

# JESUS' FIRST FOLLOWERS

JOHN 1



**KEY PASSAGE:** John 1:14

**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** Is Jesus God or a human? Jesus is fully God and fully human.

**CHRIST CONNECTION:** Jesus still calls people to follow Him today as His disciples. Everyone who repents and trusts that Jesus died and rose again for their sins is His disciple. Jesus is worth following, no matter what we have to leave behind.

**STORY POINT:** Jesus called disciples to follow Him.



## PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

### LEADER Bible Study

Jesus' calling to His first disciples follows the same pattern our Savior uses today. His invitation for us to follow Him remains steadfast as He asks—and answers—the same question He extended to His earliest disciples: “What are you looking for?” (John 1:38). We find Jesus Himself to be the all-sufficient answer to the question of what we seek; He is the only One worthy of our following.

Christ intentionally met His disciples in their curiosity. He extended an invitation to come and see His life and ministry for themselves, to join Him on mission to fulfill His Father's will. We read that John, the writer of this Gospel account, remembered what time it was, down to the hour, when he first met Jesus—the moment his life was forever changed (John 1:39).

It was through hearing Christ's words and inviting others to hear Him for themselves that the earliest followers were brought into His fold. Jesus sought out His first disciples, saying to them, “Follow Me” and revealing His deep desire to abide with them—not just in the present—but for all eternity. In experiencing the closeness and intentionality of Christ, the first followers of Jesus proclaimed, “We have found the Messiah,” “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law,” and “You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel!”

Christ's invitation to follow Him was simple enough to understand for people who had received little education. His question, “What are you looking for?”, is the same one He extends to people today—even young children!

We see from this passage that Jesus knows us—beings who have been lovingly created by the Father. Even more, He desires that we know Him and trust Him to be the answer for all we seek.

It was through word of mouth that even more people heard about Jesus and were invited into a saving relationship with Him. May the boys and girls you teach accept Jesus' invitation to trust in Him for salvation and be empowered to share His love with others.



Scan the QR code to listen to The Gospel Project for Kids Weekly Leader Training Podcast.



#### PREPARE

##### THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



#### WELCOME

##### 10–15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



#### LEARN

##### 25–30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



#### LOVE

##### 15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



#### LIVE

##### 15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel



## PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

## GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



### WELCOME

#### Activity Page

- "Wacky Tacky Objects" activity page



### LOVE

#### Review & Bible Skills

- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)



### LEARN

#### Introduce the Session

- countdown video
- Story Point Poster

#### Big Picture Question

- Big Picture Question Poster

#### Review the Timeline

- Giant Timeline

#### Tell the Bible Story

- "Jesus' First Followers" video
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- map set (optional)

#### Questions from Kids

- "Unit 20, Session 4" Questions from Kids video

#### Missions Moment

- "United States Map" printable

#### Key Passage Activity

- Key Passage Poster
- "Dwelt Among Us (John 1:14)" song
- worship song of your choice (optional)



### LIVE

#### Activity Choice (Option 1)

- uncooked spaghetti noodles
- uncooked penne noodles
- paper towels

#### Activity Choice (Option 2)

- leis, 3 per kid

#### Reflection and Prayer

- Bible story coloring page



## WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

| **SAY** “What do you own that would feel impossible to give up?”

### 1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “Wacky Tacky Objects” on the activity page.

| **SAY** “Nice work showing off your detective skills to find what didn’t belong in the picture! In today’s lesson, we’ll learn what happened when Jesus called some people to be His disciples.”

### 2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

#### OPTION 1: NAMING NUMBER



Invite the kids to sit in a circle. Tell everyone to close their eyes. Explain that you will begin by saying the number one. Someone else can then call out the number two, then another person can call the number three, etc. Any of the kids can call out the number, but they must call out the numbers in order. However, if any kids call out the number at the same time, the whole group must start over. Continue playing as time allows, challenging the kids to see how high they can count without starting over.

| **SAY** “You guys have some great listening skills! Just like you called out the numbers, Jesus came to call God’s people to turn back to Him. In today’s story, we will learn that **JESUS CALLED DISCIPLES TO FOLLOW HIM.**”

#### OPTION 2: FOLLOWING FOOTSTEPS

Use tape or cutout footprints, and create a pattern on the floor. Have the kids form a line behind the pathway. Choose one volunteer to start walking along the pathway by following the pattern. Instruct the next kid in line to walk the same pathway from memory, without looking down at the pattern. If any kid misses a step in the pattern, they are out. Repeat this until all the kids have taken a turn. For more of a challenge, play several times and continue to add more steps each round until only one kid remains.

| **SAY** “Following the pathway from memory was not easy! God’s people had strayed from Him because of sin, but Jesus came to call the people back. In today’s story, we will learn that **JESUS CALLED DISCIPLES TO FOLLOW HIM.**”

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





## INTRODUCE the Bible Story

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### 1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

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

**SAY** “ Hi, there! My name is [your name], and I’m glad you could join me today! Who can remind me what we talked about last week? [Allow responses.] Jesus was tempted by the devil, but unlike us, Jesus never sinned! Today’s story comes from the Gospel of John. If you brought your Bible with you, go ahead and turn there now. [Distribute Bibles to any kid who needs one.] As Jesus began His ministry, He called certain men to follow Him as disciples. Let’s pray together before we open God’s Word. ‘God, thank You for sending Jesus to bring us back to Yourself. Open our hearts and clear our minds to listen and obey Your Word. Amen.’ ”

### 2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

**SAY** “ Over the past few weeks, we have learned more about who Jesus is through our big picture question. Can you all say the question we have learned? [Allow responses.] **Is Jesus God or a human?** Who remembers the answer? [Allow responses.] **Jesus is fully God and fully human.**

As the Gospel of John reminds us, Jesus has always existed. He is the second person of the Trinity, the Word who was with the Father and the Holy Spirit when the world was created. Jesus came to live as a human and walked in perfect obedience to God the Father. Through Him, God has shown us His glory. Being fully God and fully man, Jesus was the sufficient sacrifice to pay the price for our sin. ”

### 3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the Giant Timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

**SAY** “ Through the ministry of John the Baptist, people heard the message of sin and repentance. All along, God was preparing the way for Jesus to call His people to repentance. Jesus obeyed His Father’s will when He was baptized, marking the beginning of His ministry on earth. Finally, Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by the devil, but did not sin. Today, we will learn that Jesus calls people to follow Him as His disciples. ”



## LEARN the Bible Story

### 1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to John 1. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Jesus’ First Followers.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

#### JESUS’ FIRST FOLLOWERS

“One day, John was standing with two of his disciples. John saw Jesus passing by and said, **“Look, the Lamb of God!”**”

John’s disciples heard him say this and followed Jesus. Jesus turned to them and said, **“What are you looking for?”**

They said, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), **“where are you staying?”**

**“Come and see for yourself,”** Jesus replied. So, they went and stayed with Him that day.

One of the two disciples who followed Jesus was named Andrew. He found his brother, Simon, and told him, “We have found the Messiah, the Christ!” **Andrew brought Simon to Jesus.**

When Jesus saw Simon, he said, “You are Simon, son of John. From now on, you will be called Peter.”

The next day, Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. He found a man named Philip and told him, **“Follow me.”** Philip found his friend Nathanael and told him, **“We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law.** His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph, from Nazareth.”

Nathanael replied, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

“Come and see,” Philip answered.

**When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, He said, “Here truly is an Israelite who tells no lie.”**

“How do you know me?” Nathanael asked Jesus.

Jesus replied, **“Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you,”**

“Rabbi,” Nathanael replied, **“You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel!”**

Jesus responded, **“You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree? You will see much greater things than this.** Truly I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God going up and coming down on the Son of Man.”

Christ Connection: Jesus still calls people to follow Him today as His disciples.

#### STORYTELLING TIPS

**Visualize the characters:** Create signs to hold up with the name of each disciple. Hold these up as each disciple is speaking in the story.

**Use a map:** Use the map set and allow kids to help you chart the town of Galilee and Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth as you read through the story.



## LEARN

### THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

Everyone who repents and trusts that Jesus died and rose again for their sins is His disciple. Jesus is worth following, no matter what we have to leave behind. ”

## 2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

**SAY** “ What did John mean when he called Jesus the Lamb of God? [Allow responses.] In the Old Testament, a lamb was sacrificed as payment for the sins of the people. When John used this name for Jesus, he was confirming that Jesus was God’s only Son who came to be the all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. John’s disciple, Andrew, followed after Jesus and went to tell his brother that he had seen the Messiah. Can you remember the name of Andrew’s brother? [Allow responses.] When Simon came to meet Jesus, He was given a new name: Peter! When we follow Jesus, though our name doesn’t change, we receive a new identity as a child of God.

How did Jesus know who Nathanael was? [Allow responses.] Jesus reminded Philip’s friend that He knew him because He had seen Him under a tree. Nathanael was amazed and understood that Jesus was truly the Son of God who had come to save the people of Israel. But Jesus shared that Nathanael would see even more amazing things! Who did Jesus say that Nathanael would see the angels ascending and descending on? [Allow responses.] Jesus showed Nathanael that He is not just any man; He is the Son of Man. By using this name, Jesus revealed that He is both a human and God, the one who the prophets foretold! Like these men, Jesus calls us to follow Him as disciples.

Jesus still calls people to follow Him today as His disciples. Everyone who repents and trusts that Jesus died and rose again for their sins is His disciple. Jesus is worth following, no matter what we have to leave behind. ”

## 3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

**SAY** “ Jesus was not just a great teacher. He is the Messiah, the Son of God who came to die on the cross for our sins. When we trust in Him as Lord, He forgives us and calls us to follow Him in our new identity as disciples. To learn more about what it means to trust your life to Jesus, you can see one of your parents or a leader at church. ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)

## 4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 20, Session 4” Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. Why were there 12 disciples, and how did Jesus choose them?
2. What would you be willing to leave behind to follow Jesus?



## LEARN

### THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

#### 5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

Point to Kansas City, MO, on the United States Map (and Parkville, Missouri, if marked).

**SAY** “ RiverPark Church was started a few years ago in Parkville, Missouri, just a few miles outside of Kansas City, Missouri. It held its first service in 2020. Stephen Daniel and his family moved to Kansas City from Fort Worth, Texas, in 2018, to begin planning for a new church. The church was started by 14 people meeting in English Landing Park. The church now meets at Graden Elementary School in Parkville, Missouri, but sometimes they still meet at the park when weather allows.

RiverPark Church encourages people to join a group that meets on Sunday mornings to have people who support and care for one another. It’s a place to make new friends, learn, and get through the struggles of life with a community of people who care. The church wants to help individuals and families learn about God, connect with the community, and build a successful life by living life God’s way. The church relies on the support of its members and partners to continue the mission God has placed on the church. ”

Pray for RiverPark Church as they reach people in the community of Parkville. Pray for the church leaders as they lead the church to grow and serve.

#### 6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud John 1:14 together.

**SAY** “ Jesus is the Word who came down to live with His people. He calls us to repent of our sins and follow after Him. Let’s review our key passage together! ”

Write each word of the key passage on different sheets of construction paper. Using tape, place each piece of paper on the floor to create a pathway. Mix in pieces of paper that contain words not found in the key passage to create various pathways. Encourage the kids to step along the pathway, following each word of the key passage. If they step on an incorrect word, he or she must start back at the beginning. After each kid has reached the end of the pathway, invite the class to recite the key passage aloud together.

Lead kids to sing “Dwelt Among Us (John 1:14).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

#### 7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

**SAY** “ God, thank You for calling us out of our sin. Give us the courage to live as Your disciples every day and to make disciples by sharing the good news of Jesus with others. Amen. ”

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

## LOVE God by Applying the Story

### 1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the New Testament Israel Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to John 1. Explain that John, the author of today's story, walked with Jesus as one of His disciples. John knew the sacrifice of following Jesus firsthand and his Gospel reminds readers of the eternal life Christ offers when we follow Him.

Consider pointing out the location of Galilee (C6) on the New Testament Israel Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud John 1:41-43 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verses aloud.

**SAY** “ Think of a time when you had to give up something. How does it feel to give up something we care about? [Allow responses.] Giving up our possessions or activities we love can be hard. But it can be easier to walk away from these things if we know we are receiving something better in return. Jesus called His disciples to leave the life they knew in order to follow after Him. When we trust in Jesus as Lord, He calls us to leave behind our life of sin. Giving up the ability to live life the way we want to is not easy, but the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ is worth it. Our new identity as children of God far outweighs any pleasure this world can offer! ”

### 2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

**SAY** “ How was Jesus able to see Nathanael under the tree? ”

Share that Jesus' statement displayed His identity as God. Remind kids that because Jesus is God, He is omniscient. He knows everything about us and desires a personal relationship with us! (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Psalm 139:1-4.)

**SAY** “ What does the name Son of Man mean? ”

Explain that the name “Son of Man” refers to an Old Testament prophecy where Daniel described someone who would rule the world forever. Remind kids that Jesus is the sinless Son of God who the prophets pointed to! (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Daniel 7:13-14.)

**SAY** “ Does following Jesus cost us anything? ”

Share that salvation is a free gift from God and that we can't earn it by being good enough on our own. However, Jesus also tells people to count the cost of following Him. To be a disciple of Jesus, we must be willing to turn away from our sin and want to live for His glory, not our own. Following Jesus is not easy, but He offers something the world cannot: salvation and eternal life through Himself. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Matthew 16:24-25.)

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

### LIVE the Mission

#### 1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

##### OPTION 1: NOODLE NECKLACE



Before the session, bring in uncooked spaghetti noodles and uncooked penne. Lay out a paper towel for each kid on the table. Place one spaghetti noodle and one penne noodle on each towel. Have each kid stand in front of a paper towel with their hands behind their backs. Explain that everyone must pick up their spaghetti noodle with their mouth. Challenge the kids to string the spaghetti noodle through the penne noodle without using their hands. If any kid's noodle breaks, they must start over with a new noodle. Play as time allows.

**SAY** “ Trying to string the noodle through the pasta seemed difficult at times. Following Jesus is not easy either; we must be willing to give up everything! But Jesus promises that following Him is greater than anything we leave behind. ”

##### OPTION 2: LEI IT DOWN

Choose one volunteer to be the leader. Have him or her stand at one end of the room. Line the other kids up shoulder to shoulder on the opposite end of the room. Give each kid three leis to wear around his or her neck. Starting at one end of the line, have kids take turns asking the leader if he or she can move forward. Examples could include *May I take three baby steps forward*, or *May I take two leaps forward*. However, each time a kid moves forward, he or she must lay down a lei. If a kid does not make it to the leader before they run out of leis, he or she is out. Tip: Be prepared to deny any ambitious requests that would make the game too easy (ex. *May I take 12 giant leaps?*) and to direct kids to ask more humble requests.

**SAY** “ Jesus called His disciples to follow Him no matter the cost. We are also called to give up our life of sin in order to follow Jesus. But following Jesus is greater than anything we leave behind! ”

#### 2 REFLECTION AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper and pencil to each kid. Ask kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Who can I tell about this story?

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids. If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.