



FAITHWEAVER

Weaving faith into today's families **NOW**[®]



**SPRING
SUNDAY SCHOOL**

**MIDDLE SCHOOL
LEADER GUIDE**

Group

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ONE-TIME ACTIVATION CODE:

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Real. Bold. Love.

Group resources really work!

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



Relational

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.

Group

FaithWeaver NOW® Bible Curriculum, Middle School Bible Studies, Spring

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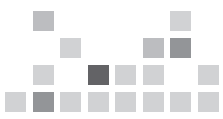
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Contents

Introduction	4
The Studies	
Study 1: Jesus Teaches About Commitment—Mark 8:31-38	5
Study 2: Jesus Clears Merchants From the Temple—John 2:13-22	15
Study 3: Jesus Explains Why God Sent Him—John 3:12-21	25
Study 4: Jesus Notices a Widow’s Giving—Mark 12:41-44	33
* Study 5: People Rejoice as Jesus Enters Jerusalem—Mark 11:1-11	41
* Study 6: Jesus Is Alive!—Mark 16:1-8	49
Study 7: Jesus Appears to His Disciples—John 20:19-31	59
Study 8: Paul Teaches About Spiritual Gifts—1 Corinthians 12:4-27	69
Study 9: Peter Tells the Sanhedrin About Jesus—Acts 4:5-14	77
Study 10: Philip Tells the Ethiopian About Jesus—Acts 8:26-40	87
Study 11: Peter Visits Cornelius—Acts 10:1-44	97
Study 12: Barnabas Encourages Christians in Antioch—Acts 11:19-26	107
Study 13: Jesus Sends Power From God—Acts 2:1-21	117

* We recommend starting the quarter so that Studies 5 and 6 align with the dates of Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. Visit the Digital Download Center for a suggested schedule.



The future of Sunday school + family ministry is NOW.



No doubt about it, the world is changing. Families used to go to church every week. Kids used to have longer attention spans. Teachers used to have more time to prepare. And didn't our budgets used to be bigger?

Even the Sunday school Bible curriculum you used just a couple of years ago is already out of date. But there's one thing that's never changed: the need to grow families closer to Jesus.

That's why we created FaithWeaver NOW®, and it's different from anything you've ever seen before!

It combines Sunday school with family ministry. ■■■■

Sure, you've seen Sunday school aimed at families. But FaithWeaver NOW actually hits the target by having everyone in the family learning about the same Scripture each week.

It's simpler and easier. ■■■■

Sometimes change is a wonderful thing. Gone are the days when you needed to spend hours preparing your lessons and hunting for supplies. FaithWeaver NOW will have you and your team ready to go in a snap.

It's made for NOW. ■■■■

Life is complicated and full of distractions. FaithWeaver NOW keeps faith on track through even the most frenzied lifestyles.

What makes FaithWeaver NOW the perfect curriculum for TODAY's church?

- Families learn the same Bible passage in age-appropriate ways.
- Kids don't just hear the Word. They experience it.
- Simple and easy lessons fit even the busiest lives.
- Kids see God in their everyday world.
- The Scope & Sequence goes through the Bible every three years.
- You can customize it however you like, with both print and digital versions.

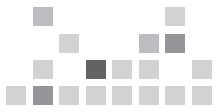


Create a vibrant family ministry that's new...that's wow...that's NOW. FaithWeaver NOW gives you a fresh strategy for being more successful than ever in bringing families closer to Jesus.

Thom Schultz Joani Schultz

Thom and Joani Schultz
Chairman and Chief Creative Officer
Group Publishing, Inc.





Jesus Teaches About Commitment

Mark 8:31-38

Middle schoolers are often idealistic and may be swayed into jumping into a cause or onto a bandwagon without giving sufficient thought to the cost or outcome. That's why it's sometimes easy for them to make highly emotional commitments to Christ during rallies, at camp, and on retreats. This Bible passage will be sobering to many young believers because it's not about all the benefits of coming to their Savior but the cost of following their Lord. Discipleship requires both. Be sensitive to how this passage is being received by your students, and be prepared to answer questions.



► **Bible Point**
Commit to follow Jesus.

Key Verse
"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile" (Romans 1:16).

Weaving Faith Into Life
Students will practice following Jesus.

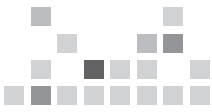
STUDY	WHAT STUDENTS DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
1 Faith Connection	Backstage Tour Passes <i>(about 15 min.)</i> Create passes to use on any tour they choose, and then discuss why those tours are worthwhile.	scissors, 20-inch length of yarn per student, index cards, markers, hole punch	
	Media Connection (Option) <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Watch a scene from <i>Shrek</i> , and discuss what it means to follow.	video player, movie <i>Shrek</i>	Cue <i>Shrek</i> to 00:35:10, when Shrek lies on the ground after a crash landing.
2 Bible Exploration	Give Up? <i>(about 15 min.)</i> Read the Bible narrative, and consider the costs of following Jesus.	Bibles, Bible Trek, pens, 6 pieces of individually wrapped candy per student	Remove the Study 1 pages from each Bible Trek student book.

Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.



STUDY	WHAT STUDENTS DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
3 Weaving Faith Into Life	Choose Your Own Adventure <i>(about 20 min.)</i> Adventure 1: Join Together “Follow” each other with string, and offer encouragement on how to follow Jesus. Adventure 2: Encouraging Words Create analogies to read when following Jesus feels difficult.	Bible Trek, string or yarn, scissors Bible Trek, paper, pens	Set out the supplies for each adventure at different stations.
	I’m Not Ashamed <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Hear the Key Verse, and write alternate endings.	Bibles, paper, pens	
4 Lasting Impressions	Daily Challenges <i>(about 5 min.)</i> Choose a Daily Challenge to apply God’s Word.	Bible Trek, pens	
	Weaving Faith at Home <i>(about 2 min.)</i> Talk about how to share what they learned with their families.	Bible Trek	Remove the letter to parents from the back of each Bible Trek student book.

Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.



Jesus Teaches About Commitment

Mark 8:31-38

BIBLE BACKGROUND
FOR LEADERS

Jesus Rebuked Peter

The disciples were likely counting on a great earthly kingdom in which Jesus would lead the Jews in overthrowing the Romans and would place his disciples in important positions. Jesus' statements didn't go along with those expectations! Peter wanted Jesus to change his mind and forget all this talk about dying.

Peter's thinking was based on wrong assumptions because he saw things from a purely human point of view. Here we see a clear statement about what it means to follow Jesus. Too often we think of God as a powerful being who can help us advance our own agendas. Instead, truly following Jesus means listening to what he says, discovering his will for our lives, and then obediently following, no matter how attractive or repulsive that may seem to us at the time.

Jesus Challenged the Crowd

A crowd had apparently gathered to hear Jesus, and he wanted to clarify his meaning. This is not a description of what some call "easy believism." Instead, Jesus points out how denying oneself means turning away from selfish, self-protective attitudes and seeking the true humility and faith God wants to see in us.

What does it mean to take up your cross? For Jesus' disciples to each take up his own cross didn't mean just to endure suffering. It meant to accept fully the suffering they would face because of their faith in Christ. Jesus wanted his disciples to know that their faith came with a cost.

Stand Firm in Faith

As he spoke of what it means to follow him, Jesus knew that many in the crowd around him wouldn't

be followers he would recognize as his own when he returns. Our generation is much like that of Jesus' day. People who claim to be religious—or even Christian—often shy away from bold witnessing for Jesus. It's easy to say you believe in God, but it's much more difficult to confess you're a Jesus-following Christian.

The Jesus Connection

Humans are willing to sacrifice a lot for the sake of those they love. Your relationship with Jesus *will* require sacrifice, risk, and loyal commitment—but it's all worth it!

How can you take up your cross? Try living out the "Joy" acronym: Pray about one specific way you'll put *Jesus* first (such as spending time with him first thing each day), put *others* second (such as washing a friend's car), and put *yourself* last (such as giving up time watching TV in order to help someone else). You can write your prayer here.





Backstage Tour Passes Supplies

scissors
20-inch length of yarn
per student
index cards
markers
hole punch

Media Connection Supplies

video player
movie *Shrek*

Media Connection Easy Prep

Cue *Shrek* to the scene
00:35:10, when *Shrek*
lies on the ground after
a crash landing.

1

FAITH CONNECTION

Backstage Tour Passes

What You'll Do

Welcome students, and distribute yarn, index cards, and markers. Set out a hole punch to share.

Say: **You're each about to create a backstage tour pass to join the tour of your choice. It can be any tour—the current international tour of your favorite band, a tour of major sporting arenas with your favorite sports team or professional golfer, even a tour with the presidential press pool. Anybody you'd want to follow around. The sky's the limit, but you have only five minutes.**

After five minutes, have students form small groups of four in order to share their backstage tour passes and tell about them, and then gather everyone back together.

Talk With Students

Lead students in this discussion.

Ask:

- **Why did you choose to join that particular tour?**
- **Who would you hope to meet on your tour? Why?**
- **Best case scenario, what would it be like to follow that person or people around? Describe it in a few words.**
- **What might you have to give up in order to follow that person or people? Why would it be worthwhile?**

Say: **We've got quite a selection of backstage tour passes, and you obviously think it's very worthwhile to follow along on these tours and have access to the tour stars. There was a time several thousand years ago when hundreds of people decided to join Jesus' teaching tour. But they hadn't considered the cost. They hadn't realized what it means to ► COMMIT TO FOLLOW JESUS.**

Media Connection (Option)

■ **Tip** In general, federal copyright laws do not allow you to use videos or DVDs (even ones you own) for any purpose other than home viewing. Your church can obtain a license from Christian Video Licensing International for a small fee. Just visit cvli.com or call 1-888-771-2854 for more information. Many movie clips are available at youtube.com.



What You'll Do

Instead of the “Backstage Tour Passes” activity, have students watch a clip from the movie *Shrek* that illustrates what it means to follow.

First, set up the film clip. Say: **Shrek is an ogre who has been recruited to rescue a princess who is being guarded by a dragon. The princess has a very clear and romantic idea of how her rescue should go—and Shrek as her rescuer doesn’t fit the bill. And he’s not too interested in doing things according to her plan, either.**

Start the clip at 00:35:10, when Shrek is shaking himself off after crash landing. In this clip, Shrek attempts to rescue Princess Fiona, but she protests his methods. Stop the clip at 00:37:00, when the princess says, “But this isn’t right!” (Make sure to stop the movie immediately because there is a swear word coming up!)

Talk With Students

Lead students in this discussion.

Ask:

- What did the princess expect her rescue to be like? In what way did it not meet her expectations?
- Explain whether you think the princess should’ve followed or not followed her rescuer.
- What costs would there be for the princess to follow the rescuer? to not follow?
- How do you decide whether something is worth following?

Say: **There was a time several thousand years ago when hundreds of people decided to follow Jesus. But they hadn’t considered the cost, and a lot of their expectations probably weren’t met. They hadn’t realized what it means to ► COMMIT TO FOLLOW JESUS.**

BIBLE EXPLORATION

Give Up?

What You'll Do

Make sure everyone has a Bible, and have students open to Mark 8:31-38. Give students each six pieces of wrapped candy, and tell them not to open them yet. Say: **We’re going to look at some costs Jesus said were involved in following him. And we’ll decide whether we’re willing to make these commitments. As we discuss each commitment, you’ll decide whether you’re in or out. If you’re willing to make that commitment, you’ll have to give up a piece of candy.**

Begin by reading aloud Mark 8:31-32. Say: **The first cost involved in following Jesus**



Give Up? Supplies

- Bibles
- Bible Trek pens
- 6 pieces of individually wrapped candy per student

Give Up? Easy Prep

Remove the Study 1 pages from each Bible Trek student book.



is believing that he died and miraculously came back to life. It's a belief that might not always make you popular. What do you think are some pros and cons of believing this about Jesus? Allow time for students to share pros and cons, and then have everyone who's willing to believe Jesus died and came back to life set aside a piece of candy to show their sacrifice. Don't try to coerce anyone into giving up candy, but rather let this be a reflection of their decision on each of the following discussion points.

Next read aloud Mark 8:33. Say: **Jesus also said that following him means putting God's concerns above our own. What do you think about that? Share some pros and cons.** Allow time for students to discuss, and then have everyone who's willing to put God's concerns first set aside another piece of candy.

Read aloud Mark 8:34. Say: **Jesus also said that we need to deny ourselves if we're going to follow him. What does that mean? What are the pros and cons?** Allow time for discussion and for willing students to set aside another piece of candy.

Read aloud Mark 8:35. Say: **Following Jesus also means being willing to die for him. What are the pros and cons of that? Are you really willing to die for Jesus?** Allow time for discussion and for willing students to set aside another piece of candy.

Read aloud Mark 8:36-37. Say: **If we don't follow Jesus, we could potentially "gain the whole world." That means following him might involve sacrificing some of the opportunity for power and wealth. What are the pros and cons of that?** Allow time for discussion and for willing students to set aside another piece of candy.

Finish up by reading aloud Mark 8:38. Say: **Finally, following Jesus means not showing shame in believing in him. That might cost you some popularity! What else could it cost? What are the pros and cons of boldly believing in Jesus?** Allow time for discussion and for willing students to set aside another piece of candy.

Say: **Well, you've considered the costs and you've made your decision. You might think that the candy you set aside to give up for Jesus is something I'm going to take. But the fact is, following Jesus gives us far more than we could ever hang on to by not following him. He's worth the cost! You actually get to keep any candy you set aside to show that the rewards for following Jesus outweigh the cost.**

Talk With Students ■■■■

Lead students in this discussion.

Ask:

- Considering everything we've discussed about pros and cons, is following Jesus worth it? Why or why not?
- What have you personally sacrificed to follow Jesus?

Say: **Most people thought the Messiah would show up and raise an army to drive Roman soldiers out of Israel. Then the Messiah would be like a king and run the country. Peter thought Jesus was the Messiah, but he was probably thinking Jesus would be the king in Jerusalem. Peter wasn't expecting Jesus to suffer and die, so when Jesus predicted it, Peter jumped in to set him straight.**





But Jesus expected his followers to follow, even if he led them to places they weren't planning to go. And then he talked about what following him really looks like. It might not sound pleasant to give up all those things, but when we ► **COMMIT TO FOLLOW JESUS**, we'll find that ultimately the costs pale in comparison with the rewards. Let's take some time now to reflect more on that.

Have students find the "Think It Over" section on their Bible Trek pages and take a couple of minutes to answer the questions on their own.



3 WEAVING FAITH INTO LIFE

Choose Your Own Adventure

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Say: **In our adventures today, we have two activities you can choose from. Adventure 1 uses movement, and Adventure 2 uses analogies. The directions are on your Bible Trek papers. Look them over and decide which activity you want to do. You can work with the others who choose the same activity.** Allow time for students to decide which adventure they want to do. Summaries of each adventure follow.

ADVENTURE 1—MOVEMENT: JOIN TOGETHER

In this adventure, students will symbolically unite and encourage each other to follow Jesus.

ADVENTURE 2—ANALOGIES: ENCOURAGING WORDS

In this adventure, students will create analogies that will help them—and others—when following Jesus feels difficult.

Say: **After you finish your adventure, you'll present some of what you experienced, so keep that in mind. When everyone has finished, we'll talk about what we've learned. You have 12 minutes to complete your adventures.** While students are working, move between the stations, and offer assistance as needed. Let groups know when they have about five minutes left so they can wrap up their work.

After 12 minutes, have your groups take turns presenting what they experienced.

Talk With Students ■■■■

Lead students in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What insight did you gain into what it's like to follow Jesus?**
- **Given what you've discovered, what's one change you need to make to follow Jesus more closely?**

Choose Your Own Adventure Supplies

- Bible Trek
- Adventure 1**
- string or yarn
- scissors
- Adventure 2**
- paper
- pens

Choose Your Own Adventure Easy Prep

Set out the supplies for each adventure at different stations.





I'm Not Ashamed Supplies

Bibles
paper
pens

Say: **When Jesus had some not-so-good news about his own fate, Peter protested. That wasn't what he expected following Jesus to be like! When we ► COMMIT TO FOLLOW JESUS, we'll experience some ups and downs. But we know it will always be worthwhile!**

I'm Not Ashamed

What You'll Do

Say: **One of the things Jesus told Peter and the other disciples was that they needed to not be ashamed of their relationship with him. Our Key Verse has a similar message. Let's read it together.** Have a willing student read aloud Romans 1:16 as others follow along: "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."

Distribute paper and pens. Say: **Paul, who wrote the book of Romans, gave one reason why he wasn't ashamed of his faith. What about you? Why would you say you're not ashamed? On your paper, write the first part of our Key Verse: "I am not ashamed of the gospel..." Then finish it with your own thoughts.**

Allow a few minutes for students to write, and then give willing students a chance to share.

Talk With Students

Lead students in this discussion.

Ask:

- **How did thinking about the end of your "not ashamed" sentence make you think differently about following Jesus?**
- **What can you do this week to show that you're not ashamed of following Jesus?**

Say: **When we ask Jesus to forgive us and we ► COMMIT TO FOLLOW JESUS, he becomes our Savior. He saves us from sin. But there's a second part to the deal: He then becomes our Lord. He's in charge. That's the message that was coming into focus for the disciples gathered around Jesus. Following him was tough and costly. And Jesus didn't explain why he was taking them into such dangerous territory. The only thing Jesus wanted to know was, "Will you follow me? No matter what?" Those are some great questions for us to consider. Jesus doesn't want us to have faith only in the good times. He wants us to commit to following him no matter what the cost.**

4 LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Daily Challenges

What You'll Do

Direct students to the Daily Challenges in their Bible Trek pages, and have them choose one to do this week. They can choose one or more of these three options:

- Follow Jesus by taking a risk to stand up for your faith.
- Pray about any big decisions this week and journal about them, committing to follow Jesus in whatever decision you make.
- Find a partner, commit to a way to follow Jesus, and call or text each other every day to share how it's going.

Talk With Students

Lead students in this discussion.

Ask:

- What's a practical way you're going to do your Daily Challenge? Include a time, a place, and other ideas.

Say: **When all was said and done, Peter and most of the other disciples took the plunge. They followed Jesus even though it did ultimately lead to most of their deaths. Let's ► COMMIT TO FOLLOW JESUS no matter what it costs by following through with our Daily Challenges this week.**

Weaving Faith at Home

Hand out the letter to parents from the Bible Trek student books, one to each student. Also encourage students to talk with their parents about the Daily Challenges they chose and what they learned about following Jesus. Students can also do the activities on the "Bringing It Home" section of their Bible Trek pages with their families.

Talk to your Director about emailing the FREE FamilyConnect to all your church's families! Available at group.com/digital.

End the study by asking several willing students to pray for the group—that God would show all of you what it's like to truly follow Jesus and that he would help you follow Jesus despite the cost.



Daily Challenges Supplies

Bible Trek pens

Weaving Faith at Home Supplies

Bible Trek

Weaving Faith at Home Easy Prep

Remove the letter to parents from the back of each Bible Trek student book.

FaithWeaver NOW is for today's Sunday school teachers. It's developed by real Sunday school teachers, examined by real ministry leaders, and tested and approved by thousands of churches so you get great lessons that work with today's families.

This quarter you'll explore these Bible passages:

	BIBLE CONTENT/SCRIPTURE	KEY VERSE	BIBLE POINT
WEEK 1	Jesus Teaches About Commitment (Mark 8:31-38)	"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile" (Romans 1:16).	Commit to follow Jesus.
WEEK 2	Jesus Clears Merchants From the Temple (John 2:13-22)	"Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker" (Psalm 95:6).	God wants sincere worship.
WEEK 3	Jesus Explains Why God Sent Him (John 3:12-21)	"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).	Jesus came to save us.
WEEK 4	Jesus Notices a Widow's Giving (Mark 12:41-44)	"Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).	Give cheerfully to God.
*WEEK 5	People Rejoice as Jesus Enters Jerusalem (Mark 11:1-11)	"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10-11).	Jesus is our king.
*WEEK 6	Jesus Is Alive! (Mark 16:1-8)	"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies'" (John 11:25).	Jesus is alive.
WEEK 7	Jesus Appears to His Disciples (John 20:19-31)	"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1).	Believe in Jesus.
WEEK 8	Paul Teaches About Spiritual Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-27)	"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10).	God gives us gifts to serve him.
WEEK 9	Peter Tells the Sanhedrin About Jesus (Acts 4:5-14)	"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).	Trusting God makes us brave.
WEEK 10	Philip Tells the Ethiopian About Jesus (Acts 8:26-40)	"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6).	Follow where God leads.
WEEK 11	Peter Visits Cornelius (Acts 10:1-44)	"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20).	Tell everyone about Jesus.
WEEK 12	Barnabas Encourages Christians in Antioch (Acts 11:19-26)	"But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness" (Hebrews 3:13).	Encourage each other to believe in Jesus.
WEEK 13	Jesus Sends Power From God (Acts 2:1-21)	"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26).	God gives us the Holy Spirit.

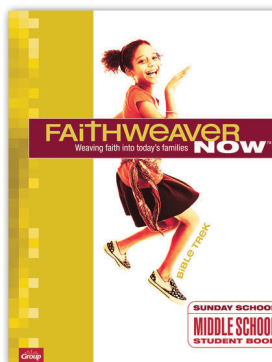
* We recommend starting the quarter so that Lessons 5 and 6 align with the dates of Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. Visit the Digital Download Center for a suggested schedule.

PLUS...

Access all these **FREE FaithWeaver NOW digital resources at group.com/digital:**

- **FREE digital copies of Leader Guides** in Word and PDF format so you can easily customize any lesson to your ministry. Sharing lessons with busy volunteers couldn't be easier! *See inside for activation code.*
- **A FREE downloadable Director Manual** to help you structure your program for maximum effectiveness.
- **FREE weekly FamilyConnect pages** you can print out or email to parents to help families grow together in faith throughout the week.

Don't forget...



***Get a colorful, age-appropriate student book for every student! Each week, you'll get...**

- Engaging activities that bring the Bible to life for every student
- Easy faith conversation-starters for students to take home
- Meaningful at-home activities for families to dig into Scripture

***You'll need one per student. Sold separately.**



THIS IS A SAMPLE
The number of pages is limited.

Purchase the item for the complete version.

