
“What Does it Take to Follow?”

Children’s Sunday School Lesson Matthew
16:21-28



This passage may contain confusing elements for young children. Did Jesus really call one of His best friends “Satan”? What does it mean that some people might not experience death? Just how much do we have to give up in order to follow Christ? The emphasis in this lesson is on the blessings of being a disciple. Following Jesus is not a burden, but a beautiful opportunity we have to be called children of God. It is worth whatever we might have to give up, because we know Jesus laid down His life for us.

Lesson focus: This lesson reminds children of the importance of following Jesus first and foremost, rather than chasing after what the world may have to offer. Sometimes we have to make sacrifices for Jesus, but they are worth it in order to have a relationship with Him and know we are part of God’s kingdom. We recognize that Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice for us, and we can be grateful for that.

Passage: Matthew 16:21-28

Target Audience: Kindergarten-6th grade (or whoever you might have around!)

Materials Needed: Construction paper, decorative materials, glue, scissors, plastic cups in various colors, crayons, string, toothpicks, Bible (all optional, depending which activities you choose to use—except for the Bible, you need that for sure).



Group Games & Lesson Introduction

Lesson Opening: This lesson discusses how we follow Jesus, as well as how we might have to experience hardships in our lives as Christians.

Here are some activities to get kids thinking...(select the best ones for your audience and age group):

- Go for the gold! Discuss what it takes to be a top performing athlete (also mentioned in children's message for this Gospel). Sports stars sacrifice a lot for fame and notoriety. Is it worth it to gain things that really don't last?
- Play "Simon Says" or "Follow the Leader" to talk about being a disciple.
- Play a "cross toss" game. Arrange one color of plastic cups in the shape of a cross. Surround the cross with other cups. Have kids take turns tossing a ping pong ball or other small object into the cups, aiming for the ones within the cross shape.
- Look at the prices of various worldly objects (houses, cars, etc.). Is there a price tag on people? Can we pay a certain amount to gain salvation or Heaven? (Hint: the answer should definitely be "no").

Explain that today we'll look at a Gospel passage where Jesus tried to explain to His disciples that they might have to do hard things and sacrifice in this life. We know that life sure isn't easy. Following Jesus isn't always easy, but it's worth it to gain the greater treasure of eternal life. That is not a treasure we earn, though, because Jesus already paid the price for us so that we could be part of God's family!

Ask: How do you focus on one thing, even when there are distractions?



Matthew 16:21-28 Sunday School Lesson

Bible Lesson: As always, how you choose to experience the story will vary according to the ages and abilities of your children (and how many are participating). This passage is pretty straight forward, but feel free to share it through a skit or “popcorn reading” if preferred.

From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. 22 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”

23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.” -Matthew 16:21-23

Explain that Jesus here is warning His disciples of what lies ahead. Peter, always impetuous, rebukes his master (which was not usually something that “students” did with masters). He didn’t want to think about the possibility of Jesus suffering. Why does Jesus call him “Satan”? Here, He is trying to share what the most important things in life ought to be. He tells Peter that His mission is not about comfort and ease, but about greater things—Godly concerns.

Ask: Do you ever face choices between doing something easy or comfortable and doing something hard? Why are hard things sometimes better to choose? How can you make those tough decisions?

Explain that Jesus knew His death was going to be difficult, but necessary. Sometimes for us, things will be difficult, but we know that Jesus already conquered the hardest of obstacles for our sake. Jesus reminded His followers of what it might cost them to seek and serve Him. But there is a beautiful blessing that goes along with this tough truth.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life^[1] will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. ²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done. ²⁸ “Truly I tell you, some



who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.” -Matthew 16:24-28

What does it mean to “take up a cross”? Will we have to die for our beliefs? Fortunately, most of us in this day and age won’t face such struggles and possibilities. The disciples did, though. In fact, only one of them was not killed for his faith. We might have sacrifices and hardships to face, though. But it’s important to note that those challenges do not somehow earn us a spot in Heaven or recognition as God’s children. Those things are already set. Jesus made the biggest sacrifice of all. God became man and lived among us, and gave His life for us. That was a bigger and better thing than anything else imaginable. And the blessing is that because of that, we know we will “find our lives.” We do need to commit to Christ. We need to be willing to make sacrifices and do things that are tough. But in the end, eternal life is worth far more than all of the riches in the world. People chase after many things: fame, money, attention...none of that can be worth it, compared with knowing God’s love through Christ. He has purchased our souls and deemed us “worth it”, and we can use our lives to thank Him!

Ask: What are some things that you might commit to in life? What does it mean to commit to Jesus? How can we do that joyfully?

Close with a prayer thanking God for His Son Jesus, and for salvation. Ask for trust and help as we commit to Jesus and follow Him every day.

Craft & Additional Teaching Ideas

Crafts: The “True Reward” is in Jesus: “Crown of Glory”, “Medal of Honor”, “Seek and Find Scratch-off Cross”

Follow up/Additional Activities

- Learn about people who have had to make sacrifices to follow Jesus. Consider famous missionaries, pastors, or even athletes (Eric Liddell is a great one!).
- Talk about churches that are persecuted in other countries. Consider what a blessing it is to live in a time and place that we can worship with freedom, and pray for others who cannot.
- Send a letter to military personnel, thanking them for their service and sacrifice.





This lesson was prepared by [Kristin Schmidt](#), who serves at the Epiphany Lutheran Church in Castle Rock, CO.

She has shared her teaching gifts through *Ministry-To-Children* since 2014 and now serves as our lead curriculum writer.

Kristin has a professional background in elementary and pre-school education. A graduate of Biola University, she holds a Master of Education and will receive the Master of Theology degree from Concordia University, Irvine, California, in May


2020. Kristin grew up in southern California and lived the past 10 years in Georgia. She is a long-distance runner and voracious reader.

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“The Greatest Reward”

Craft Ideas on the Cost of Discipleship

In this Gospel lesson, we focus on the importance of committing to follow Jesus. It may be tough at times and require sacrifice, but ultimately it is not a burden, but something that brings great joy and hope. Drawing on a sports theme, these crafts remind children of the great reward that is ours in Heaven. Offered here are instructions for making a “medal of honor”, a “crown of glory”, and a cross decoration with a fun scratch-off element. Feel free to alter and embellish as needed, and always be sure to remind students of the significance behind items they are making.

Bible Verses or Craft Captions to Consider...

For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. ²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

-Matthew 6:19-21

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. ²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. -1 Corinthians 9:24-25

Jesus is the true treasure!

A crown that lasts...the sacrifice of Christ

A medal of greater reward...life with Jesus!

Don't miss the [demonstration video of these craft projects](#) and on our [Matthew 16:21-28 for kids](#) playlist. We also have a [children's sermon](#) based on this Bible passage.



Craft one: “True Reward Medal”

You will need:

- Paper plates or construction paper
- Yarn or string
- Markers, stickers, or other decorating materials
- Scissors
- Hole punch



Procedure:

1. Cut a circle out of paper, cardstock, or paper plate.
2. Decorate the circle as a “medal”, including verse captions, colors, and glitter, if desired.
3. Hole punch the center of the “medal.”
4. Use the medal as a necklace or hang as a decoration.



Craft Two: “Crown of Glory”

You will need:

- Glue or tape
- Construction paper, cardstock, or crown cut-out
- Scissors
- Caption or verse
- Markers or crayons
- Jewels, stickers, or other decorations (optional)



Procedure:

1. Cut paper into a crown shape strip, or prepare crown hat.
2. Decorate the crown with captions, verses, colors, gems, stickers, or otherwise.
3. Fold or bend the crown to fit the head of the individual child.
4. Remind kids that we seek an “unperishable crown”!



Craft Three: “Scratch off Cross Decoration”

You will need:

- Yarn, pipe cleaner, or string
- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Extra decorations (stickers, etc.)
- Caption or verse
- Crayons
- Toothpicks



Procedure:

1. Decide whether you prefer to trace a shape or color an entire paper (shape cutting optional).
2. Use crayons to cover the area with layers of colors.
3. Use a black crayon for the final layer, pressing fairly hard to make the black top coat.
4. Cut out the shape, if desired.
5. If desired, hole punch the top to create a decoration. String the yarn, string, or pipe cleaner through the papers. This can be used as a long wall decoration or a simple necklace to enjoy.



Extra Ideas:

- Make a list of things that people tend to seek after or dedicate their lives to. Create a collage that goes with it, depicting the importance of seeking Christ first and foremost.
- “Cross toss”: arrange several Solo cups in the shape of a cross. Place other cups surrounding it (in differing colors), and attempt to toss ping pong balls in the cups that make up the cross shape.
- Play “follow the leader” to recall how we follow Christ.
- Look up facts about military leaders. Examine how they sacrifice for their country.





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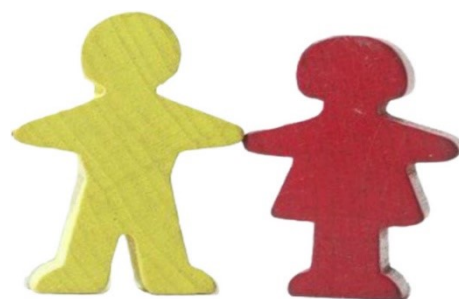
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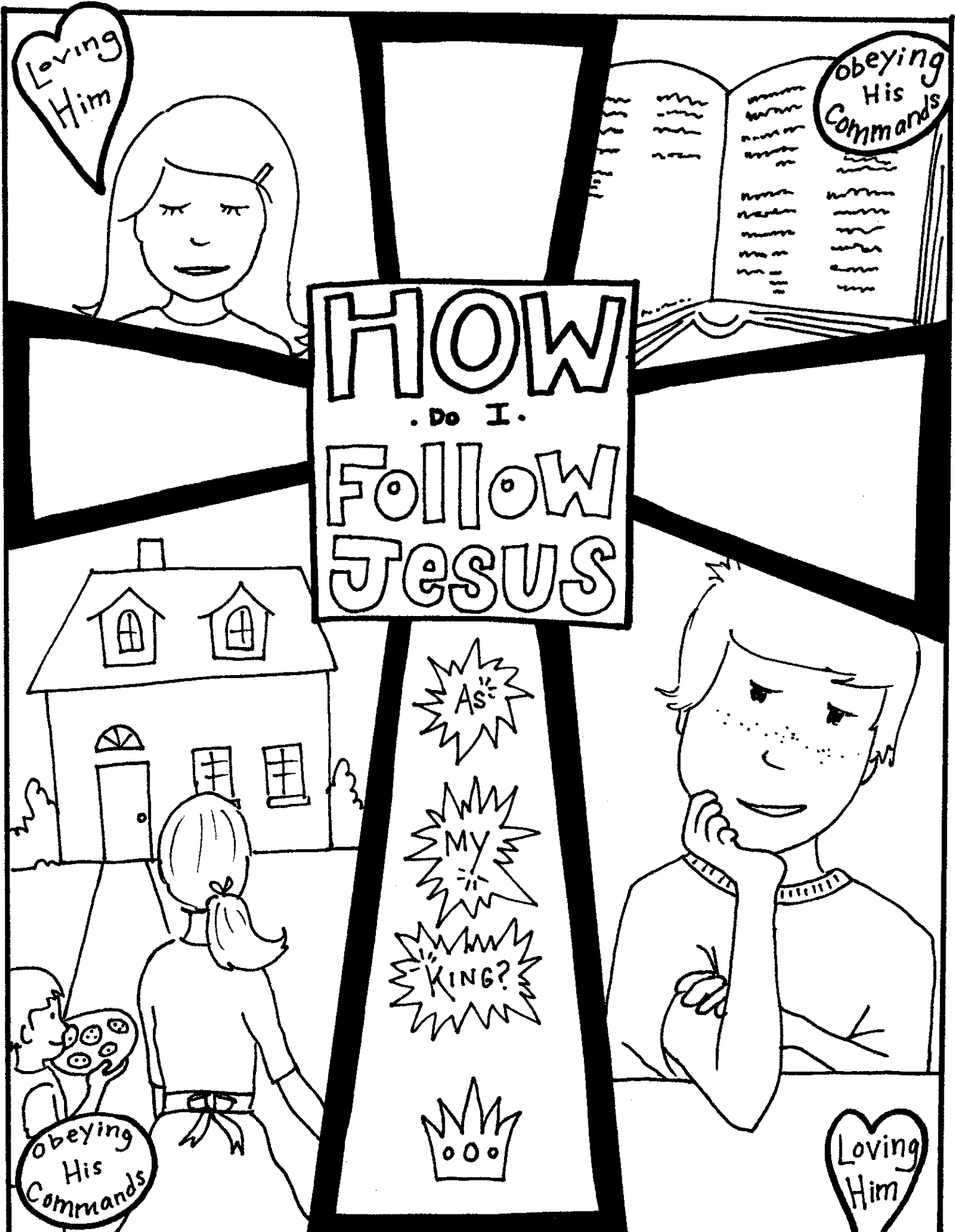
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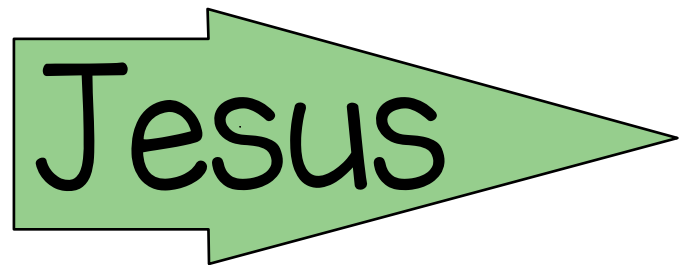
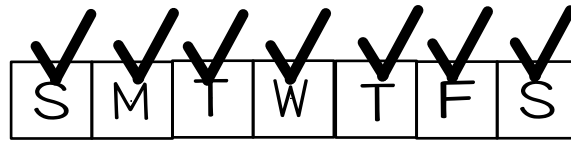
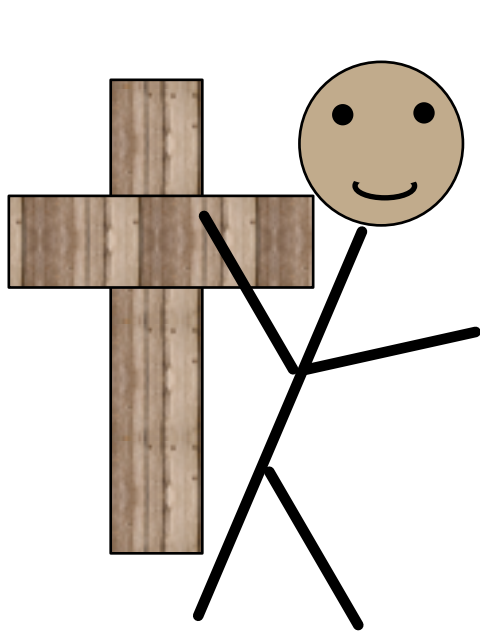


HOW
. DO I.
FOLLOW
JESUS

AS
MY
KING?
CROWN



"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.
Luke 9:23



For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?"
Luke 9:25

