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.

INTRODUCE THE STORY
(10–15 MINUTES)
PAGE 92

TEACH THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 94

APPLY THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 100

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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.

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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

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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.

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INTRODUCE 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.

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 discuss a time they saved up money to buy something on their own. What did they buy? How did they decide it was worth it?

SAY • We often make choices about how to use our money, time, or talents. When we choose to do one thing, we are also giving up other things. Today we will talk about some of the things people give up to gain Jesus. But gaining Jesus is always worth it.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Count the Cost" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the "Count the Cost" activity page. Challenge the kids to count the money in each set to determine if they would have enough to purchase the item shown.

SAY • To buy anything, you must give up some of your money. What do you think people might give up to follow Jesus? Do you think following Jesus is easy or hard? We will learn more about that today.

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Session starter (10 minutes)

LOW PREP

- chairs, 1 per kid (optional)

OPTION 1: A rough road

Instruct the kids to sit in two lines with a narrow aisle between them. Select one kid to stand at the front of the group and pretend to drive a bus. She will lean different directions, jump up and down, or shake herself back and forth as though driving over a rough and winding road. The rest of the kids should follow her lead and pretend they are on a bus with the "driver."

SAY • If I were riding in a bus, I would not want the road to be that difficult! Today we will learn about some of the things Jesus warned His followers they might face if they walked with Him. Do you think He promised an easy life or a difficult one?

OPTION 2: Guess the price

- grocery store items (can of soup, box of crackers, bag of chips, package of breakfast cereal, and so forth)
- list of prices for grocery store items
- paper
- pencils

Place various grocery items around the room at different stations. Make sure you have a list of all their prices. Provide each child with a sheet of paper and a pencil. Invite the kids to go from station to station and write down what they think the price of each might be. For very young kids, this might be difficult. Encourage them to try anyway, and remind them that there is no penalty for guessing incorrectly. Once the kids finish, reveal the correct prices. Congratulate all the kids for their efforts.

SAY • When your mom and dad go to the grocery store, it is important to count up the cost of the items they want to take home. Today we will learn that following Jesus is worth any cost.

Transition to teach the story

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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

[Leader enters wearing business casual clothing.]

LEADER • Hey, everyone. Wow, you must really miss school to keep coming in on days off. I'm so proud! A lot of times, people talk about school and learning as if they are boring or pointless, but the truth is, learning is one of the most important things we can do—and most of our learning doesn't happen in a school classroom.

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

From the day a person is born, he starts to learn. We learn to roll over, to sit up, to crawl, and sometimes even to walk all in our first year of life. Soon after that we learn to talk. We can learn all kinds of skills and talents, like playing sports, riding bikes, playing video games, singing, or playing instruments. So the next time you hear someone say something about how he doesn't like to learn, remind him that if it weren't for learning, he'd still be

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wearing diapers!

No, the question isn't whether people like to learn, it's what we like to learn, how we like to learn, and who we want to learn from. Jesus is the greatest teacher who ever lived, and His teachings are the most important of all. So let's get into it.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Do you all remember our big picture question and answer? ***What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom. He taught that all Scripture is about Him***. Every story points to Jesus. Jesus came to earth to live the life we could not live and die the death we deserved to die. When we have faith in Him, we are adopted into God's family and become a part of His kingdom. It's important that we know what it means to be in God's kingdom and how we ought to live so that we honor our King, Jesus.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

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

- Giant Timeline

LEADER • Last week, we looked at the Sermon on the Mount, one of Jesus' most famous teachings. We learned that **Jesus taught people how to live in God's kingdom.** We cannot earn a place in God's kingdom by obeying, but when we have faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit helps us love God and obey. This week, we will learn that obeying Jesus can be very difficult at times. This story is called "The Cost of Following Jesus."

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Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

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

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 • Wow, that was pretty intense. These teachings of Jesus can often be hard to hear. It's very common to believe that God wants us to be happy, but how can we be happy if we know we will suffer hard times if we follow Jesus?

The answer comes from understanding that there is a difference between what the world calls happiness and true joy that comes only from God. The world often says happiness is the good feeling you have when everything is going the way you want it to go. The Bible promises the opposite of that. When we follow Jesus, we must expect some things to be hard or sad. Thankfully, what Jesus offers is better than worldly happiness. Jesus offers true joy!

Joy isn't just feeling good because things are going well. Joy is feeling peace and hope because you understand that God is in control. We can feel joy even when we are sad. Joy comes from knowing that no matter what happens to us while we are living in a sinful world, Jesus will return and restore the world and we will live with Him forever.

When we choose to follow Jesus, we must give Him complete control of our lives. Sometimes that can seem scary or even sad, but the truth is, we gain something much better than anything we give up. **Following Jesus is not easy, but He is worth it**.

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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.

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 23, Session 2" questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about why following Jesus is hard. Guide them to discuss the blessings and benefits we receive from Christ.

- "Unit 23, Session 2" Questions from Kids video

Missions moment (3 minutes)

Show the "Balasingham Family Photo" printable 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 • Kesavan and his family live on mission in Toronto, 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. They know that **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. Then sing the key passage song.

- Key Passage Poster
- "I Have Spoken (John 14:25-26)" song

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LEADER • It would be impossible for us to remember all of Jesus' teachings and obey them perfectly. Thankfully, God sent the Holy Spirit to help us. As you go about your week, ask the Holy Spirit to remind you of the things you know are true about God. Ask for His help trusting that Jesus is worth any sacrifice.

Sing (4 minutes)

· "Just As I Am" song

LEADER • **Following Jesus isn't easy, but He is worth it**. He accepts us as we are and transforms us to be more like Him each day.

Sing together "Just As I Am."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Lord, thank You for the amazing gift of Your Son. Help us trust You and understand that nothing we could ever sacrifice to obey You compares to the wonderful and eternal life available in Jesus. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

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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.

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APPLY the Story

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Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- "Key Passage Flip Cards" printable
- pencils or pens

Print double-sided copies of the "Key Passage Flip Cards" printable and cut them apart. Ensure you have one set for each kid in your group. Distribute the flip cards and challenge the kids to fold their card in half to fill in the missing words on the first level. After each level, they should move to the next level and fold the previous level under so they cannot see it.

SAY • Great job with those cards. Our key passage comes from the Gospel of John. Jesus spoke these words to His disciples before He went to the cross. He wanted them to know that even if they struggled to remember His teachings, the Holy Spirit would help them remember. The same is true for us. When we have faith in Jesus' perfect life, death, and resurrection, the Holy Spirit lives with us to help us love and obey God.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

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

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help kids find the books of Matthew and Luke. Discuss which division these books are in and why we use Bible divisions.

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Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. Jesus said the Son of Man has no place to what? (*lay His head, Matt. 8:20*)
2. What did Jesus say a person must take up to follow Him? (*his cross, Matt. 16:24*)
3. What did Jesus say about a king going to war? (*He must consider whether his army can win, Luke 14:31*)
4. Why do you think we must be willing to give up our family and even our life to follow Jesus? *Guide kids to see that Jesus is the most important. If we truly love our families, we will want to put Jesus first so that we can help them see that He is best for them. If we love anything, even families or other good things, more than we love Jesus, those things have become idols.*
5. What are some ways you might suffer for Jesus' sake? *Discuss what can happen if kids stand up for what's right against friends or other kids at school. Discuss missionaries who move away from home. Talk about places where Christians are not allowed to worship God and might be arrested or killed for their faith.*
6. What do we gain by following Jesus? *Help kids think about the rewards we have through Jesus, both in this life and the next. Remind them that Jesus gives us peace, love, joy, and wisdom. Help them see that no matter what hard situations we face now, someday we will rule with Jesus when He returns.*

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

SAY • **Following Jesus is not easy, but He is worth it**. Some people hate Christians and think we are foolish and wrong. Even though they are enemies, we love them and trust Jesus through hard times. No situation is so difficult that God cannot use it for His glory and your good. He is worthy.

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Activity choice (10 minutes)

LOW PREP

- "Tamil Alphabet" printable
- paper
- pencils
- world map (optional)

OPTION 1: A new way to preach

Print a few copies of the "Tamil Alphabet" printable and distribute them among the kids. You may choose to print enough for each kid to have one or ask kids to share. Give each kid a sheet of paper and a pencil and encourage her to try writing some of the Tamil (TAM-uhl) letters. Remind the kids that Tamil is a language used in Sri Lanka. You may display a world map and point out Sri Lanka off the tip of India on the eastern side.

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

SAY • 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 preach, read the Bible, and tell people about Jesus in two languages! Many people in Kesavan's community speak both languages. Learning another language isn't easy. In a similar way, **following Jesus is not easy, but He is worth it**.

OPTION 2: A cross to bear

- pool noodles, 3
- duct tape

Before the session, make two crosses out of three pool noodles by cutting one in half to make the two cross bars. Use duct tape to secure the cross bars to the upright portion. During the session, form two teams of kids. Instruct the teams to line up on one side of the room. Place the crosses at the far side. The players on each team will take turns rushing to the crosses, picking one up, and returning it to their line. There, each player will hand off the cross to the next player in line, who will take the cross back and leave it at the far side.

SAY • When Jesus said to take up your cross to follow Him, He wasn't speaking about a silly, light, foam cross like

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these. But He also wasn't talking about only a literal wooden cross used to crucify people. Jesus had to carry one of those, but the "crosses" we have to carry can be different.

We have to deal with different kinds of sufferings. Kids at school might make fun of us or think we aren't cool. Some people might hate us for believing in Jesus. Others might even want to hurt or kill us. But the fact is, Jesus took the punishment we deserve for sin, and as a result, we can have forgiveness of sin and life with God forever. **Following Jesus is not easy, but He is worth it**.

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

- pencils and crayons
- paper
- Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid

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

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

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

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

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

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