

Use Week of:

Unit 23 • Session 2

The Cost of Following Jesus

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Matthew 8; 16; Luke 9; 14

STORY POINT:

Following Jesus is not easy, but
He is worth it.

KEY PASSAGE:

John 14:25-26

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom. He taught that all Scripture is about Him.

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Additional resources are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit ministrygrid.com/gospelproject.

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

Large crowds traveled with Jesus; many people wanted to follow Him. 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 lay His head.”

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 people that following Him wouldn't be easy. It would cost them a lot.

“Anyone who comes to Me must be willing to leave his family. You must love me most of all—more than your own life! **Anyone who is unwilling to suffer cannot be My disciple,**” Jesus said.

Jesus urged the people to think about what they were doing. He told them a story: “If you wanted to build a tower, you would first sit down and figure out what it would take to complete the tower. Otherwise, you would build the foundation and be unable to finish. People would laugh at you.”

Then He told them another story: “If you were a king, you wouldn't go to war against another king without considering whether your army



would be great enough to win the war. If you have too few men to fight, you would send some men to ask for peace before the battle even started.”

Jesus wanted the people to consider the cost. “If you are not willing to give up everything you have, you cannot follow Me,” Jesus said. Following Jesus means giving Him complete control of your life. That is not easy, but it is worth it.

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: Jesus taught that following Him is not easy. It requires commitment and sacrifice. When we trust in Jesus, we give Him complete control of our lives. True life is found in Jesus, who gave up His life to rescue us from sin and death. He is worth it.

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Draw icons:** For each part of the story, draw simple icons such as a bird, a headstone, a heart, a tower, a crown, and so on.
- **Use props:** Display a cross to prompt kids to consider the cost of following Jesus.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: The Cost of Following Jesus

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KEY PASSAGE: John 14:25-26

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

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to think about a recent time they made a big decision. What did they consider?

Activity page (5 minutes)

- “What Will It Take?” activity page,
- 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete “What Will It Take?” on the activity page. Guide kids to consider each scenario and describe what it would take to accomplish the task.

SAY • Earning good grades might require studying for hours. Growing the largest pumpkin might require research and hard work in the garden. What might it take to follow Jesus? [*Allow kids to respond.*] In today’s story, we’ll find out what the Bible says.

LOW PREP

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Guess the leader

Instruct kids to sit in a group. Choose one kid (the “guesser”) to stand to the side with his eyes closed while you point to a seated player to be the leader. Explain that the rest of the kids should “follow the leader” by copying any

movements she does.

Invite the guesser back into the circle. He should watch kids' movements and try to guess who the leader is. The leader should try to change movements when she thinks the guesser is looking at someone else.

SAY • What do you think it means to follow someone?

[*Allow kids to respond.*] Today we will find out what Jesus meant when He said, "Follow Me," and what important things He wanted people to think about before they followed Him.

OPTION 2: The right price

Before the session, choose several common pantry items that cost between \$1.11 and \$9.99. Write down the prices for your own reference.

Display or describe a common pantry item. Explain that the cost of the item is between \$1.11 and \$9.99. Draw three squares on a dry erase board for each number in the price. Choose a volunteer to roll a numbered cube. Announce if the first digit in the price matches the number rolled. If the number does not match, ask the volunteer to guess if the actual number is higher or lower. Then reveal the answer and write it in the corresponding square.

Repeat with the remaining numbers. Play again with a new volunteer and a different item as time allows.

SAY • When you go to the store to buy something, you have to consider the cost. Are you willing to pay the price? That's the question Jesus wanted people to consider in today's Bible story, but He wasn't talking about shopping. Let's find out more.

- numbered cube
- dry erase board or large sheet of paper
- marker
- pantry items (optional)

Tip: Allow the volunteer to consult with the group before announcing a guess.

Transition to teach the story

TEACH 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. He taught that all Scripture is about Him.

Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

- leader attire
- Bible
- basket of school supplies

[Leader enters wearing business casual attire or a T-shirt for a local school with jeans. He or she also carries a Bible and a basket of school supplies.]

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

LEADER • Hello, everyone! My name is [Mr./Mrs.] [your name]. Welcome to my classroom! I'm glad you could join me today. My students will be back from their break in about a month, so I'm trying to get my room ready. *[Set out the school supplies on a table while you talk.]* You know, a lot of people would assume teachers take long breaks like their students, but I'd never be prepared if I just showed up to school on the first day like everyone else! But when I took this job, I counted the cost and believe that the opportunity to influence young minds and help kids grow and learn is well worth long hours of preparation.

[Hold up the Bible.] You know, that reminds me

of what Jesus talks about in the Bible. He wanted people to consider the cost of following Him before they made such a big commitment. Let me tell you more.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Jesus was a greater teacher than any other teacher on earth. Do you remember what was so important about Jesus' teaching? Let's answer our big picture question: ***What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom. He taught that all Scripture is about Him.***

Everything you learn in school is certainly important, but Jesus taught about things that will matter forever. Keep our big picture question and answer in mind as you hear today's Bible story.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

· Giant Timeline

LEADER • Jesus was about thirty years old when He began His ministry on earth. He traveled between the regions of Judea and Galilee, performing miracles and teaching people. Last time, we learned about Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. **Jesus taught people how to live in God's kingdom.** Today's Bible story is called "The Cost of Following Jesus." We'll see what Jesus taught about following Him.

· Bibles
· "The Cost of Following Jesus" video
· Big Picture Question Poster
· Bible Story Picture Poster
· Story Point Poster

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Matthew 8; 16; Luke 9; 14. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you

tell the story, or show the Bible story video “The Cost of Following Jesus.”

LEADER • Does following Jesus sound hard? It is! **Following Jesus is not easy, but He is worth it.**

What did Jesus say to the man who wanted to bury his father first? Look at Matthew 8:21-22. [*Allow kids to read the verses and respond.*] Jesus was saying that following Him must be a priority. We shouldn’t make excuses and say, “Let me do this first, and then I’ll follow You,” or “Now is not a good time. I’ll follow Jesus in a few years.”

Jesus told two stories to tell people that they should count the cost before choosing to follow Him. Many people choose to follow Jesus and then turn away from Him when they realize that following Jesus is not easy. [*See John 6:66.*]

What did Jesus say will happen if we give Him complete control of our lives? Find Matthew 16:25 in your Bible. [*Allow kids to read the verse and respond.*] If we cling to our life on earth, which is temporary, we will lose eternal life with God. But giving Jesus complete control over our lives now will mean enjoying eternal life with Him forever.

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided on page 99 to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Christ connection

LEADER • Jesus taught that following Him is not easy. It requires commitment and sacrifice. When we trust in Jesus, we give Him complete control of our lives. True life is found in Jesus, who gave up His life to rescue us from sin and death. He is worth it.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 23, Session 2” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about the difficulty of following Jesus. What might they have to give up to follow Jesus? What will they gain? Guide them to discuss if Jesus is worth it.

• “Unit 23, Session 2” questions from kids video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

Show the family photo and introduce the members of Kesavan’s family to your group: Kesavan (father), Viji [VEE-jee] (mother), Josiah (age 8), Micah (age 6), Abigail (age 3) and Emily (age 1). Point to each member of the family in the photo as you introduce them.

• “Balasingham Family Photo” printable

LEADER • This family is living on mission in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. They do normal things that other families do, but they try to live in a way that teaches others about Jesus. Kesavan says he prays that each of his children will become faithful followers of Jesus. He hopes that he can baptize them one day and then see them lead other people to Jesus.

Kesavan teaches people that no matter how hard life gets, it’s best to follow Jesus. **Following Jesus is not easy, but He is worth it.**

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together John 14:25-26.

• Key Passage Poster
• “I Have Spoken (John 14:25-26)” song

LEADER • God gives the Holy Spirit to everyone who trusts in Jesus. Following Jesus is not easy, and sometimes we can forget that He is worth it. The Holy Spirit reminds us what is true and gives us power to press on. One day, Jesus will make all things right.

Let’s sing our key passage to help us remember

these words from the Bible.
Lead kids in singing “I Have Spoken (John 14:25-26).”

Sing (4 minutes)

• “Just As I Am” song
• Bible

Open your Bible and read aloud Romans 8:35,37.

LEADER • The Bible says that we are weak, but the Holy Spirit will help us in our weakness. We live with hope, trusting that God works all things for the good of those who love Him. He is worth it! Let’s sing. Sing together “Just As I Am.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Lord God, we confess that there are times we doubt and wonder if following You is worth it. Strengthen our hearts and remind us of the truth. You are worth it. Anything we give up in this life and any sufferings we face for the sake of the gospel are nothing compared to the glory You will give us. Thank You for Your Word and Your Spirit. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY 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. He taught that all Scripture is about Him.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- masking tape
- dominoes
- permanent marker

Before the session, write the key passage as words or phrases on strips of masking tape. Stick the tape to dominoes.

Display the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud John 14:25-26 together.

Invite kids to stand the dominoes on end in order, about an inch apart. Then prompt them to say the key passage before pushing over the first domino to knock them all over.

SAY • *What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom. He taught that all Scripture is about Him.* With the Holy Spirit's help, the disciples remembered Jesus' words and wrote them down in the Bible so we can read them today. The Holy Spirit is with believers today too, and He helps us understand God's Word and remember what is true.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster
- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (005802970)

Distribute Bibles. Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to Luke 9. Explain that today's story is found in Matthew and Luke. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Luke 9:23-25.

SAY • Jesus spoke to His disciples when they were near the

Sea of Galilee. [*Point out the Sea of Galilee (D6) on the New Testament Israel Map.*] Jesus was clear that following Him is not easy.

When we trust in Jesus, we give Him complete control of our lives. That's what it means to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus. True life is found in Jesus, who gave up His life to rescue us from sin and death. He is worth it.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. What do you think Jesus meant when He said that anyone who is unwilling to suffer cannot be His disciple? *Explain to kids that Jesus later told His disciples that because the world had persecuted Him, they would be persecuted. Believers should expect to suffer in a fallen world. We can endure suffering, fixing our eyes on Jesus and looking forward to eternity with Him.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read John 15:18-20.)

2. Why is it important to understand the cost of following Jesus? *Help kids recognize that following Jesus without understanding the cost may make it difficult to persevere in trials. Emphasize that though Jesus does not offer us an easy life, He offers us Himself. He is better than anything the world offers.*
(Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 Pet. 4:12-13.)
3. How can we encourage others who aren't sure if following Jesus is worth it? *Prompt kids to consider the importance of praying for others. The Holy Spirit gives us strength to follow Jesus. Kids can also point others to Jesus, remembering that suffering is temporary and one day Jesus will make all things right.*
(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Heb. 12:1-3.)

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

LOW PREP

- "Tamil Alphabet" printable
- world map
- pencils
- paper

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment from Teach the Story.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Tamil alphabet

Print and distribute one copy of the Tamil alphabet to each kid. Ask kids if they know what language is on the paper. They probably won't recognize this one!

SAY • These are letters from the Tamil (TAM-uhl) language. It's one of the languages spoken in Sri Lanka. [*Point to Sri Lanka on a world map.*]

Kesavan Balasingham spoke Tamil when he moved to Canada and had to learn English. Learning English was very hard for him, but now he can read the Bible, preach, and tell people about Jesus in two languages! Many people in Kesavan's community speak both languages.

Encourage kids to practice writing some of the Tamil letters.

SAY • Learning another language isn't easy, but God can use a person's language skills so more people can hear the gospel.

OPTION 2: Cross reminders

Before the session, cut one 12-inch length and one 6-inch length of 1-inch wide ribbon per kid. Also cut one 8-inch length of 1/8-inch wide purple ribbon per kid. Distribute supplies and the "Cross Reminders" printable. Lead kids to complete the following steps:

1. Glue together the ends of the 12-inch strip.
2. Glue together the ends of the 6-inch strip.
3. Slide the 6-inch loop about one-third of the way down the 12-inch loop. Glue it in place to form a cross shape.
4. Wrap an 8-inch strip of 1/8-inch wide ribbon around the intersection of the cross. Use glue to secure the

- "Cross Reminders" printable
- 1-inch wide ribbon in two colors
- scissors
- 1/8-inch wide purple ribbon
- fast-drying glue or adhesive dots
- ruler

Option: Use paper instead of ribbon.

ribbon to the back of the cross.

SAY • Jesus told His disciples, “If anyone wants to follow after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me.” Jesus taught that following Him is not easy. It requires commitment and sacrifice.

When we trust in Jesus, we give Him complete control of our lives. True life is found in Jesus, who gave up His life to rescue us from sin and death. He is worth it.

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God’s glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

• pencils
• Journal Page
• “Story Point Shapes” activity page,
1 per kid

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, asking God to draw kids to Himself and give them strength to faithfully follow Jesus—no matter the cost. Pray that kids would always remember that following Jesus is worth it.

As time allows, lead kids to complete “Story Point Shapes” on the activity page. Kids should color in the shapes according to the key to finish the story point.

Tip: Give parents this week’s *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.