15

Following Jesus

Main idea

Anyone can follow Jesus. To get started, a person needs to accept his invitation.

Questions answered

by this program

- Is Jesus only interested in good people?
- How do you start following Jesus?

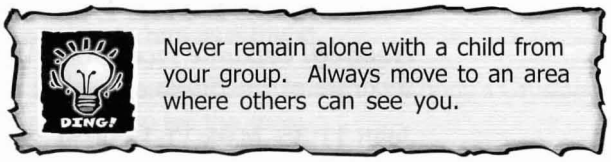
Bible Base

Matthew 9: 9-13

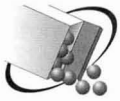
For the leader

Some leaders unnecessarily cloud the whole 'deciding to follow Jesus' process in secrecy by inviting children to 'stay behind', we recommend you talk openly and generally about how to start with Jesus, so everyone can think about it.

The Pharisees considered themselves superior for carefully keeping the law, and criticised Jesus for mixing with tax collectors, who didn't. But Jesus said these were the very people he came to invite to be his followers. Jesus particularly invites those in your group who don't measure up and know it.



Never remain alone with a child from your group. Always move to an area where others can see you.



Open the pack

WHO'S THE LEADER?

Why? To give the children an experience of following.

Seat everyone in a circle. Choose a volunteer to leave the room while you choose a leader from the children left. This leader commences an action which everyone else copies. The volunteer tries to guess who is the leader.

INVITATIONS

Why? To introduce the concept of RSVP.

Needed: *A party or other invitation.*

Show the invitation and discuss these questions:

To what sort of events do you get invited? What is the best invitation you have received? What made it so good? What information do invitations have on them? What does the person receiving the invitation need to do?

Dig in

COME WITH ME!

Why? To help the group understand what it might have been like for the disciples when Jesus asked them to come with him.

Once the children are settled, choose one child and issue this command, '(Michael), Come with me!' and lead the way outside. When outside give them a written invitation to come to kids club next week or to something else you are planning for the group. Come back to everyone and ask the child:

What did you think might happen when I said, 'Come with me?'

Why did you come?

Comment: Jesus issued that same command to some people long ago.

Getting Started

DRAMA: JESUS' INVITATION

Explain that there are two groups of people mentioned in this Bible story.

1. Pharisees – important men who were like lawyers. They knew God's laws and helped people keep them. They meant well, but sometimes the keeping of the law became more important than caring for people.
2. Disciples – followers of Jesus.

Set up your room to act out the Bible reading in two scenes.

Scene 1: **At Matthew's tax office**
Choose someone to be Matthew sitting at his table collecting taxes from another person.
Read Matthew 9:9 from your Bible and then choose someone to be Jesus and act out what happened.

Scene 2: **Later, at Matthew's home**
Choose two or three children to be Pharisees, a few to be disciples and have the same 'Matthew' and 'Jesus'. Everyone else is a party guest.
Read Matthew 9:10-13.

Chew on it

GETTING STARTED

Comment: Following Jesus is more than finding out about him. Jesus is still alive. He invites us all to get to know him through his Spirit. We can have Jesus as our invisible friend.

Tell about how and when you chose to accept Jesus' invitation. Invite the group to ask questions.

Give each child a plastic teaspoon with the letters 'TSP' written on it.

Explain that 'TSP' is the abbreviation for teaspoon and it also stands for 'Thank you, Sorry, Please'. It reminds us of a prayer we can pray to join Jesus' team of followers.

T Thank you for your love for me and that you invite me to follow you.
S Sorry for the things I have done wrong
P Please forgive me and help me to be a good friend of yours.

Suggest that sometime soon they take their spoon to a quiet spot and think about Jesus' invitation to follow and how they will answer. Invite them to tell you about it next time they see you.

THEME SONG FOR FOLLOWING JESUS

Listen to and/or learn one of these songs:

- It's an adventure, Choosing Jesus *Gospelling to the Beat 1*
- Jesus makes things new, Take a little step, Be on Jesus' team *Gospelling to the Beat 2*

Close the pack

Comment: Jesus said to Matthew, 'Come with me!' and Matthew chose to come.

Jesus said the same words to me and I chose to come.

Jesus is saying the same words to you. I wonder what your choice will be?

Assure everyone that you'd like to help them think about it some more and they only need to ask.

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Following Jesus

Main idea

In this lesson the children will discover that sometimes it feels great to follow Jesus.

Questions answered

by this program

- Was Jesus ever a big hero?
- Were Jesus and his friends always serious?

Bible Base

John 12:12-19

For the leader

This whole session is set in an atmosphere of chaotic celebration, as it must have been on Palm Sunday when Jesus entered Jerusalem. Success will depend on you and all other leaders enthusiastically playing the part.

People were curious about Jesus and those who travelled with him. They had heard that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, and wanted to find out more about this man. As Jesus came to the city of Jerusalem, many people, probably including some who were in the city for the Passover holiday, went out to meet him. They seemed to see Jesus as a potential nationalist leader who would help them become independent of foreign powers.

John recognised that the disciples did not understand the significance of this event until after Jesus' death (John 12:16). They were enjoying Jesus' popularity.

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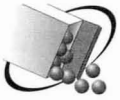


Open the pack

CREATE A STREET PARADE

Why? To catch something of the excitement of a parade to help an understanding of the Bible reading.

Needed: *Streamers, materials to make flags (such as crepe paper or fabric, long cardboard rolls and tape), bright music*

Choose some bright music to have playing while the children are creating their decorations. Use this time to ask questions like these:

Have you been at a festival or a street parade? What happened? Who looked like they were having the most fun? Who would you like to be in a parade?

Let as many as time allows, pretend they are a famous person and walk in front of all the children while they wave their streamers and flags.

Dig in

A BIBLE PARADE

At some stage during your parade celebrations tell the children to freeze in their position as you read John 12:12-13. Read verse 13 again as they unfreeze and begin cheering again.

Instruct them to freeze again as you complete verses 14 & 15.

SONG

Comment: When followers of Jesus get together one of the things they like to do to celebrate is to sing. Let's celebrate that Jesus loves us and we can follow him.

Choose a favourite song and sing it.

When it's Great

CELEBRATION PARTY

(Especially for groups who don't enjoy singing)

Bring along some snacks and have a party to celebrate that Jesus loves us and we can follow him.

Chew on it

WHAT'S SO GOOD ABOUT JESUS?

Why? To help the children process and express their thoughts about Jesus

You might like to explain that on 10 June in the year 2000, millions of people across the world went in a Global March for Jesus. Many cities and towns across Australia have Easter Marches each year to celebrate that Jesus is alive.

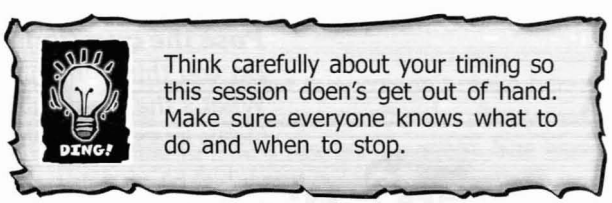
> ***Pose the questions:***
> *Why do they do that? What's so special about Jesus?*
> *(You might like to write a list of the answers and encourage the group to use them in the prayer activity.)*

PRAISE TIME

Alternate words and phrases mentioned in the above activity with 'J-E-S-U-S' to make a chant of praise. For example, 'J-E-S-U-S Awesome, J-E-S-U-S loves us, J-E-S-U-S powerful, J-E-S-U-S the best!'

Close the pack

When you love Jesus and follow him, it's great to be with others who do the same. That's why people belong to churches. (Take the opportunity to invite the children to Sunday school or tell them about other kids programs at local churches and encourage them to go.)



17

Following Jesus

Main idea

Jesus gives courage to keep following him in the tough times.

Questions answered

by this program

- Doesn't Jesus always protect his people?

Bible Base

Acts 4:1-22

For the leader

Following Jesus is not insurance against bad things happening. Jesus faced tough times and so do his followers, however, we know that overall God is in control. Even if the worst happens, we are eternally safe with him in heaven.

Open the pack

TRUE FALSE QUIZ

Why? To expose the belief that nothing bad ever happens to people who love Jesus, as false.

Designate the front of the room 'true' and the back 'false'. Read out the following statements and tell the group to move to the front or back of the room depending on whether they believe it to be true or false.

- According to the Bible, Jesus was born in Bethlehem. (T)
- There are millions of people who follow Jesus today. (T)
- All followers of Jesus live in western countries. (F)
- Some of the Bible was written before Jesus was born. (T)
- Jesus only wants good people to follow him. (F)
- The Bible says God existed before anything else. (T)
- If you follow Jesus nothing bad will happen to you. (F)

SONG FOR BAD TIMES

Why? To help children learn the song and the concept that God is with his people in the bad times.

Needed: Gospelling to the Beat 2 *CD and player, song words (optional)*

Play 'Song for bad times', encouraging the children to listen carefully to the words and say 'Boo Hoo' whenever they hear anything sad. Play it again saying 'Boo Hoo' at the end of the first two lines and 'Hooray' at the end of the second two.

Comment: Someone who loves God very much and has been a follower of Jesus for a long time wrote this song.

Pose the questions:
Do you think anything bad ever happened to the songwriter?
What's the great thing about following Jesus when bad things happen?
(Jesus loves us and will be with us.)

Dig in

A BAD TIME

Needed: *The following questions on a board or large sheet of paper, Bibles*

- Did everyone like them? Who didn't and why?
- What happened to Peter and John?Where did they spend the night?
- What happened that Peter and John would have been pleased about?
- What instructions did the officials give to Peter and John when they were released from prison ? Were they likely to get into trouble again? Why?

When it's Tough

Explain that even in Bible times bad things sometimes happened to Jesus' followers. Jesus called Peter and John to follow him. After Jesus went back to heaven they became important apostles. An apostle is someone chosen by Jesus to take his message to others.

> ***Pose the question:***
> *Do you think things always went well for Peter and John?*

Form groups of 2-5 each with one or more Bibles. Display the questions and challenge the children to find answers in Acts 4:1-4, 18-20. Share answers

Comment: I'm sure it was very tough for Peter and John to spend the night in prison. And their only crime was telling people the good news about Jesus!

IN PRISON

Tell or read the story of Peter and John being put in prison from your CEV Bible. Ask the above questions.

Chew on it

WITH US IN THE TOUGH TIMES

Needed: *Paper and pencils*

Comment: We may never end up in jail, but we have tough times too.

Encourage everyone (leaders included) to write or draw about a tough time they are experiencing at the moment or might experience.

Have everyone scrunch up their paper and hold it in their hands. Invite those who wish to pray a sentence thanking God for being with them in the tough times and asking for help to keep on following.

JONI'S STORY

Tell the story of Joni Eareckson who became a quadriplegic when she was seventeen. She had been very active and independent but dived into Chesapeake Bay one hot summer day and hit the bottom. Suddenly she was helpless, totally paralysed from the neck down. She couldn't feel anything and couldn't move. Her sister came and carried her up onto the sand. Joni could tell that onlookers were very worried about her. 'Don't worry. I'll be all right. God won't let anything bad happen to me.'

The ambulance took her to hospital where she was operated on but they couldn't make her better. Joni had no feeling in her arms or legs. Over the next days and months she discovered she had broken her neck and was never going to be able to lead a normal life again. She was angry with God and cried bitterly. How do you think you'd feel if you couldn't move at all?

Gradually she learned to trust God again even though he had allowed that to happen to her. Joni is now more than 50 years old. She still can't move any part of her body below her neck but she's learned to write and paint using her mouth instead of her hand and she travels the world telling people that God will be with them in the tough times and help them through.

Close the pack

Comment: Tough times don't last forever, but Jesus never, ever leaves us.

18

Following Jesus

Main idea

Every follower has a part to play in Jesus work on earth.

Questions answered

by this program

- What do I have to do if I start to follow Jesus?
- How will I know what to do?

Bible Base

Hebrews 10:25;
Phil 4:6;
2 Tim 3:17;
Matt 28:20;
1 Thessalonians 5:17

For the leader

It's helpful to use different word pictures at different times when talking to children about life with Jesus. Some of these include, 'following Jesus', 'being Jesus' friend', 'belonging to God's family', and 'being a Christian'. This session uses the concept of 'being on Jesus' team'. Jesus' team consists of all who have said 'yes' to Jesus' invitation to come and follow him. Jesus' team has the task of doing what Jesus wants done in this world, under his coaching.

We are a Christian when we choose to accept what Jesus did for us and invite him to rule our life. Praying, reading the Bible, attending church and telling others don't make us a follower of Jesus but they help us be effective members of his team.

. . . . . .

Open the pack

TEAM GAMES

Why? To give everyone a team experience.

Play some team games such as balloon tunnel ball or sock hockey.

FLASH INTERVIEWS

Why? To focus on what it means to join and belong to a team.

Ask everyone to ask as many people as possible in one minute if they belong to a team. They can keep count on their fingers. (This is chaotic but fun!) Restore order and share the results. Identify a few teams such as school sports or debating teams, gym squads or scout groups.

Pose the questions:
How do you join these teams?
Can anybody join?
If you are part of a team, what do you have to do?
(Attend training, obey the coach, keep the rules)

Dig in

MY PART

Why? So children will remember what good team members on Jesus' team do.

Needed: *Four large cards each with one of the letters in 'PART' on the front and the corresponding words and Bible references on the back (See below), TSP teaspoon from Session 15.*

Explain that Jesus has a team of followers.

Everyday

Pose the question:
What does it take to be part of Jesus team?

Talk about accepting Jesus' invitation to join. Show one of the TSP teaspoons from Session 15 and review how to accept Jesus' invitation.

Comment: Everyone who has accepted Jesus' invitation to follow him is on his team. As with other teams, there are privileges and responsibilities for team members.

Display the four cards with the letters P A R T in order.

For each one, allow some guesses as to what the letter might stand for before revealing the word on the back. After each word lead the children to read the Bible verse which reinforces the need to carry out our PART in Jesus' Team.

P	PRAY	1 Thessalonians 5:17, Phil 4:6;
A	ATTEND	Hebrews 10:25
R	READ	2 Tim 3:17
T	TELL	Matt 28:19, 20

Chew on it

LISTENING

Why? To affirm that Jesus invites us to be part of his team and to give those who haven't thought about their response yet a chance to do so. And for fun!

Listen to the song *Be on Jesus' team* from *Gospelling to the Beat 2*.

BRAINBUSTER

Why? To verbalise what they've heard about joining Jesus' team and to help you know what they understand. To give an opportunity for those who have joined the team to minister to those who are still thinking about it.

Pose the question:
If someone said to you 'Why should I join Jesus' team?' what would you tell them?

Close the pack

The best thing is that Jesus invites everyone to join his team. Assure everyone that you are happy to answer questions or talk to anyone who is thinking about joining Jesus' team but still isn't sure.