



Use Week of:

Unit 23 • Session 2

The Cost of Following Jesus

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Matthew 8; 16; Luke 9; 14

STORY POINT:

Jesus taught that following Him is not easy.

KEY PASSAGE:

John 14:26

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom.

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LEADER Bible Study

The benefits of following Jesus are wonderful: justification from sin, lifelong sanctification, and adoption into the family of God. But following Jesus also comes at a price. People had waited so long for the promised Messiah to come into the world, so many were eager to follow Him. Yet as Jesus taught, He urged people to consider the cost of being His disciple.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus explained to one disciple that following Him might involve giving up worldly comforts. He told another disciple that following Him should be higher priority than anything else—even one's commitment to his parents. (See Matt. 8:18-22.) In Matthew 16 and Luke 9, Jesus told His disciples, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me."

Jesus shared two examples in Luke 14 of people who must count the cost of doing something. If a person is building a tower, he must first calculate the cost. If he begins the project and is unable to complete it, onlookers will ridicule him. In a similar way, a king counts the cost of going to war before sending out his army. If he is not able to oppose the enemy, he doesn't foolishly send out a small group to fight a larger group. Instead, he seeks peace.

Many who wanted to follow Jesus changed their minds. Jesus even asked the twelve disciples if they wanted to turn away as well. Peter answered, "Lord, to whom will we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

Paul acknowledged the difficulty of following Jesus in 2 Corinthians 4 but kept his eyes on eternity: "For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory" (v. 17). As you teach, emphasize that following Jesus is not easy, but He is worth it.

The BIBLE Story

The Cost of Following Jesus

Matthew 8; 16; Luke 9; 14

Many people wanted to follow Jesus. Large crowds followed Him around. One man said, “Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.” Jesus told the man, “Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lie down.”

Another disciple said, “Lord, I will follow You, but first let me go and bury my father.” Jesus replied, “Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”

Jesus told the crowds that following Him would not be easy. “Anyone who comes to Me must be willing to leave everything,” he said. “You must love Me most of all—more than your own life! Anyone who thinks life should be easy cannot follow Me,” Jesus said.

Jesus wanted the people to choose carefully. He told them a story: “If you wanted to build a tower, you would first sit down and see what you would need to make the tower. If you did not, you would build the foundation and could not finish. People would laugh at you.”

Then He told them another story: “If you were a king, you would not go to war against another king without thinking about if your army is great enough to win the war. If you don’t have enough men to



fight, you would send some men to ask for peace before the fighting even started.”

Jesus wanted people to think about the cost. “If you are not willing to give up everything you have, you cannot follow Me,” Jesus said.

Jesus said, “Whoever gives up his life for Me will find true life. What good is it to have everything you want in the world if you give up life with God forever?”

Christ Connection: Following Jesus is not easy, but He is worth it. When we trust in Jesus, we give Him complete control of our lives. Jesus gave up His own life to rescue people from sin and give us life with God forever.

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Move around the room:** Place props associated with the Bible story (foxes and birds, gravestone, building blocks, king's crown, heart) in different corners in the room. Move from corner to corner as you tell the parts of the story related to the props.
- **Use people figures and blocks:** Set up blocks to represent the building materials for the tower and people figures to represent the armies going to war. Shove them all aside when Jesus says to give up everything.

INTRODUCE the Story



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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom.

Welcome time

- “Just As I Am” song
- offering basket
- Allergy Alert
- favorite toys related to the Bible story theme

Play a theme song in the background as you greet preschoolers and follow your church’s security procedures. Set an offering basket near the door to collect at an appropriate time. Post an allergy alert, if necessary. Set out a few favorite theme-related toys, such as puzzles and blocks.

Activity page

- “Home” activity page, 1 per child
- crayons or markers

Tip: Be sensitive to children who may not have a place to live.

Lead preschoolers to draw a line matching each creature with its home.

SAY • Good job finding the homes for all of these creatures! Having a place to call home is really nice. Sometimes people have to leave their homes for something more important. Do you know what is the most important thing ever? Following Jesus! Listen to today’s Bible story to hear more!

LOW PREP

Tip: If you are unfamiliar with the song, listen to it online before the session.

Sing the answer

Teach children the first verse of “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus.” Then ask, “What if we have to move far away?” Guide children to answer by singing the verse. Pose another question like “Do you have to grow up first?” Shout “no!” and sing again. Continue asking questions based on possible excuses and singing the hymn in response. Pray for God to

help the preschoolers grow to follow Jesus decisively.

SAY • Deciding to follow Jesus is an important choice. It's not easy! But it is the best decision you could ever make. This song helps me remember not to turn back from following Jesus when life gets hard. I pray God will help you follow Jesus no matter what too!

Teach cost

Provide play money and allow children to “shop” for toys and other classroom items. Assign a basic cost to each item as a child brings it to you, such as “That book will cost you five bills” or “Those markers will cost you ten coins.” Do not worry about actual values; just help the children count each piece of money as they give it to you. As children bring you another item, say “That will cost everything you have! Is that worth it to you?”

SAY • A *cost* is how much you have to give up, like money, to get something you want or need. Was it hard when you had to give up all of your money to get something you wanted? That's a harder choice to make! Today we will hear about something Jesus said would cost everything but would be worth it. He wanted people to think about the cost and choose carefully. Listen to the Bible story to find out what Jesus taught.

· play money
· toys and classroom items

Tip: Remind children they are playing pretend and “purchased” items will stay in the classroom after play.

Transition to teach the story

To gain the attention of all the preschoolers to move them to Bible study, show the countdown video, turn the lights off and on, or clap a simple rhythm for the children to copy. Challenge children to follow you on a difficult path to Bible study.

· countdown video (optional)

TEACH the Story



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Introduce the Bible story

- Bible
- bookmark
- Giant Timeline

Place a bookmark at Luke 14 in your Bible. Invite a preschooler to open it. Reverently display the open Bible.

SAY • Jesus always spoke God's words, so we know His teaching is true. I'm really glad people wrote down God's true words in the Bible! Today we are hearing a story from the Bible Books of Matthew and Luke.

Point to the Bible story picture on the giant timeline. Remind children that all the stories in the Bible fit together to tell an even bigger story. The Bible tells us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Watch or tell the Bible story

- Story Point Poster
- "The Cost of Following Jesus" video (optional)
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Show the video or tell the Bible story using the provided storytelling tips. Use the bolded version of the Bible story for young preschoolers.

SAY • Many people wanted to follow Jesus because they thought He would make their life easier. **Jesus taught that following Him is not easy.** In fact, it can be really hard. When we trust in Jesus, we give Him complete control of our lives. He is worth it because He gives us the best gift ever—Himself! Jesus gave up His own life to rescue people from sin and give us life with God forever!

Practice the key passage

Place the key passage marker at John 14:26. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage. Read the key passage aloud. Challenge any willing preschooler to say the key passage from memory, promising to teach and remind him as much as necessary. Prompt him with words or using the motions you created last week. Praise any attempts and encourage other children to try.

SAY • Memorizing Scripture is hard, but it is worth it! **Jesus taught that following Him is not easy**, but He is worth it. And when we trust in Jesus, He gives us the Holy Spirit to teach and remind us of His words!

Sing the key passage song, “The Holy Spirit,” and the theme song, “Just As I Am.”

- Bible
- Key Passage Marker
- Key Passage Poster
- “The Holy Spirit (John 14:26)” song
- “Just As I Am” song

Learn the big picture question

SAY • Our big picture question asks, *What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom.* Even though following Jesus is not easy, it is worth it because He will get to be with God in His kingdom. That is better than anything we may have to give up now.

- Big Picture Question Poster



Missions moment

SAY • Let’s meet the Balasinghams, a missionary family from Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Show the “Balasingham Family Photo.” Point to each family member as you introduce him or her. Ask children to repeat the names after you. Ask them to raise their hands if they are the same age as one of the children. Pray for the family.

- “Balasingham Family Photo” printable

Pray and transition to experience the story

EXPERIENCE the Story



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LOW PREP

Play “Mirror, Mirror”

Form pairs. Lead pairs to stand facing each other an arm’s distance apart. Designate one child to be the *leader* and the other child to be the *mirror*. Explain that the *mirror* must copy the movements of the *leader* as if the *leader* is looking in a mirror. Play for a given amount of time then switch roles and play again. Reassign partners and continue playing as time allows or as interest holds.

SAY • Was it easy or hard to copy the leader’s motions when you were the mirror? People who follow Jesus look and act more and more like Jesus the longer they follow Him, but **Jesus taught that following Him is not easy.** Trusting Jesus means giving Him complete control of our lives. Jesus gave up His own life to rescue people from sin and give us life with God. Following Jesus is not easy, but He is worth it.

Choose your preference

Print the “Would You Rather?” printable. Hold up a pair, asking preschoolers which of the two options they would choose. Encourage children to pause and think about their choice before they answer. Then invite children to raise their hands as you name each choice and tally up the votes on a dry erase board. Continue with each pair until the

- “Would You Rather?” printable
- dry erase board
- dry erase marker

world and Jesus. Invite children to think about choosing between the world and Jesus, but do not vote on it.

SAY • Sometimes we have to give up even good things so we can get something better. Jesus is always the better choice, even if we have to give up the whole world.

Jesus taught that following Him is not easy, but He is worth it. He gives us life with God forever! When we trust in Jesus, we give Him complete control of our lives. Jesus gave up His own life to rescue people from sin.

Play musical foxes and birds

Before the session, cut large circles from brown and black construction paper. Cut enough circles for each child to have one. Form two groups. Assign one group to be *birds* and the other group to be *foxes*. Explain that the brown circles are *birds' nests* and the black circles are *foxes' dens*. Spread out the circles on the floor, using one less *bird's nest* than the number of *birds* and one less *fox's den* than the number of *foxes*. Tell preschoolers that when the music begins, the *birds* must flap their wings and the *foxes* must crawl on the floor. When the music stops, each *bird* must find a *nest* and each *fox* must find a *den*. The *bird* and *fox* that cannot find a home are out but may select a *bird's nest* and *fox's den* to remove for the next round. Play until only one *fox* and one *bird* remains.

SAY • One man told Jesus he would follow Him wherever He went. Jesus told the man, "Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lie down." **Jesus taught that following Him is not easy**, but He is worth it. Whoever gives Jesus complete control of his life will find true life.

- brown construction paper
- black construction paper
- scissors (adult use)
- "The Holy Spirit (John 14:26)" song (optional)
- "Just As I Am" song (optional)

Tip: For younger preschoolers, give each child a brown or black scrap of paper or dot sticker to help them remember if they are a bird or fox.

- Allergy Alert
- small foam blocks
- non-menthol shaving cream
- wipes for cleanup

Build a tower with shaving cream

Post an allergy alert. Set out small foam blocks on a table. Squirt a mound of non-menthol shaving cream in front of each child. Invite preschoolers to build a tower together using the shaving cream to hold the blocks together. Ask children about their building plans as they work.

SAY • Jesus said builders plan what they need before they start building. What if someone built the floors and walls of a house, but then didn't have a roof to put on? That would be silly! Jesus wants people to think about what it takes to follow Him too. When we trust in Jesus, we give Him complete control of our lives. **Jesus taught that following Him is not easy,** but He is worth it. Jesus gave up His life to rescue people from sin and give us life with God forever!



Play out visiting a beach and a zoo

- beach towels
- sunglasses
- sand toys
- zoo animal toys
- "Balasingham Family Photo" printable

Set up one side of the room to represent a beach with beach towels, sunglasses, and sand toys. Set up the other side of the room to represent a zoo by displaying animal toys. Encourage preschoolers to use their imaginations and pretend to visit the beach, a zoo, or both. Show preschoolers the "Balasingham Family Photo."

SAY • Remember the Balasingham family we are learning about? They are missionaries in Canada. The Balasingham's two favorite places to visit are the beach and the zoo. They love to be outside and visit special places with their family. Where do you like to visit with your family? *[Allow responses.]* God is using this family in Canada to help people know about Him. Let's pray that God will help the Balasingham family continue to share the good news about Jesus.

Snack and review

Play the countdown video to signal the end of activities. Wash hands and gather preschoolers for snack time. Pray, thanking God for the snack.

Offer preschoolers two options for snack, explaining that they cannot change their mind later. Advise preschoolers to think about which snack they want and choose carefully. Talk about how Jesus wanted people to think about the cost of following Him. Following Jesus is not easy, but He is worth it.

Show the Bible story picture as you ask the following questions. Retell parts of the Bible story as needed.

1. Did many people want to follow Jesus? (*yes*)
2. Did Jesus teach that following Him is easy? (*No, Jesus taught that following Him is not easy.*)
3. Why would Jesus teach that following Him is not easy? (*He wanted people to think and choose carefully.*)
4. Is following Jesus worth it? (*yes, always*)
5. What did Jesus promise to those who give up everything to follow Him? (*life with God forever*)
6. ***What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom.***

Transition

When preschoolers finish their snack, they may color the Bible story coloring page, play a simple game to practice the key passage or big picture question, or sing along to the key passage or theme song.

If parents are picking up their children at this time, tell them something that their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session. Distribute the preschool big picture cards for families.

- countdown video (optional)
- Allergy Alert
- paper cups and napkins
- snack food
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Big Picture Question Poster
- second snack option (optional)

- Bible Story Coloring Page
- crayons
- Key Passage Poster
- Big Picture Question Poster
- "The Holy Spirit (John 14:26)" song
- "Just As I Am" song
- Big Picture Cards for Families: Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers