



The Ladder Robert Morris

- Focus** The church is God's house and the place where God's presence dwells. When we are in God's presence, we experience His protection for our family. Further, church is the place where we discover God's provision. God's house is the gateway to heaven, and Jesus is the ladder.
- Fun** Divide your group into teams of 3 or 4. The task is simple: in 18 minutes, teams must build the tallest free-standing structure out of 20 sticks of spaghetti, one yard of tape, one yard of string, and one marshmallow. The marshmallow needs to be on top. You will need to plan ahead to have the materials ready (visit marshmallowchallenge.com for some insights). You can connect this to the lesson and draw out the spiritual lessons learned, or you can just have fun.
- Review** Key Scripture: Genesis 28:10–22; John 1:51
- **God's Presence**
Jacob described the place of God's presence as an awesome place, none other than the house of God, the very gateway to heaven. Church is a place where we experience God's presence and become aware that He is with us. We will hear Him speaking to us as we encounter His presence.
 - **God's Protection**
The church is a place of safety for you and your family because God's presence is there. God promises that He will never leave us or forsake us. No matter what challenges we face, God will protect us and bring us through safely.

- **God's Provision**

The church is a place where we discover God's provision. Furthermore, it is a place where we discover that God is *for* us. God has a vision for our lives and it is good. God has given us His ultimate provision through His Son, Jesus Christ. The church is the gateway to heaven, and Jesus is the ladder.

Group Dynamics Idea Prayer needs will always arise; however, it is also important to celebrate the praise reports and answered prayers. Lead the way in celebrating what God is doing, big or small, in the lives of your group members. You may even enjoy planning a celebration night or just simply take time to allow everyone to share the good reports of what God is doing.

Discuss

1. Pastor Robert described the church as a place of God's presence. Has this been your personal experience? Why or why not?
2. What did encountering God's presence look like for Jacob, and how does it compare to how we might encounter God's presence today?
3. How is the church a place of safety and protection? Do all churches have God's presence? Why or why not?
4. What can we do to ensure that God's presence is not only welcome at our church but also in our lives?
5. God promises us His provision and that He is for us and will never leave us. Do you know in your heart that God is for you and is your provider? Is there any area of your life that you need God's provision today—emotional, physical, or material? Share.
6. Take time to allow group members to share their needs and then pray for one another. Be sensitive to how the Holy Spirit is leading you during this prayer time. This time will be different for every group.

Take Home

As we conclude, remember the following:

- The church is the place of God's presence.

- The church is the place of God's protection.
- The church is the place of God's provision.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your great love for us. Thank You that Your presence, protection, and provision are available for us here and now. We receive You into our lives, and we invite Your presence to be with us right now. Help us to know Your ways and to walk in the fullness of Your grace and love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

New Leader Tip It is important that you see yourself as, "one who actively disciples." Help those in your group know why you are doing what you do and prayerfully seek God on what discipleship looks like for your group. Be confident that God has already empowered you to do even more than you realize!