family?**

## Make your mark on the Wall Chart.

Look at the chart and find the theme for today. Give kids time to find the word *Share*. **The early Christians sold their possessions and shared everything they had with the community. God gives us all gifts we can share.** Invite kids to brainstorm things they can share, and draw a few symbols of those things in the box by *Share*.



### BIBLE BIT

This is just one of many biblical examples of how God's grace covers those who believe. Other examples include Exodus 16; Matthew 14:13-18; and Matthew 6:19-34.

### WATCH IT AGAIN

If you watch the video again, pay attention to the things Gabe remembers from his childhood flashbacks. How was Little Gabe's life different from Big Gabe's life?

### OUR CHURCH

Look around the classroom. What things in this room do you "hold in common"? What about in other areas of the church? How do these shared things help you serve or worship God?



# RESPOND 10

## Open leaflets and pass out pens.

Tear off leaflet square.

1. **Part of sharing is understanding what others in our church, community, and world need, and how we can meet those needs. We are going to conduct a simulation to help us better understand one kind of need: global hunger.**
2. Divide kids into three groups: roughly 15% in one group, 25% in a second, and 60% in a third. Separate the groups.
3. Distribute the candy in the sandwich bags. Each person in the first group receives 11 jelly beans, each in the second receives 1 jelly bean, and one of every four people in the third receives 1 jelly bean. **The jelly beans represent the survival resources available to the world's population.**
4. **The largest group is about 60% of the class, and they have only about 2% of the jelly beans in the room. The medium group represents about 25% of the class, and they have about 25% of the jelly beans. The smallest group, about 15% of the class, has a whopping 90% of the jelly beans.**
5. Ask members of each group how they feel about the resources they have at their disposal. **Does everyone have enough to live?** Finally, challenge the kids to redistribute the jelly beans among the whole group as they choose and enjoy them during the final step.
6. Invite kids to complete the hunger quiz on the leaflet. **How does this compare with what we read in Acts 4:32-35? Is it possible to live like the early believers? What are ways we could be more like them?**

# LAUNCH 10

## Circle up with kids for a quick review.

It can be hard in our world today to imagine a community where all possessions are shared and everyone's needs are met. But just as in the days of the early believers, Christian community today still means that we care for each other's needs. Imagine if our church looked more like the community of early believers. What could that be like?

## Return to the leaflet panels and pass out markers.

Choose a church, community, or world need you are familiar with and write it on the top of the refrigerator on the leaflet. On the lower part, write how we might meet that need. Don't be limited by what you can do or share alone, and consider time and abilities as things that can be shared in addition to possessions.

## Send kids out with a blessing.

Circle up with kids. **God blesses all of us. And that means me** (place a hand on your chest). **And that means you** (place your other hand on the shoulder of the kid next to you). Each kid passes the blessing by repeating those words and actions. When the blessing makes it back to you, say, **Go and bless the world.**

Thank kids for coming today. Remind them of the Family Square on the other side of the leaflet.