



FOLLOWING JESUS



SAMPLER

A Scripture Union Curriculum 

Following Jesus

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PrimeTime®*Plus* is a faith-based program designed for middle school aged children. The program provides a safe, welcoming environment for children during the critical after-school hours, and offers children an opportunity to know and follow the Lord Jesus.

Scripture Union is an interdenominational mission organization whose vision is to see people of all ages coming to faith in Christ, committed to God and His Word, and living as salt and light.

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Following Jesus

CURRICULUM

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Purpose

PrimeTime®*Plus* provides a safe and supervised environment for young people between the ages of 12 and 14. In our program, these tweens and early teens develop positive relationships with program leaders and volunteers, learn about God, and develop a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. The PrimeTime®*Plus* program is a tool for evangelism, reaching out to young people who may not regularly attend church in order to introduce them to a life of Christian discipleship.

Yearly Schedule

PrimeTime®*Plus* offers 40 weeks of programming, corresponding to a typical school-year schedule. The curriculum includes 36 regular weekly sessions and four additional sessions for Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentine's Day, and Easter.

The curriculum is designed for a once-a-week program, but is fully adaptable to fit your unique circumstances and needs. If you have an after-school program that meets two or more days a week, for example, you may wish to designate one of those days for learning about God and His Word through the regular PrimeTime®*Plus* lesson. Then, the extension activities offered at the end of each weekly lesson may be used, adapted, and expanded for use on the other meeting days.

Each session in the curriculum builds on earlier sessions, so you will want to use the lessons in order as much as possible. If young people are

unable to participate every week, though, they still will be able to understand and benefit from the content presented when they are able to attend. Also, you will want to welcome new young people into the program at any time during the year. New participants may need time to grow comfortable with aspects of your program, such as singing, prayer, and Bible reading. Pairing up new participants with a program volunteer or another young person who is more experienced with the program may help them feel more comfortable as they acclimate to the program and its curriculum. As new people enter the program, you will want to help them understand what PrimeTime®*Plus* is all about!

Daily Schedule

A typical PrimeTime®*Plus* session might look something like this:

Part 1: Welcome

As the young people arrive, you will play music related to the day's theme, such as the love of God, spending time with Jesus, or using God's gifts and serving others. Each weekly lesson provides several song choices directly related to the day's topic.

If you provide a snack time for your participants, this is a good time for them to eat. Consider providing a nutritious treat for the young people so that they can enjoy something healthy when they are hungry after school.

Once they have finished their snack and have heard the music playing in the background, you may enter a time of worship and praise, with the young people singing along once they are familiar with the chorus or some of the verses of the songs. Including music in our worship helps us to incline our hearts to God, unite our voices with others in praise of God, and express our love for Him with our whole being.

After a time of worship, you will want to check in with the young people to see how they are doing and what is on their minds. Each lesson provides two conversation starters to get your group talking. You may choose to have these conversations as a large group, or divide into smaller groups, depending on how many participants you have. Your goal is to make everyone feel comfortable and willing to talk with one another.

Finally, you can invite the young people to recall the Key Verse from the previous week's lesson. You may wish to make Scripture memorization a more formal part of your program, offering prizes to the young people who are able to recite Key Verses correctly each week.

Part 2: Prime Time

Next, you move into the main teaching time of the session. First, you will introduce the lesson. Sometimes this will take the form of a discussion question; other times you will engage the young people in a game or activity related to the Scripture they will be reading.

You will want to make sure that each person has a Bible during this time so they can follow along during the Scripture reading. After opening in prayer, the young people will hear the Bible verses that form the basis of the day's lesson. You may

choose to have a PrimeTime®*Plus* leader read the Scripture aloud. Other times you may ask for a volunteer to read, or you might show a video depiction of the Bible story. Occasionally, the curriculum presents the Scripture in the form of a skit, Readers' Theater, or other activity.

After hearing Scripture, the young people will engage in some combination of whole or small group discussion and activities. During this time, they develop their ability to understand and apply the day's learning.

This part of the lesson always ends with a time of Small Group Prayer. You will want to develop small groups that meet consistently week to week. The young people will share their prayer requests with one another, having committed to keeping all requests confidential within the group. You may wish to employ a Prayer Box, which is simply a box for receiving the young people's praises and requests in written form. You are encouraged to keep an ongoing list of requests so that you can follow up on how God is working in the situations they have described.

Part 3: Wrap Up

At the end of each session, the young people will have an opportunity to learn the Key Verse at the heart of the day's lesson. They will complete a game or activity that will help them repeat and practice the verse multiple times. They will have a chance to recite the verse from memory during the next week's Welcome Time.

Your session wraps up with a whole-group closing prayer. You are encouraged to send the young people off with a reminder that God loves them, and with an invitation for them to receive His love and share it in the ways they think, speak, and act toward themselves and others during the coming week.

Using the Curriculum

Some leaders will choose to follow this curriculum document step-by-step. Others may use it as a general guide, adding to it as their own creativity and circumstances lead them.

Either way, you are encouraged to read over the curriculum for each session well in advance of meeting with the young people. You will find a list of materials you are likely to need, an explanation of the Bible background for that day's learning, and guidance as you prepare for your time with the young people. You will want to preview discussion questions, Scripture readings, games, and activities so that you will know what's coming each session.

Prayer is the most important part of your preparation, so keep your time with the Lord at the top of your "To Do" list.

This year's curriculum, *Following Jesus*, is all about forming a relationship with the Lord Jesus and growing in that relationship. During the first several weeks, the young people explore the question of WHO to follow. They look at people they think of as heroes and consider the benefits and risks of following different leaders. Then they are introduced to the very best leader to follow: Jesus.

The remainder of the year is spent on these questions: *WHY should you follow Jesus? WHEN should you follow Jesus?* and *HOW do you follow Jesus?* The greatest amount of time is spent on the HOW questions, looking at practices that help people develop a relationship with Jesus: prayer, Bible reading, fellowship with other Christians, and service.

While the young people in your program may make the choice to follow Jesus at any time throughout the year, you will find specific times of invitation

throughout the curriculum. These invitations provide you with an entry point for talking and praying with individuals who have decided to confess their sin to God, ask for His forgiveness, and commit their lives to following Jesus.

Be sure to consult other Scripture Union USA resources for having these important conversations with the young people in your program. You are in a unique and precious position to:

- discuss what it means to be a Christian and whether the young person is ready to respond to God's invitation through Christ;
- pray with them as they confess their sin and acknowledge their need for forgiveness through Christ;
- be present as they ask Christ to be the Savior and Lord of their lives; and
- follow up with assurances of God's forgiveness; ideas for Christian practices that strengthen the life of faith; and resources, such as a Bible, information about joining a community church, and guidance on talking to their family about their life of faith.

It is important to provide ongoing support and guidance to new Christians, especially if they may not be receiving this encouragement from home.

Each week, the young people will have an opportunity to pray together in a small group setting. They are encouraged to keep those prayer sessions confidential. Please note, however, that any comments that raise concerns about a young person's safety and well-being should lead to a follow-up conversation (not in a group setting) to determine if mandatory reporting may be required.

Share It!

Each weekly lesson includes two “Share It” features. These content-related messages are ready for you to share on your social media accounts to bring attention to your PrimeTime®*Plus* program! The more you spread the word to the young people in your community about the value of the PrimeTime®*Plus* program, the more your program has the potential to bring tweens and young teens to a saving faith in Jesus Christ.

PrimeTime®*Plus* Take-Home Pages

Each thematic section of the PrimeTime®*Plus* curriculum includes a Take-Home Page, found at the back of the curriculum under the “Take-Home Pages” tab. These pages allow the young people to engage independently with the content. You will want to photocopy and distribute a Take-Home Page for each young person in your program when you begin each thematic section. For example, the first Take-Home Page covers weeks 1 to 4 of the curriculum, and should be distributed to the young people at the beginning of week 1, if possible.

In the left-hand section of each Take-Home Page, the young people will find a prayer that incorporates the theme of each week, a Bible reading plan to encourage them to engage independently with a section of the Bible, a Bible reading strategy that will enhance their understanding of what they are reading, and an activity they are invited to try over the course of the month that relates to what they have been learning about in PrimeTime®*Plus*.

In the middle section, the young people will find the week’s memory verse printed onto cards that they can cut out and use for memory verse practice. They may want to write the Bible reference on the back in order to “quiz” themselves on the text of the verse.

In the right-hand section, the young people will find a bookmark that they can color, cut out, and use in their Bibles.

Who Do You Follow?

Week
3

Materials:

- Display of Key Verse (either on posterboard or computer slide)
- Optional: Name tags
- Pens and pencils
- Bibles
- Chart paper, or access to an erasable board
- Markers
- CD or online source of praise songs
- "Following the Right Path" handout

Thought:

True heroes focus on God's will and plan for their lives and His kingdom.

Share It:

How do YOU choose your heroes? Let John the Baptist be your guide!
#PrimeTimePlus
#ScriptureUnion_USA

Session Goal:

Young people will determine who they are currently following in life.

Key Verse:

"Dear children, don't let anyone lead you down the wrong path" (1 John 3:7).

Session Description:

The young people will consider who they admire and aspire to be like and, through the story of John the Baptist, identify qualities of a positive leader.

Bible Background:

In ancient times, when a king planned to travel around his kingdom, he would send out a messenger to tell the citizens to prepare for his arrival. The people would hurry to clean up their streets, even filling in ruts and removing rocks from the road to smooth the way for the king's coach. Preparations allowed the king to make a grand entrance wherever he went.

John the Baptist is the messenger who calls on the people to prepare their lives for the King of Kings, Jesus. A powerful preacher, John drew crowds with his message to repent and be baptized. John provides us with an example of a positive leader: he was focused on the will of God, he fearlessly spoke the truth, and he didn't value his own ministry more highly than that of the One he came to proclaim.

It's natural for people to identify heroes: people they admire and desire to emulate. Unfortunately, we often choose poor examples to follow rather than positive role models. In this lesson, you will be challenging the young people to consider carefully the choices they make about who to follow and what they look for in a hero.

As You Prepare:

1. Pray for the upcoming session and for the young people in your program. Ask God to help you make each young person feel welcome. Pray that the young people will open their hearts to examine how they choose the people they follow and that they will begin to see the need to follow Jesus.
2. Think about the famous, and not-so-famous, people who you admire and wish you were like. Think back to people you admired or wished you were like when you were a child. What qualities have attracted you to these people?
3. Read Luke 3:2-14. Imagine you were alive during the ministry of John the Baptist. How do you think you would have responded to him?
4. Make enough copies of the "Following the Right Path" handout for each person to have one.
5. Choose music for the session.
6. Prepare displays of the Key Verse either on posterboard or computer slide.

Part 1: WELCOME

Here are some ideas for welcoming the young people and getting them settled into today's session.

MUSIC: As they arrive, play praise songs. Encourage the young people to sing along once they are familiar with the chorus or some of the verses. Including music in our worship helps us to incline our hearts to God, unite our voices with others in praise of God, and express our love for Him with our whole being.



Current songs by popular Christian artists that might be relevant include:

- + Leeland, "Waymaker"
- + Chris Tomlin, "How Great is Our God"
- + Hillsong Worship, "What a Beautiful Name"
- + Phil Wickham, "This is Amazing Grace"

CONVERSATION: Distribute name tags to the young people if you or they are still learning each other's names. Check in with the young people to see how they are doing and what is on their minds. You may wish to use one of these conversation starters to get your group talking:

a. What would be your dream job?

b. What would you like to be famous for?

LAST WEEK'S KEY VERSE: Say: **Each week when we meet, you will have a chance to recall the Key Verse from the week before. Who can recite last week's Key Verse?** [Encourage the young people to recall the snap and clap rhythm they created last week. "How great is the love the Father has given us so freely! Now we can be called children of God" (1 John 3:1).]

Part 2: PRIME TIME**LESSON INTRODUCTION:**

Ask: **Who is someone you admire or someone you would like to be like?**

Ask for volunteers to share their answers, and follow up by asking why they admire this person and *what qualities* this person has that they would like to have, too. As they share, make a list of their reasons on chart paper or an erasable board. For example, they may say, “good at basketball,” “beautiful,” “great singer,” or “smart.”

Thought:

The young people may include some qualities that aren't exactly positive, which you may want to challenge gently. Record them for now, though, as you will be addressing the idea of what we look for in the people we admire in future sessions.

SCRIPTURE READING:

Be sure that each person has a Bible.

Open with prayer: **Dear God, thank You for the Bible. Help us to learn from Your Word today.**

Help the young people to find the Gospel of Luke in the New Testament.

Say: **Remember last week we said that the Bible is divided into the Old Testament and the New Testament? Our verses from 1 John last week were in the New Testament. Our Scripture this week from the Gospel of Luke is in the New Testament, too.** [You may want to direct them to the Table of Contents, or encourage them to flip through the pages of the New Testament to grow familiar with the order of the books.]

Say: **Once you've found the Gospel of Luke, you'll see that it is divided into chapters. We are going to be reading from chapter 3 today. Who can find Luke, chapter 3, verse 3, and read it aloud to us?** [Allow a volunteer to read the verse aloud. If a different translation of the Bible is used, reinforce from last week the fact that the Bible has been translated into English from other languages, so there are different translations, or versions.]

Say: **The “he” in this Bible verse is a man named John; we call him John the Baptist. We are learning about following Jesus this year in PrimeTime® Plus. But before Jesus even started preaching and teaching, John was encouraging people to turn away from their sins and be baptized. When they were baptized, they went under the water in the Jordan River, and that represented the washing away of their sins.**

Say: **John the Baptist was admired and followed by a lot of people. He was a good leader and a good person to follow. As I read what the Bible tells us about John the Baptist, think about what qualities he has that made him a good leader.**

Read aloud Luke 3:2-14. Ask the young people to follow along in their Bibles.

WHOLE GROUP ACTIVITY:

In the center of a piece of chart paper or an erasable board, write the name “John the Baptist” with a circle around it; this will create the center of a Word Web.

Ask: **Why did people listen to John the Baptist and want to follow him? What can we say about what John was like or what he did that made people admire him?** [As the young people share their responses, write each one in a circle around his name to create a kind of “web” of John’s qualities. Responses might include: followed God, told the truth/honest, encouraged people to stop sinning and lead good lives, brave, didn’t care what people thought of him, did the job he was given to do, taught people to be kind, to care for each other, to share, to be honest.]

Idea:

Be sure the young people are looking at the Scriptures to find their answers to your question.



Say: **We’ve been talking about who we admire and the kind of person we would follow. We’ve also looked at some of the reasons people admired and followed John the Baptist. Next time we meet, we’ll talk about the importance of following the *right* person. If you follow the *wrong* person, you end up going in the wrong direction!**

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION:

Use the following questions to continue your discussion about John the Baptist. Be sure the young people have Bibles with them to help them with their answers.

1. **Reread Isaiah 40:3-5, which appears in Luke 3:4-6. Isaiah was a prophet, which means that he brought messages from God to the people. He told the people things that God wanted them to know and understand. How were John the Baptist’s actions a fulfillment of this prophecy, meaning: in what way were his actions in line with what God said was going to happen?** [He dedicated his life to teaching the people that they needed to change their habits and actions, that they needed to stop sinning, that they needed to be ready to welcome the one who would save them. John was getting them ready to meet Jesus and to accept what he had come to do, just as the prophecy said someone would come and do.]

Idea:

Remind the young people of 1 John 3:4-5 from last week: “Everyone who sins breaks the law. In fact, breaking the law is sin. But you know that Christ came to take our sins away. And there is no sin in him.”



2. **Isaiah had told the people that they would need to prepare the way for God to send someone to save them. Jesus is the person God sent to save them. How did John explain to them that they should get ready for Jesus’ appearance among them? Look at Luke 3:11-14.** [They needed to change their actions: share clothing and food with people in need, be honest, be content with what they had. John was calling for a change of heart. The people needed to stop their habit or practice of breaking God’s laws.]

3. **In Luke 3:9, John the Baptist talks about “trees that don’t bear good fruit.” He’s really talking about people, not trees. What do you think it means that some people “bear good fruit” and some people “don’t bear good fruit”?** [If a tree is healthy, it will produce healthy fruit. If a tree is unhealthy, it will produce unhealthy fruit or no fruit at all. In a similar way, if our spirits are healthy, meaning we have a good relationship with God through Jesus who saves us from our sin, then we will have the power to make good choices and live in a way that pleases God. Our good fruit is doing good for others, like John describes in verses 11 to 14.]
4. **The health of a tree is determined by what’s going on inside. The health of our spirits is determined by what’s going on inside, too! We cannot be in right relationship with God and be one of His children without turning away from our sin and turning towards Jesus. How do we prepare our hearts for Jesus? How do we turn towards him?** [We spend time talking to God! We admit that we are sinners, that we need His forgiveness, and that we want Jesus to be in charge of our lives. Remember what we learned from the Bible last week: God loves us and wants us to be part of His family! He is just waiting for us to accept His invitation, and His spirit will come to live inside of us. In John 3:9 we learned that when we become God’s children, “God’s very nature remains in [us].”]

SMALL GROUP PRAYER TIME:

Say: **Let’s take a moment to share prayer requests with one another. Remember from last week that we have promised to keep all prayer requests *confidential*, or private. What we say in our small group stays in our small group. How can we be praying for you this week?** [Give the young people an opportunity to share praises or prayer requests at this time. If you have a Prayer Box for prayer requests, include those petitions, as well. Keep an ongoing list of prayer requests and invite the young people to keep the group posted on how God is working in the situation they have described. Pray as a small group.]

Part 3: WRAP UP**KEY VERSE ACTIVITY:**

Read the Key Verse aloud and ask the young people to repeat it back to you.

Give each person a copy of “Following the Right Path” handout, and challenge them to be the first to follow the correct path, following Jesus to our Key Verse.

Idea:

You may wish to share a story with the young people about a time when following the wrong person took you or someone you know down a wrong path. You could also share a time when following Jesus took you down the right path!

**Share It:**

“Dear children, don’t let anyone lead you down the wrong path” (1 John 3:7).
#PrimeTimePlus #ScriptureUnion_USA

PRAYER:

Close with prayer, asking God to help us make wise choices about who we admire and who we follow.

As the young people leave for the afternoon, remind them that God loves them! Invite them to receive His love and share it in the ways they think, speak, and act toward themselves and others this week.

Part 4: LESSON EXTENSIONS

If you have the time to complete additional activities, or would like to give the young people ideas for activities to carry home and do throughout their week, here are some possibilities:

Option 1: Choral Reading

Choral reading is a way to perform a text for deeper understanding. Each person or group of people is assigned different parts of the text to read aloud. The arrangement of the different voices creates a choral effect.

Form a group to create a Choral Reading for Luke 3:2-14. You will use the actual words from the Bible, but you may choose to arrange them for a choral effect. This means that some parts may be repeated, like a refrain. Some parts may be spoken in soft voices, while some parts are spoken in loud voices. You may choose sections from different parts of the passage, rather than using all of the verses in a row.

Your group will want to type a script for your reading, indicating who will speak each of the lines and including any details about voice volume, speed, pitch, etc. Give each group member a copy of the script and practice your reading several times. When you are confident that you all can perform it smoothly, present it to the rest of the group.

Option 2: Hero Interviews

Interview a number of different people, asking them to identify their heroes. If possible, talk to a variety of different people. Find out what they admire about the people they consider heroes.

Write down some questions to ask each person and jot down the answers they give you. Do you notice any qualities that the heroes have in common? Are there any differences in the types of people who are admired based on age or some other factor? Share your discoveries with the rest of the group.

Option 3: Twenty Questions

Each person will take a turn thinking of a famous person that most everyone in the group is likely to know about. Group members can ask up to 20 yes or no questions (such as, "Is it a woman?" "Is it a sports star?" etc.) to guess the famous person. The first person to guess correctly gets to choose the next famous person.

Option 4: Role Model Recognition

Think of someone (currently living) who you identify as a hero or role model. Create a card or write a letter to this person, whether or not you know them personally. Tell them what you admire about them, how they have influenced you, and in what ways you would like to emulate them with your own life. Send your card or letter to your role model.

Following the Right Path



**START
HERE**

