



Date: _____

Series: God is Our Rescuer
Fall Year 2, Lesson 20

Pick Up Your Cross and Follow Jesus

Primary Scripture: Luke 9:23-27

Key Verse: Luke 9:23, “He said to all of them, ‘Those who want to come with me must say no to the things they want, pick up their crosses every day, and follow me.’”

How does this address a need in our kids' lives?

A kid's world is filled with obedience issues. They have instructions from both parents and teachers. Obeying is sometimes done grudgingly. It hurts to give up what we want to do. Jesus tells us that when we follow him we will experience pain in giving up what we want to do. We will deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow him. As kids receive the gift of Jesus' forgiveness and presence in their lives, they need the challenge of giving up themselves and following him.

How does Jesus fill this need?

Jesus for us: Jesus was perfectly obedient to the Father in giving his life for us on the cross. Jesus is alive and victorious over our sins so he might give us a victory in denying ourselves and following him.

Jesus in us: Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus helps us to want and to do his will. Therefore, Jesus helps us carry the cross.

Jesus through us: When we are obedient to the Father, we will find ourselves to be of greater service to the world. Jesus will work through us to reach others.

Stamp of Excellence:

Remind the kids what excellent worship looks like. We are in God's presence to honor him. Put on your best manners. This might include wearing your nametag, participating eagerly at all times, listening when the leader is talking, raising your hand to speak, not distracting others, playing the learning game with cooperation, singing enthusiastically, and praying reverently. Offer rewards or positive reinforcement to those who worship with excellence.



Worship

Invocation:

Let kids bring forward the worship symbols such as cross, candles, Bible, and offering plate. Invite God's presence and call by name Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Attention Grabber:

Capture the children's attention and help them focus on the worship theme for the day.

Today we will be talking about taking up our cross and following Jesus. Use a large cross for a visual aid. This might be made out of 2 x 4's. It would be helpful for the cross to be mobile to be carried on someone's back. Set it upright and be sure it is stable, to use as a centerpiece for worship throughout the service.

In today's Bible reading, Jesus said: "Those who want to come with me must say no to the things they want, pick up their crosses everyday, and follow me." If we were following him today, where would Jesus take us?

Jesus would first take us right to God, the Father. Even though Jesus is God, while on earth he would pray and think about God, the Father, and tell him how wonderful he is. He would do whatever God, the Father, wanted him to do.

That is what we are doing today in worship. If we follow Jesus and take our cross with us, he will lead us right here so we can worship God. We can tell him how wonderful he is and thank him for all of his gifts. Today, we will learn again that God's best gift ever was giving his own Son, Jesus. Jesus took up his cross to pay for all of our sins, so we may be together with God.

Songs of Worship:

Choose two or three songs. Briefly introduce songs so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God!

Your choice of music.

The Power of the Cross:

Jesus has given his life for us that we might have forgiveness and power to live for him.

This event is both the Learning Game and the Power of the Cross experience for today.

Use several flat-head screwdrivers. To the handle of each screwdriver, attach a paper towel with a cross boldly showing on it. The very tip of each screwdriver will be dipped into baby oil. A child will then try to grab the very tip of the screwdriver and hang onto it, without letting it squeeze out of his hands. It can't be done – the greater the pressure exerted to try to keep the screwdriver from slipping, the greater the pressure for the screwdriver to slip away.

Ask for a big, strong volunteer to come forward.

Are you strong enough to hold up this screwdriver? He'll probably say yes. **What if we dip just the tip of it in this oil? Will you still be able to hold onto it?**

He'll probably still say yes. Have fun with this. Have kids vote on whether or not they think the volunteer will be able to hold the screwdriver up. Then dip it in the oil and let him try.

After he fails, see if other kids want to give it a try. Use the other screwdrivers outfitted with paper towel crosses so more than one participant can try at a time. For a little extra fun, ask the kids if they think you can do it. After all have failed, say:

Jesus calls us to carry our cross. We carry our cross when we trust in Jesus as our Savior and live our lives for him. But sometimes we let the cross drop. We let it drop when we choose to do things our way instead of his way. This oily stuff is like the sin in our lives – it's slippery; it keeps us from carrying our cross and following Jesus.

So how do we get rid of the yucky, slippery, oily sin in our lives?

Remove the paper towel from the handle of a screwdriver and use it to clean the tip, and then use the paper towel to also clean the fingertips of one or more volunteers as you say:

We get rid of the sin in our lives by confessing it to God and asking him to forgive us. When we confess our sin and ask God for forgiveness, the cross of Jesus wipes that sin away and gives us another chance to follow Jesus.

Reattach the paper towel to the screwdriver's handle. Then have a volunteer try to hold it. This time they should have no trouble hanging on. Say:

Now that the oily slimy sin is gone, you're following Jesus. So does this mean you'll never sin again? Is sin completely gone from your life?

Dip the screwdriver back into the oil. Have someone try to grip it again.

No. Sin is all around us. We're going to "blow it" and let God down.

Wipe the blade and the volunteer's fingers one more time and have him/her hold the screwdriver as you say:

But if we live in a right relationship with Jesus, every time we sin he'll take our sin away and help us start clean again. How do we live in a right relationship with Jesus? By trusting him to be our Savior and that he will take us to Heaven someday.

With all the volunteers still up front, say a prayer thanking God for his grace and forgiveness and for taking away our slimy, oily, nasty sin. You may want to invite kids to confess specific sins that have kept them from carrying their cross the way they should. Be sure to end by thanking God for his wonderful forgiveness and new beginning in Jesus!

Song of Response:

Choose a song to help the children turn to Jesus. Or, you may want to help them celebrate what God has done by singing a song of praise.

Offering:

Teach the importance of giving and talk about the mission activities they are supporting.

Invite kids to bring their offerings and place them at the foot of the cross as a way of thanking God for his wonderful kindness and mercy. As they do, remind them of what your current mission project is. Then ask God to bless their offerings to reach the goals you've set for the project.



The Word

Bible Reading:

Help children pay attention by giving them a word or concept to listen for as you read. Consider letting a child read who could do so with excellence.

Read Luke 9:23-27. Open a Bible to visually and physically reinforce where these words come from. With the scripture, apply this teaching:

Consider Jesus who carried his cross. It was an instrument of torture. He carried it from the city of Jerusalem through the streets to the Mount of Calvary. There the cross was placed into the ground so that he would be hung on it. Why did he do that? Couldn't he have stopped it? Sure, he could have stopped it because he was powerful, and he was God's Son.

He chose not to stop because he was obeying his Father. God, our Heavenly Father, sent his Son, Jesus, into the world to take all the punishment of our sin on himself when he died on the cross. Jesus paid for us to go to Heaven with his death on the cross. Jesus not only loved us enough to do this, he loved his Father. He wanted to obey his Father.

The cross did not slip off of Jesus' back. The cross went from him carrying it, to him hanging on it. What held him there? It was nails. They were small nails, but they were enough to hold him there. Because he was obeying the Father, he let himself be held by those nails. He denied himself to do what God wanted.

Pound 16 penny nails into the cross where Jesus' hands and feet would have been. Then say:

These nails are a picture of "obedience moments" we all face. God challenges us to obey him instead of doing what we want. These obedience moments, though they may seem small, are the ways we truly show our obedience and deny ourselves. Sometimes it is not what we want, and it might even hurt.

Ask for a volunteer to come forward to carry the cross.

What did Jesus say in today's Bible reading? That's right, whoever wants to come after Jesus must take up his cross and follow him. This means we trust Jesus as our Savior, and we want to be obedient to God just like he was. It means that we will deny ourselves. We will say no to the things we want but God does not want us to do or have. Jesus says that, though it might seem like we lose our life, we will actually save it.

Help put the cross on the volunteer's back so he can carry it. Point out that the cross might start to fall off. It is hard to hang onto. Then point to the nails the child can hold onto to help carry the cross.

Boys and girls, do you think these nails would have hurt Jesus? (Yes.) But Jesus said to God, "If you want me to do this, *even if it is painful*, I will." He was obedient, even though it hurt.

Did you know that there might be small ways in your life that God wants you to obey as well; even if when you obey those things it might be painful? For example, does it ever seem painful not to be mean back to someone at school who is mean to you? What about if a brother or sister is mean to you? Is it painful to try to understand that person and forgive him?

When these things happen they are "obedience moments." They might seem like small things, but they make a big difference. These small things may sometimes be painful because we are saying no to our own selfishness and yes to God's way. It is just as if God was handing us a nail, but what gets nailed to the cross is our own selfishness, or the things we would want to do that are not pleasing to God.

Let's find out what some of your obedience moments are. These are moments when you have to make a choice between obeying what God would want you to do, and doing what you would want to do yourself without listening to him.

I want some volunteers to come forward. Every person who comes up and shares one example of an obedience moment in his life will be given a piece of licorice to remind him of the nail that connects him to his own cross. Just like the licorice tastes good, we will find that the obedience moments when we do what God wants always end up for our best.

Help kids come up with examples in their lives of the choices they make that may seem little but make a big difference because they choose to follow God's way. Then give a licorice piece to everyone who hasn't received one yet, saying:

If you love Jesus, raise your hand. When you love Jesus, you can know there WILL be obedience moments in your lives – times when you have the option of obeying God or doing what you want. This piece of licorice reminds us that when we choose God’s way, we will always be blessed, and often others will be blessed as well.

Application:

Show the video, *The Legend of the Three Trees* by Tommy Nelson, 2001 or read the story in book form.

The “three trees” story is an ideal example of how God uses us wonderfully if we are obedient to him. Each tree had a dream for itself that never came true. But what happened to each one was better than its original dream. When we take up our cross, we may not get to do everything we thought we wanted, but what we will get to do will be far better than what we wanted.

When the video is finished, ask these questions:

What did the three trees learn about their own dreams? (*That God had something better in mind for each of them.*)

Did the trees have a choice about what they would be or do? (*No.*)

Do you have a choice about what you will be or do? (*Yes.*)

That’s right, God gives you the choice to obey him or do what you want. What do we call those moments? (*Obedience moments.*) **And what happens when we obey him instead of doing what we want?** **That’s right, we’ll be blessed.**



Witness

Witness and Tell:

Give children opportunities to share how God is working in their lives. It is best to use a microphone to ask children interview questions around the theme for the day.

Invite kids to share times when they obeyed God, even when it was hard or painful. If possible, have them identify what blessing came to them or someone else because they were obedient.

Prayer:

Let the kids pray out loud. If you are using a microphone, invite children to form a prayer line and speak their thanksgivings or requests. If you have portable microphones, you can roam the audience. Kids can also go to prayer stations set up for specific types of prayer.

Invite the kids to ask for God's help to take up their cross when they have “obedience moments” in their lives. Have them be specific.

Blessing:

Speak a blessing prayer over the children. Personalize this to your setting. Use a special scripture verse or blessing around the theme of the day.

Song of Sending:

Choose one song. Briefly introduce songs so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God.

Safety and Security: Safety and security procedures are important for each church to carefully define and implement according to their unique needs. The security, safety, illness and accident procedures described in this curriculum are provided for example purposes only and may not be appropriate, applicable or adequate for every situation. Each church is responsible for determining whether any security, safety, illness and accident procedures contained in the curriculum are appropriate, applicable or adequate for its unique situation. The activities described in this curriculum require adult supervision and may not be suitable for each child and each situation. Each church is responsible for ensuring that adequate adult supervision is provided for all activities and for determining whether an activity is appropriate for each child and each situation. Kids Kount Publishing disclaims all liability for the implementation of any procedures or the performance of any activities described in this curriculum.

Supplies:

Attention Grabber:

- a large cross – made out of 2 x 4's. It would be helpful for the cross to be mobile to be carried on someone's back. Mount it to be stable, as it will be a centerpiece for worship throughout the service.

Power of the Cross:

- several large flat-head screwdrivers, each with a paper towel attached to the handle. On each paper towel is a bold cross. The paper towel will be removed then reattached during the experience.
- baby oil or oil treatment
- newspaper on the floor
- hand wipes or additional paper towels

Bible Reading:

- hammer
- 16 penny nails
- small, bite-size pieces of licorice

Application:

- video, *"The Legend of the Three Trees,"* narrated by Hal Holbrook, Tommy Nelson, a division of Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2001 Nashville, TN.