

13

most important

BIBLE

Lessons

for kids
about

living for
JESUS



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This Group resource incorporates our R.E.A.L. approach to ministry. It reinforces a growing friendship with Jesus, encourages long-term learning, and results in life transformation, because it's



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Learner-to-learner interaction enhances learning and builds Christian friendships.

Experiential

What learners experience through discussion and action sticks with them up to 9 times longer than what they simply hear or read.

Applicable

The aim of Christian education is to equip learners to be both hearers and doers of God's Word.

Learner-based

Learners understand and retain more when the learning process takes into consideration how they learn best.



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INTRODUCTION

Ask people who minister to children what they want most, and you'll hear something like this:

"I want kids to know the Bible."

"I want children to have a strong relationship with God."

"I want kids to have a faith foundation that'll stand the test of time."

That's what the *13 Most Important Bible Lessons for Kids* series is all about—helping kids build a strong foundation in the basics of their faith. In *13 Most Important Bible Lessons for Kids About Living for Jesus*, you'll draw children closer to Jesus and help them learn through his example and those who followed him how to live for our Savior. Based on the prayer that Jesus offered for his disciples in John 17, each lesson uses Scripture, conversation, and hands-on experiences to teach kids vital truths that include:

Jesus' followers obey God's Word. (John 17:6)

Jesus' followers accept God's gifts through faith. (John 17:7-8)

Jesus' followers belong to God. (John 17:9)

Jesus' followers bring glory to Jesus. (John 17:10, 14)

Jesus' followers live in the world but aren't of it. (John 17:11)

Jesus' followers trust in God's protection. (John 17:12)

Jesus' followers are filled with joy. (John 17:13)

Jesus' followers are made holy by God's truth. (John 17:17, 19)

Jesus' followers are sent into mission. (John 17:18)

Jesus' followers share their faith with others. (John 17:20)

Jesus' followers unite with each other. (John 17:21, 23)

Jesus' followers look forward to heaven. (John 17:24)

Jesus' followers stay close to Jesus. (John 17:25-26).

These lessons won't fill your kids with theoretical information they'll soon forget. Instead, we've designed the lessons to transform your kids by engaging them in learning experiences that'll help them know the loving God who created them and sustains them.

Here's the flow for each lesson:

Set the Foundation—Engages kids in an opening activity to get them enthused and wanting more.

Present the Bible Foundation—This is the “meat” of the lesson, designed to help kids dig into the Bible.

Build on the Foundation—Once kids have learned a key attribute of God, they respond and apply what they've learned in a meaningful way—then pray.

Jesus told a much-loved parable about the need to build a strong faith foundation. You know the parable: The wise man built his house upon the rock...and nothing could tear down that house!

This is what you dream of, plan for, and pray about in ministry—that the children you minister to will have such a strong faith foundation that nothing will be able to tear down their faith. May God use *13 Most Important Bible Lessons for Kids About Living for Jesus* as you lead children in their growing relationship with Jesus.



Be aware that some children have food allergies that can be dangerous. Know your children, and consult with parents about allergies their children may have. Also be sure to read food labels carefully as hidden ingredients can cause allergy-related problems.



To avoid choking hazards, be sure to pick up pieces of any broken balloons promptly. Balloons may contain latex.



LESSON 1

Jesus' Followers Obey God's Word

The concept of obedience tends to be easy for kids to understand—it's the basis of much of what they learn at a young age. Obedience, though, can be a difficult concept to consistently apply. Kids may know what they *should* do—and what parents, teachers, or even the Bible says is *right* to do—but willfulness and selfishness arise and they tend to choose a different path.

How do we obey? By making a choice. And even when that choice is difficult, Jesus is here to guide us. The Bible lights our path. And other Christians can shore us up with encouragement and affirmation. As you lead kids in this lesson, let them know that the Bible is our go-to guide for direction in life—and that you and other Christian friends will be here to cheer kids on as they seek to obey and follow Jesus.

Scripture Foundation

LUKE 5:1-11

Simon obeys when Jesus tells him to toss the fishing nets again.

JOHN 14:15

Jesus says those who love him keep his commandments.

JAMES 1:22-25

We don't just read or listen to God's Word—we also obey it.

THIS LESSON AT A GLANCE

SEQUENCE	EXPERIENCES	SUPPLIES
SET THE FOUNDATION (about 10 minutes)	<i>Do It Like This</i> Kids play a game to see whether they can obey directions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none
PRESENT THE BIBLE FOUNDATION (about 25 minutes)	<i>Fishing Frenzy</i> Kids act out portions of Luke 5:1-11 to consider what it meant for Simon to obey Jesus.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5-foot lengths of yarn or string (1 per child) • scissors • 2 adult helpers for every 10 kids
BUILD ON THE FOUNDATION (about 10 minutes)	<i>Mirror, Mirror</i> Kids make a reminder to place on their mirrors, helping them look for ways to obey God's Word.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • kid-friendly Bible (preferably NLT) • mirror • 6-inch length of yarn or string • scissors • fine-tipped markers • large sticky notes (2 per person)

SET THE FOUNDATION

Do It Like This

(about 10 minutes)

Welcome children, and invite them to stand so they can all see you. You may choose to stand in a circle or have children scattered about the room.

SAY:

Let's play a game where you try to do whatever I do. Here's the tricky part: I'll say one thing and I might do that same thing, but I might do something different from what I say. You have to do what I do, no matter what I say.

For example, I'll say, "Jump on one foot. Do it like this." And then I might not jump on one foot, but I might do a jumping jack instead. You must do what I do, no matter what I say. Ready?

Spin in a circle. Do it like this. (Spin in a circle.)

Pat your head. Do it like this. (Jump up and down.)

Clap your hands. Do it like this. (Scratch your nose.)

Continue playing, alternating between doing and saying the same motion and doing and saying different motions. Invite children to take turns being the leader to see if they can confuse each other with saying one thing and doing something different.

When everyone has run out of ideas for funny ways to "do it like this," have children sit in a circle.

ASK:

- **What made it easy or difficult to obey the leader in our game?**
- **When have you had a person tell you to do one thing with their words, but then do something different through their actions?**
- **What makes it easy or difficult for you to obey your parents or teachers?**

SAY:

In a game, it's fun to try following and obeying. But sometimes there are people who tell us to do one thing, but then they do something

different. For instance, if you hear a doctor say “Don’t smoke” but later you see that doctor in the parking lot smoking a cigarette, that can be confusing.

God’s Word, the Bible, doesn’t try to confuse us or trick us. The Bible gives us clear directions about what’s right and wrong. When we’re followers of Jesus, we obey God’s Word. Today we’re going to discover more about what it means to obey God’s Word. Let’s dig into that now.

PRESENT THE BIBLE FOUNDATION

Fishing Frenzy

(about 25 minutes)

Have kids sit in a circle, far enough apart that only their fingertips can touch. (If you have a group of more than 10, form two circles. You’ll need two helpers for each circle.)

SAY:

Let’s look at an example in the Bible of a person who obeyed even when the directions seemed strange. Give each child a 5-foot length of yarn.

Now, let’s imagine what happened. Have kids lie down in place on the floor on their backs, feet facing into the circle, and close their eyes.

Picture in your mind what I tell you based on Luke 5:1-11. No matter what I tell you to do, you must keep your eyes closed until I tell you to open them. Your yarn is your net, so hold an end in each hand. Ready? Cast your net above your head. Have kids release one end of their net and let it stay there.

Simon was a fisherman. Simon would go out in a boat, throw his huge net into the water, and wait. And wait. And wait. Remain silent for 30 long seconds. During this time, have your helpers discreetly gather the ends of all the yarn and hold onto them.

SAY:

When Simon pulled in his net, sometimes there were lots of fish. Have kids gently tug on their “nets” while you or a helper holds the ends to show the resistance a lot of fish would give. **Sometimes there were none.** Let go of the nets and have kids tug on their nets again. **No fish meant Simon and his family would go hungry.**

The night before, Simon had fished all night in the Sea of Galilee. Have kids put their arms down at their sides and gently roll their entire bodies from side to side as if lying in the bottom of a rocking boat. **He didn’t catch a thing.**

The next morning Jesus was nearby, preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Great crowds pushed against him as they tried to listen to God’s Word. Have kids cross their arms and squeeze. **That wasn’t going to work.**

Jesus decided to step into Simon’s boat and asked Simon to push it out into the water. Have kids pretend to push a heavy boat out to water. **Then Jesus sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there so more people could hear what he had to say.** Have kids gently roll their entire bodies from side to side as if in the boat.

When he’d finished speaking, Jesus said to Simon, “Now go out where it’s deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish.”

Simon was a little confused. “Master,” Simon said, “we worked hard all last night and didn’t catch a thing. But if you say so, I’ll let the nets down again.” Have kids cast their nets above their heads again, letting go of just one end. Again, have your helpers gather the ends of all the lengths of yarn and hold them tight.

And this time when Simon raised his nets, they were so full of fish they began to tear! Have kids tug gently at the yarn while you hold tight. **Simon shouted for help, and the other fishermen rowed out to give him a hand.**

When Simon realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus. Have kids clasp their hands. **His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed.**

Jesus replied to Simon, “Don’t be afraid! From now on you’ll be fishing for people!” And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus. Have kids throw down their nets, and then have kids open their eyes and sit up.

ASK:

- What surprised you about what happened to Simon?
- Explain whether you think it's difficult or easy to obey Jesus' commands.
- What can we learn about Jesus from this Bible passage?

SAY:

Jesus has amazing power to do miracles such as this. Simon may've been tired from spending the entire night trying to catch fish; he was probably frustrated that he hadn't caught anything. So when Jesus told him to throw out his nets again, Simon probably wondered why. He'd been trying to catch fish all night and hadn't caught a thing. But Simon obeyed, and Jesus surprised him with more fish than he could fit into two boats.

ASK:

- Tell about a time you obeyed and were glad that you did. (Be ready with an age-appropriate example from your life of a time you obeyed and had a good result; perhaps there was a time when a parent said "Stop!" right before a car zipped past and narrowly missed you. Then encourage children to share their stories.)
- Tell which rules or directions you obey even though you don't like to obey them.
- When you love the person giving you directions, explain whether it's easier or more difficult to obey.

SAY:

Obeying isn't always the easiest or most fun thing to do, but when we obey Jesus, we can trust that he has a reason behind what he's telling us to do. Following Jesus means we obey God's Word. In fact, obeying God's Word is a way we show our love for Jesus. In John 14:15 Jesus said, "If you love me, obey my commandments."

ASK:

- Describe whether you think love and obedience go together.
- Explain when love and obedience don't go together.

SAY:

When we love someone, it's easier to obey what that person tells us to do. Obeying Jesus' commands is a way we show our love for him. Let's see how we can do that.

BUILD ON THE FOUNDATION

Mirror, Mirror

(about 10 minutes)

SAY:

We're going to play another game that'll help us think about what it means to obey God's Word.

Have children sit in a circle. Show kids that you have a mirror and a length of yarn or string. Ask for a willing child to go first, and have the child close his or her eyes. Gently place the string somewhere on the child where it'll be difficult to see without a mirror, such as on top of the child's head or on one shoulder. Because the string is so lightweight, the child won't likely be able to feel where you put it. Once the string is in place, have the child open his or her eyes.

SAY:

Now, let's see if our friend can guess where the string is.

The child may guess correctly, but if not, let the child use the mirror to find the string and remove it. Then let the child choose another child to take his or her place. The first child gets to place the string and the new child will guess where it is.

Play several rounds. Kids will begin to see that they can place the string very gently and the person they put it on won't be able to detect it by feel—only by use of the mirror.

ASK:

- **Why are mirrors helpful?**
- **What can mirrors tell us about ourselves?**

SAY:

The Bible tells us about what we just experienced.

Read aloud James 1:22-25, or ask a willing child to read it from the Bible.

ASK:

- **How is this verse like our game?**
- **How is God's Word like a "mirror" in our lives?**

SAY:

When we read the Bible, it tells us what's right and what's wrong. If we follow what the Bible tells us, we're obeying. But if we listen to God's Word and then just ignore it, it's like looking in the mirror and seeing that our hair is wacky or there's lettuce in our teeth and then not doing anything about it.

Now let's make something that'll help us remember that as Jesus' followers, we obey God's Word.

Set out markers, and give each child two large sticky notes. Kids will only use the top sticky note; the one below it will serve to protect the sticky part until kids get home to post the note they create.

SAY:

Think about what we've learned today. What would help you remember that people who follow Jesus obey God's Word, the Bible? You might want to draw a picture of Simon or a fish to remind you of how Simon obeyed even when he wasn't sure what would happen. Or you could write yourself a note that says "Take the string off your head!" as a reminder to look in the mirror of God's Word to see what you need to do. It's up to you.

Write a note to yourself or draw a simple picture. Then when you get home you can stick this on your mirror and leave it there all week as a reminder that we obey God's Word.

Allow several minutes for kids to work. As they work, you can continue the discussion about obedience, asking kids what they're creating and how it'll help them remember to obey.

When children have completed their projects,

SAY:

Sometimes it might seem boring or difficult to obey God's Word. But the opposite is true: When we obey God's Word, we feel joy and peace knowing that we're doing what God wants us to. Let's close our time today with a prayer.

PRAY:

Dear God, help us to look at the Bible, your Word, every day and see what you want us to do. Help us show love for you by obeying your Word. In Jesus' name, amen.



LESSON 2

Jesus' Followers Accept God's Gifts Through Faith

Accepting God's gift of grace and love is the foundation of our relationship with Jesus and the starting point of our friendship with God. Until we recognize that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and accept this incredible gift, we won't fully know what it means to be followers of God. The same goes for your kids. Accepting Jesus' gift is based on abstract faith, and for literal-minded and practical kids, this can be tough to grasp.

This lesson will give kids hands-on experiences in trusting and accepting unwarranted gifts so they can better grasp what God's done for them. By taking away confusing language and examining God's gift to us through a simple object lesson, you'll show kids how easy it is to become Jesus' followers. You can help kids embark on their relationship with Jesus and look to build on that foundation for the rest of their lives.

Scripture Foundation

JOHN 17:7-8

Jesus prays for his disciples.

EPHESIANS 2:4-9

Paul explains that we're saved by grace because of God's love.

THIS LESSON AT A GLANCE

SEQUENCE	EXPERIENCES	SUPPLIES
SET THE FOUNDATION (about 10 minutes)	<i>Grateful Gifts</i> Kids choose to accept or reject a gift based on its outward appearance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 mini or fun-size candy bar per child • fancy wrapping paper • small bow • transparent tape • scissors • pieces of scrap paper, each large enough to wrap a small candy bar • basket large enough to hold all the wrapped candy bars
PRESENT THE BIBLE FOUNDATION (about 25 minutes)	<i>Gift Wrap</i> Kids explore what Jesus says about God's gifts to them as they respond to writing prompts and then gift wrap the message.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • several kid-friendly Bibles (preferably NLT) • 1 copy per child of the "Gift Box" handout (at the end of this lesson) • pens • 1 pair of scissors per child • transparent tape
BUILD ON THE FOUNDATION (about 10 minutes)	<i>Tie It With a Bow</i> Kids write on ribbon and then use the ribbon to decorate their gift boxes as they thank God for the gifts he gives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fine-tipped markers • curling ribbon, 3/8-inch size • 1 pair of scissors per child • transparent tape • reflective music and music player (optional)

Before the Lesson

SET THE FOUNDATION: GRATEFUL GIFTS—Wrap a mini or fun-size candy bar for each child. Neatly wrap one candy bar in fancy wrapping paper and add a bow. Wrap the rest of the candy bars individually inside scrunched-up pieces of scrap paper.

PRESENT THE BIBLE FOUNDATION: GIFT WRAP—Copy the "Gift Box" handout, enlarging it to 122 percent. Use card stock, if desired, or you can use regular paper.

BUILD ON THE FOUNDATION: TIE IT WITH A BOW—Cut the curling ribbon into 12-inch lengths. You'll need five lengths per child.

SET THE FOUNDATION

Grateful Gifts

(about 10 minutes)

Welcome children, and have them sit in a circle.



See page 8.

ASK:

- **Tell about the best gift you've ever received.**

SAY:

Today I have a gift for each of you. It may not be the best gift you've ever received, but I chose these gifts with you in mind. You can decide whether to take the gift or not; it's up to you.

Show kids the gift wrapped in fancy paper and then all the other gifts wrapped in scrap paper, and then place all the gifts in a basket.

ASK:

- **Explain which gift you'd prefer—and why.**

Offer a gift from the basket to each child one at a time, including the nicely wrapped gift. As you do, remind kids that you chose the gifts for them and you think the gifts are special. Allow each child the option to choose to accept or reject the gift, and then move on to the next child. After offering a gift to everyone, let the kids who chose to accept a gift unwrap theirs.

ASK:

- **Explain what it was like to accept your gift based on its outward appearance.**
- **Now that you know what the gift is, explain whether you wish you'd chosen differently.**

Let kids who didn't accept a gift take one, and then have everyone enjoy their treats together.

SAY:

When you couldn't tell what the gift was based on its wrapping, you had to trust me when I told you you'd like it. God has gifts for you, too.

And just as you had to trust me that my gifts were good, the Bible tells us to trust God and accept his gifts through faith. Let's learn more about what the Bible says about God's gifts for us.

PRESENT THE BIBLE FOUNDATION

Gift Wrap

(about 25 minutes)

SAY:

One place the Bible talks about the gifts God has for us is in a prayer from Jesus. Let's check it out.

Read aloud John 17:7-8.

While praying, Jesus told God that his disciples knew that everything Jesus had was a gift from God.

ASK:

- Explain what gifts you think Jesus is talking about in this passage.
- Why do you think it's important that Jesus told his disciples about his gifts from God?

Then read Ephesians 2:4-9 aloud to the kids.

ASK:

- Describe some gifts God has given you.
- According to this passage, why do you think Jesus gave these gifts to you?

SAY:

Let's think some more about what these verses mean.

Encourage kids to spread out around the room. Give each child scissors, a pen, and a copy of the "Gift Box" handout. Instruct kids to carefully cut out the gift box on the solid lines.

Give kids a solid faith foundation for a lifetime.



Do your kids
know what
it means
to follow
Jesus?



Do kids know
how their
faith in Jesus
changes their
lives?



How can you help
kids prepare their
hearts for the
journey through
life as Christians?

13 Most Important Bible Lessons for Kids About Living for Jesus is kid-sized theology that really cements the fundamentals of faith into kids' hearts and heads. If you're looking for an effective way to teach kids the foundational truths of the Christian faith, this is it!

This practical and engaging resource will draw children closer to Jesus and help them learn how to live for him. These 13 Bible-packed lessons equip upper-elementary kids to experience, grasp, and embrace the fundamentals of their faith. Each lesson uses Scripture, conversation, and hands-on activities to teach kids vital truths that include:

- Living in the hope and joy of Jesus
- Showing the glory and truth of Jesus to others
- Living in the world but belonging to Jesus
- Uniting in faith with other followers of Jesus
- Trusting in Jesus for eternity

Let *13 Most Important Bible Lessons for Kids About Living for Jesus* be the launchpad to send the kids in your ministry into a rewarding and exciting journey of faith.

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