UNIT 20 | SESSION 4

JESUS' FIRST FOLLOWERS

JOHN 1

CHRIST CONNECTION: Jesus came to be our King. He died on the cross and rose again to rescue us from our sins. Jesus calls us to follow Him and be His disciples.

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

KEY PASSAGE: The Word became flesh and lived among us. John 1:14

STORY POINT: Jesus chose disciples to follow Him.

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PREPARE

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.

PREPARE
THE WEEK PRIOR
Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session

WELCOME
10–15 MINUTES
Greet preschoolers and open the session

LEARN
25–30 MINUTES
Teach preschoolers the story of the gospel

LOVE
Lead preschoolers to love the God of the gospel

30–40 MINUTES

LIVE
Lead preschoolers to live the mission of the gospel

BONUS
60–65 MINUTES
Teach preschoolers for an additional hour

The Gospel Project Podcast

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

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PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a supply of the following items available during all teaching sessions: Allergy Alert, Bibles, washable markers, crayons, scissors (adult use), blunt-tip scissors, construction paper, copy paper, glue sticks, glue, tape, baby dolls, blocks, play dough, and a beanbag.

WELCOME

Create a mural
- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster
- ☐ JESUS mural from last session

LEARN

Find the people figures
- ☐ people figures, 1 per child

Tell the Bible story
- ☐ "Jesus' First Followers" video (optional)

Review the Bible story
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster

Learn and practice the key passage phrase
- ☐ Key Passage Phrase Marker

LOVE

Cut out pictures of people
- ☐ magazines or sales ads with pictures of people

Find the hidden person
- ☐ people figures

LIVE

Painting handprints
- ☐ "Key Passage Phrase Label" printable
- ☐ washable paint
- ☐ paintbrushes
- ☐ art smocks

Snack and transition
- ☐ hand sanitizer (optional)
- ☐ "Count Friends" activity page, 1 per child
- ☐ Big Picture Cards for Families

BONUS

Say the key passage phrase
- ☐ Key Passage Phrase Marker

Play with people figures
- ☐ dollhouse
- ☐ people figures

Make faces
- ☐ paper plates, 1 per child
- ☐ yarn

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WELCOME

WELCOME Preschoolers

Provide as many learning activities as possible from the Love and Live sections to give preschoolers opportunities to learn. Incorporate the Bible story, the Christ Connection, the story point, and key passage phrase in your conversations as the preschoolers engage in learning activities throughout the session.

Use the following activity to greet children as they enter the room. Talk about the big picture question and answer. After each child completes the welcome activity, encourage him to participate in the activities provided from the Love and Live sections of the leader guide.

CREATE A MURAL

Before the session, refer to the JESUS mural from last session and the Bible Story Picture Poster on the wall at the children's eye level. Add the remaining letters, US, to spell JESUS. Place washable markers near the mural. Post the Big Picture Question Poster near the entrance to the classroom. Greet kids as they come to the classroom and point out the Big Picture Question Poster. Encourage kids to decorate the last two letters on the mural with the markers.

> **SAY** *"I am so glad you are at church today. Our big picture questions asks,* ***Is Jesus God or a human? Jesus is fully God and fully human.*** *We are creating a mural with a special message. Today, we can see the whole word. Do you know what it says? It says JESUS. We have been learning about Jesus and the beginning of His ministry. In our story today, we will learn that* **JESUS CHOSE DISCIPLES TO FOLLOW HIM**. *Jesus calls us to follow Him and be His disciples too."*

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

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LEARN the Bible Story

1 FIND THE PEOPLE FIGURES

Place people figures throughout the classroom where they can easily be found. Invite each child to find a figure and bring it to the group-time area. Assist children as needed so that everyone is able to bring a figure to the group.

> **SAY** *"You each found a toy person and brought it to group time. The people in our story today each found a person and brought him to Jesus."*

2 TELL THE BIBLE STORY

Open your Bible to John 1. Tell the Bible story using the following summary. You may choose to review the Bible story by showing the video.

JESUS' FIRST FOLLOWERS

SAY *"One day, John was standing with two of his followers. John saw Jesus and said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"*

When the two men heard this, they left John to follow Jesus. Jesus asked them, "What are you looking for?"

The men said, "Teacher, where are You staying?"

Jesus said, "Come and see." The men followed Jesus to where He was staying, and they spent the day with Him.

One of the men who followed Jesus was Andrew. Andrew found his brother, Simon, and brought him to Jesus. Jesus said, "You are Simon. You will be called Cephas" (which means "Peter").

The next day, Jesus went to Galilee. He found Philip and said, "Follow Me."

Philip found Nathanael and said, "We found the one we've been waiting for. He is Jesus from Nazareth."

"Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Nathanael asked.

Philip said, "Come and see."

When Nathanael met Jesus, Jesus already knew him. "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked.

Jesus said, "Before Philip told you about Me, I saw you under the fig tree."

Nathanael said, "Teacher, You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel!"

Christ Connection: Jesus came to be our King. He died on the cross and rose again to rescue us from our sins. Jesus calls us to follow Him and be His disciples.

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3 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

Look at the Bible Story Picture Poster together. Point out the people in the picture. Ask children who they can tell about Jesus.

> **SAY** "**JESUS CHOSE DISCIPLES TO FOLLOW HIM.** *People came to Jesus and brought others to Him too. Jesus came to be our King. He died on the cross and rose again to rescue us from our sins. Jesus calls us to follow Him and be His disciples. Andrew found his brother Simon and brought him to Jesus. Philip found Nathanael and brought him to Jesus. Who can you bring to Jesus by telling them about Him?*"

4 SING A SONG

Sing the song below to the tune of "If You're Happy and You Know It":

The Word became flesh and lived among us.
The Word became flesh and lived among us.
The Word became flesh,
And lived among us.
The Word became flesh and lived among us.

5 LEARN AND PRACTICE THE KEY PASSAGE PHRASE

Place the Key Passage Phrase Marker at John 1:14. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage. Encourage children to say the phrase with you multiple times. Each time you say the phrase, leave out a word, leading kids to say the missing word.

"The Word became flesh and lived among ____. John 1:14."

"The Word became ____ and lived among us. John 1:14."

"The ____ became flesh and lived among us. John 1:14."

> **SAY** "*God became a human and lived on earth. Jesus is fully God and fully human.* **JESUS CHOSE DISCIPLES TO FOLLOW HIM**. *Jesus wants us to follow Him and be His disciples, too.*"

6 PRAY

Pray, asking God to help us follow Him and tell others about Him.

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

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LOVE God because of what we learned

1 FOLLOW THE LEADER

LOW PREP

Invite 2 to 3 kids to join you in playing a game. Walk, hop, and stomp around the classroom. Wave your arms and clap your hands as you move. Lead the kids to follow every movement you make. Encourage children to invite other friends to join the game. Older children may want to take turns being the leader and deciding what movements to make.

> **SAY** *You followed each movement I made in our game. When I hopped, you hopped. When I clapped, you clapped. You invited friends to join us as well.* **JESUS CHOSE DISCIPLES TO FOLLOW HIM.** *Andrew and Philip were two of Jesus' disciples. The disciples went and found other friends to follow Jesus too. Andrew brought his brother, Simon, and Philip brought Nathanael. Jesus calls us to follow Him and be His disciples.*

2 CUT OUT PICTURES OF PEOPLE

Place magazines, sales ads, and blunt-tip scissors on the table. Encourage children to look through the magazines and find pictures of people. Talk about the people you see. Demonstrate how to cut out the pictures. Assist children as needed with holding the scissors and cutting.

> **SAY** *You found so many pictures of people. Some people are tall, and some are short. You found pictures of younger and older people.* **JESUS CHOSE PEOPLE TO FOLLOW HIM.** *Some men followed Jesus when they first saw Him; others were invited by their friends and family to follow Jesus. We can invite people to follow Jesus. Jesus came to be our King. He died on the cross and rose again to rescue us from our sins. Jesus calls us to follow Him and be His disciples.*

3 FIND THE HIDDEN PERSON

Encourage kids to close their eyes or turn around while you hide a toy person in the classroom. Then, give clues to help children find it. As a child gets close to the hidden person, tell him that he is getting "hotter." As he moves farther away, tell him he is getter "colder." Play several rounds of the game, encouraging children to take turns hiding the toy person and giving the clues.

> **SAY** *You did a great job listening to the clues and finding the hidden person. Some of Jesus' followers found their friends and family members and brought them to Jesus so they could follow Him too. Andrew brought his brother Simon, and Philip brought his friend, Nathanael. Jesus chose disciples to follow Him. Jesus' disciples knew that Jesus was the one they were waiting for and the King of Israel. Jesus came to be our King. He died on the cross and rose again to rescue us from our sins. Jesus calls us to follow Him and be His disciples. What friends could you bring to church to learn about Jesus?*

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

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LIVE for God out of love

1 PAINT HANDPRINTS

Print the "Key Passage Phrase Label" printable. Place construction paper, washable paint, and a paintbrush on the table. Encourage a child to find a friend to paint with. Assist the friends with placing smocks over their clothing. Use the paintbrush to paint one of each child's hands. Press their hands to the paper and then supervise children in washing their hands. Place a Key Passage Phrase Label on the completed artwork.

> **SAY** *"I like the handprints you and your friend painted together. You invited your friend to paint with you. Andrew and Philip invited their friends to follow Jesus with them. Our key passage phrase tells us, 'The Word became flesh and lived among us.' God became a human and lived on earth. We can invite people to follow Jesus like Andrew and Philip did."*

2 MISSIONS ACTIVITY

Ask children to share their favorite things to do at the park. Mention specific activities such as going down a slide, swinging on a swing, and hanging from the monkey bars. Invite children to play out each movement as the corresponding park item is mentioned. Pray for RiverPark Church and their church leaders as they lead the church to help more people know about Jesus in the state of Missouri.

> **SAY** *"A few years ago, Stephen Daniel and his family moved to Kansas City to start RiverPark Church. The church started with 14 people meeting for Sunday services in a park. The church currently meets at an elementary school but sometimes will meet at the park when the weather allows."*

3 SNACK AND TRANSITION

Post an Allergy Alert. Serve the snack. As children eat, review and talk about the Bible story. When children finish their snack, lead them to complete the activity page. As they work, continue talking about the Bible story and emphasize the Christ Connection.

> **SAY** *"Jesus came to be our King. He died on the cross and rose again to rescue us from our sins. Jesus calls us to follow Him and be His disciples."*

Remember to communicate helpful information to the bonus teaching hour leaders. If parents are picking up children at this time, tell them something their child did well during the session. Distribute Big Picture Cards for Families. Encourage parents to engage with the family discussion starters and family activities during the week.

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BONUS

TEACHING HOUR

BONUS Teaching Hour Group Time

1 BRING A FRIEND

Invite children to find a friend and bring them to the group-time area. Encourage a child to bring you to group time if they are having a difficult time finding someone. Tell children that some of Jesus' followers brought people to Him.

2 TALK ABOUT THE BIBLE STORY

Open the Bible to John 1. Use the summarized points below to talk about the Bible story:

JESUS' FIRST FOLLOWERS

- John was with two of his followers. He saw Jesus and said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" The two men left John and followed Jesus.
- The men wanted to know where Jesus was staying. "Come and see," Jesus said. They stayed with Jesus that day.
- One of the men who followed Jesus was Andrew. He found his brother, Simon, and brought him to Jesus. Jesus said, "You are Simon. You will be called Cephas" (which means "Peter").
- Then Jesus found Philip and said, "Follow Me."
- Philip told Nathanael about Jesus. "Come and see," Philip said. Nathanael met Jesus and said, "You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

3 SING A SONG

Sing the song below to the tune of "If You're Happy and You Know It":

The Word became flesh and lived among us.
The Word became flesh and lived among us.
The Word became flesh,
And lived among us.
The Word became flesh and lived among us.

4 SAY THE KEY PASSAGE PHRASE

Place the Key Passage Phrase Marker at John 1:14. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage. Remind children that God became a human and lived on earth. Say the key passage phrase together several times; then encourage children to say the key passage phrase to a friend.

5 PRAY

Pray, thanking God for coming to be our King and calling us to follow Him just like His disciples.

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BONUS

TEACHING HOUR

BONUS Teaching Hour Activities

6 TRACE NAMES

LOW PREP

Write each child's name in large letters across a piece of copy paper. Place several crayons on the table. Encourage children to trace over their name several times with a different colored crayon each time. Adjust the activity for younger children by having them trace their first initial or coloring over their name.

> **SAY** "*You traced over your name.* **JESUS CHOSE DISCIPLES TO FOLLOW HIM.** *Some of His disciples' names were Andrew, Simon, Philip, and Nathanael. Jesus' disciples followed Him. Jesus wants us to follow Him too. Jesus came to be our King. He died on the cross and rose again to rescue us from our sins. Jesus calls us to follow Him and be His disciples.*"

7 PLAY WITH PEOPLE FIGURES

Place a dollhouse and people figures out for kids to explore. Encourage children to have the people figures work together and be friends as they play. Suggest that the people figures invite each other to meet new friends.

> **SAY** "**JESUS CHOSE DISCIPLES TO FOLLOW HIM.** *Some of the disciples invited their friends and family to meet Jesus and follow Him. Andrew brought his brother Simon to Jesus. Philip brought his friend Nathanael to Jesus. Jesus' disciples knew He was special. Philip said, 'We found the one we have been waiting for.' Nathanael said, 'You are the King of Israel!' Jesus came to be our King. He died on the cross and rose again to rescue us from our sins. Jesus calls us to follow Him and be His disciples.*"

8 MAKE FACES

Place paper plates, washable markers, yarn, and glue on the table. Invite children to draw eyes, a nose, and a mouth on a paper plate to create a face. Demonstrate how to cut yarn and glue it to the plate to resemble hair. Older children may want to add additional features such as eyebrows, eyelashes, and ears, or details such as rosy cheeks or earrings.

> **SAY** "*I like the person you made. Jesus chose people to follow Him. Andrew, Simon, Philip, and Nathanael were a few of the disciples Jesus chose. Jesus' disciples knew He was special. Nathanael said, 'Jesus, You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel!' Philip said, 'We found the one we've been waiting for; He is Jesus.'* **JESUS CHOSE DISCIPLES TO FOLLOW HIM.** *Jesus calls us to follow Him and be His disciples too.*"

Release preschoolers to parents according to your church's security procedure. Tell them something their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session.

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