



FOLLOWING JESUS



SAMPLER

A Scripture Union Curriculum 

Following Jesus

Copyright © 2022, Scripture Union-USA. All rights reserved.

No part of this curriculum may be reproduced without written permission, except copies needed for use with leaders and program participants.

Scripture Union and PrimeTime® are trademarks of Scripture Union-USA.



Credits

Written and edited by:

Mary Meade Sutton, Janet Morgan, and Sharon Sacks

Project Director:

Janet Morgan

Design and artwork:

Jorge Barbery, J. Barbery Creative

Illustrations licensed from Shutterstock and Adobe Stock

This curriculum was adapted from Following Jesus © 2007, Scripture Union-USA, Written by Sue Thomas and edited by Lynell Johnson, Ph.D

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Reader's Version., Nlrv. Copyright © 1995, 1996, 1998, 2014 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan.

All rights reserved worldwide www.zondervan.com The "Nlrv" and "New International Reader's Version" are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

Printed in the United States of America

PrimeTime® is a faith based program designed for elementary 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.

For more information, write P.O. Box 215, Valley Forge, PA 19481; call 1-800-621-LAMP (5267); or visit www.scriptureunion.org.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Purpose
Yearly Schedule
Daily Schedule
Planning Your Program

Curriculum Framework

Curriculum Material

WELCOME PARTY

Week 1: Welcome to PrimeTime®

T H E M E : WHO SHOULD YOU FOLLOW?

Week 2: Introducing PrimeTime®
Week 3: Who Do You Follow?
Week 4: Follow the Right Leader

T H E M E : FOLLOW JESUS!

Week 5: Follow Jesus!
Week 6: Jesus is God's Son
Week 7: Jesus was a Human Being
Week 8: Start to Follow Jesus

T H E M E : WHY SHOULD YOU FOLLOW JESUS?

Week 9: Jesus Forgives Me for My Sins
Week 10: Jesus Gives Me Peace
Week 11: Jesus Gives Me Power

T H E M E : WHEN SHOULD YOU FOLLOW JESUS?

Week 12: Follow Jesus When It's Great
Week 13: Follow Jesus When It's Tough
Week 14: Follow Jesus Every Day

T H E M E : HOW DO YOU FOLLOW JESUS? BE HIS FRIEND!

Week 15: What a Friend We Have in Jesus
Week 16: Spend Time With Jesus
Week 17: Jesus is Always with You
Week 18: Share Your Friend Jesus with Others

T H E M E : HOW DO YOU FOLLOW JESUS? PRAY!

Week 19: What is Prayer?
Week 20: What Should We Pray?
Week 21: Pray for Others
Week 22: Make a Prayer Journal

T H E M E : HOW DO YOU FOLLOW JESUS? READ YOUR BIBLE!

Week 23: What is the Bible?

Week 24: Why Should We Read the Bible?

Week 25: Study the Bible

Week 26: Know the Bible

T H E M E : HOW DO YOU FOLLOW JESUS? SPEND TIME WITH CHRISTIANS!

Week 27: Spend Time in Church

Week 28: Help One Another Not to Sin

Week 29: Encourage One Another

T H E M E : HOW DO YOU FOLLOW JESUS? SERVE!

Week 30: What is a Servant?

Week 31: Serve Jesus

Week 32: Serve Others

Week 33: Use Your Talents

T H E M E : FOLLOW JESUS FOREVER!

Week 34: Why Not Follow Jesus?

Week 35: The Reward of Following Jesus

Week 36: Keep Following!

T H E M E : END-OF-YEAR PICNIC

Week 37: Celebrating Jesus' Followers

HOLIDAYS AND SPECIAL DAYS

Thanksgiving Week: Thank You Jesus!

Christmas Week: Wise People Follow Jesus

Valentine's Week: Love One Another!

Easter Week: Jesus Has Risen!

EXTRAS



Following Jesus

CURRICULUM

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

Purpose

PrimeTime® is a faith based program designed to provide a safe and supervised after-school environment for children between the ages of 7 and 11. The program provides an opportunity for children to learn more about the God who loves them and his Son, Jesus Christ. Teaching takes place through creative Bible engagement and the caring relationships of program leaders. The program is particularly suited to children who may not regularly attend church. Our hope is that, through the PrimeTime program, many children will come to faith in Christ, and live a life of Christian discipleship.

The PrimeTime® curriculum may also be used in clubs and special groups such as homework clubs, sports clubs, and music groups and in a homeschool or afterschool care setting. You can find guidelines for adapting the program to a homeschool or afterschool care setting at www.scriptureunion.org.

Leaders are in a unique and precious position to:

- Discuss what it means to be a Christian and whether the child 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.
- 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.

Children may make the decision to follow Jesus at any time during the year. It is important to provide ongoing support and guidance to new Christians, especially if they may not be receiving this encouragement from home.

Yearly schedule

PrimeTime® is designed for 40 weeks of programming, corresponding to a typical school year schedule.

The curriculum includes 2 introductory sessions, 34 regular weekly sessions and 4 additional sessions for Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentine's Day, and Easter. The curriculum is designed for running a program once a week, but is fully adaptable to fit your unique circumstances and needs. Guidelines for adapting the curriculum for a 3 or 5-day program are included in the Extras under Guidelines for Homeschool or Afterschool Care Setting.

The *Following Jesus* curriculum is designed to help children explore the following themes.

- WHO should you follow?
- WHY should you follow Jesus?
- WHEN should you follow Jesus?
- HOW do you follow Jesus?

Priority has been given to the HOW questions, looking at practices that help children develop a relationship with Jesus such as prayer, Bible reading, fellowship with other Christians, and service.

Each session in the curriculum builds on earlier sessions, so you will want to use the lessons in order as much as possible. If children are unable to participate every week, however, they will still be able to understand and benefit from the content presented. 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 volunteer leader or another child who is more experienced may help them feel more comfortable as they acclimate to the program and its curriculum. As new children enter the program, you will want to help them understand what PrimeTime® is all about.

Daily schedule

A typical PrimeTime® session has 4 parts:

- PART 1: WELCOME
- PART 2: WHOLE GROUP ACTIVITY
- PART 3: SMALL GROUPS
- PART 4: WRAP UP
- PART 5: BONUS ACTIVITIES

Part 1: Welcome

Music and snacks

As the children arrive, play music related to the day's theme. Children will register/or sign-in. New children will need to be assigned to a small group.

If you provide a snack time for your participants, this is a good time for children to have a nutritious treat 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 choose to have a time of worship and praise, with the children singing along once they are familiar with the songs.

SUGGESTED PROGRAM 90 minutes – 2 hours

Welcome	<i>20 mins</i>
Children Arrive & Register	
Music playing	
Snacks	
Conversation	
Last Week's Key Verse	
Optional Time of Worship	<i>(10 mins)</i>
Whole Group Activity	<i>15 mins</i>
Lesson Introduction	
Comment	
Small Groups	<i>30 mins</i>
Opening Prayer	
Bible Reading	
Discussion	
Prayer Time	
Wrap Up	<i>15 mins</i>
Key Verse Activity	
Closing Prayer	
Bonus Activities	<i>(30 mins)</i>

PrimeTime Groups with a special focus/club activities such homework, sports, arts, etc., may extend the time for this purpose.

Conversation

In each lesson you will find a conversation starter the will get the children talking to each other and introduce the theme for the day. Children will be asked to "turn and talk" to a partner or a couple of children. The goal is to make everyone comfortable and ready to start the session.

Last week's key verse

You can invite the children to recall the Key Verse from the previous week's lesson.

Part 2: Whole Group Activity

Children will remain in one large group for the Lesson Introduction.

Lesson Introduction

Each week, the introduction to the Bible will take the form of a creative activity, game, monologue, or a skit, all related to the Scripture they will be reading in their small groups. This will be followed by a thought or comment to pique the children's interest in the story. Occasionally, you may also wish to show a video depiction of the Bible story.

Part 3: Small Groups

Small group Bible studies are one of the most important elements of the program as they enable participants to engage directly with God's Word and deepen relationships between the children and their leaders. Children should always meet with the same small group leader.

This session includes the following elements:

- Opening prayer
- Scripture reading
- Discussion
- Prayer time

You will want to make sure that each child has a Bible during this time so they can follow along during the Scripture reading. You may choose to have the small group leader read the Scripture aloud with children following along in their Bibles.

After the Scripture reading, the children will engage in small group discussion and activities. This is designed to deepen their understanding of the Scripture and apply the day's learning.

The small group session will end with a time of prayer. The children will be given the opportunity to share their prayer requests with one another. Leaders will need to be alert to any sensitive information that may be shared and that may need to be shared with the program leader. Leaders are encouraged to keep an ongoing list of requests, so that they can follow up on those shared.

Part 4: Wrap Up

The children will move back into one large group for the Wrap Up, which consists of the Key Verse Activity and Closing Prayer.

During this session, the children will have an opportunity to learn the Key Verse at the heart of the day's lesson. Children will participate in a creative activity or game that will help them learn the verse. They will have a chance to recite the verse from memory during the next week's Welcome Time.

The session wraps up with a closing prayer. You are encouraged to send the children off with a reminder that God loves them, and an invitation for them to receive His love and share it in the way they think, speak, and act towards others during the coming week.

Part 5: Bonus Activities

The curriculum includes additional optional activities that can be used to extend the program or to help children continue to explore the Bible story and theme.

Planning your Program

Session Preparation

In the curriculum you will find the following material to help you prepare each session:

- Session Goal
- Key Verse
- Session Description
- Bible Background
- A list of Materials needed
- Guidelines for Preparation

Ensure that every leader has the material they need for preparing the part of the session for which they will be responsible.

Leader Roles & Responsibilities

For smaller programs, several roles may be held by one person.

Role	Responsibility	Skills
Program Director	<p>Overall leader of the team & program / Oversees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning, preparation, and running of the program • Selection and training of leaders • Timely running of the program • Child protection and other best practices • Promotion of the program • Evaluation of the program daily and at the end of the program 	Organization, monitoring, leading
Whole Group Leaders	<p>Presenters of whole group activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization and presentation of the Introduction and Wrap up • Presentation of other elements of the program as required 	Communicating & engaging children
Small Group Leaders	<p>Leadership of a small group of children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome the children as they arrive • Get to know the children and help them to feel a part of the program • Lead the Small Group session • Prepare any equipment and materials needed 	Teaching, coordinating group dynamics
Assistant Leaders	<p>Program helpers / supporters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take part in the program as assigned by the Director & leaders • Assist the Small Group leaders as assigned • Provide support for organizational tasks as required 	Maturity, willingness to learn & join in
Registrar/ Administrator	<p>Provides administrative support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administers leader applications, references, background checks • Orders or obtains all stationary and supplies • Organizes printing of promotion and program materials and forms • Organizes registration and maintains sign in/out records and daily attendance 	Organization and Administration
Security Monitor	<p>Monitors safety of program & participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepares a safety plan before the program commences • Oversees the safety and security of the site during the program • Has knowledge of safe practice & critical thinker • Prepares and trains the leaders in safety and security • Addresses and maintains records of any security issues, accidents, or incidents during the program • Oversees the safety evaluation at the end of the program 	Knowledge of safe practice & critical thinker
Refreshment person	<p>Organizer of refreshments/snacks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizes and prepares refreshments, snacks, or food • Maintains a record of any special dietary needs and allergies and ensures those needs are addressed 	Knowledge of hygiene and food preparation

It is further recommended that:

- You have at least one leader each session that is **qualified in first aid**.
- The Program Director forms a **core planning team** of experienced leaders to share overall responsibilities.
- You form a **prayer team** of people who may not be leaders in the program, but that will commit to praying consistently for the children and leaders.

Team Recruitment, Application, and Training

Recruitment

If you are starting a new PrimeTime program, you will need to start team recruitment and preparation at least six months in advance of the beginning of the school year in August/September. This will give you an opportunity to recruit and prepare the team before the busy summer period. If you choose to recruit team members under the age of 18 as assistant leaders, they will need to be at least two years older than the oldest child participating in program. Parental consent should be obtained in writing for all those under age 18 taking part in the program.

Application Process

For the security and welfare of children coming to the program, every team member, regardless of their role, needs to go through the application process. All potential leaders will:

- Complete an application form
- Provide at least two references
- Agree to a criminal background check
- Agree to conduct themselves in accordance with agreed standards

The background check process differs in each state, so you will need to check your state government website for the requirements in your state. There are also background services provided by a number of organizations such as:

Protect my Ministry www.protectmyministry.com
Ministry Safe www.ministrysafe.com

You will find templates for application and reference forms in the Extras.

Training

Team members will have varying levels of experience and expertise. In addition to general preparation, training for development of skills in children's ministry and in areas related to this program will build confidence and relationships in the team. This will also give you the opportunity to measure the skill levels and expertise of individual team members. Basic areas of training that should be carried out include:

- Understanding and working with children and young people
- How to lead a small group Bible study
- Child Protection and safety policies and procedures
- Helping children follow Jesus
- Working together as a team
- Aims and elements of the program
- Program roles and responsibilities

In addition to training, you will need to set aside specific times for preparation of any skits, games, or crafts.

Venue/Site

Choosing the right venue is critical to your program. Church or community halls are generally well equipped and good venues for after-school programs.

When choosing a venue/site you will need to consider:

- Is the venue/site suitable for children, and are you able to ensure their safety?
- Is there enough space for the number of children and the type of activities you are planning?
- Can you have access prior to the program for necessary preparation?
- Is the venue/site covered by public liability insurance?
- Can you obtain permission for use of the site (such as a community hall) for our program?

Promotion

You should start promoting your program before school breaks up for summer. Begin by making a list of all possible places and means of advertising your program. Be sure to invite children you are currently in contact with and encourage them to invite their friends. Next, you will want to identify the various promotional materials required and how they will be designed and produced. Materials should be bright and colorful.

You will find templates for promotional materials in the Extras.

Possible materials and means of advertising include:	Content of your advertising should include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Posters• Yard signs• Postcards• Banners• Letters• Email• Social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dates• Times• Venue/Site• How to register• Who is organizing the program and contact details

Permission needs to be obtained for placing posters or other advertising materials in libraries, recreation centers, schools, and other public places.

Registration and Sign In / Sign Out

The first moments of a child's experience in your program are very important. Be welcoming, but not overwhelming, to assure parents that their children will be safe, and also giving children a sense of the fun that they will have.

The registration form* should have a section that identifies who has permission to pick up a child at the end of the session. Once the children are registered, their names should be added to a Sign In / Sign Out sheet* that will be initialed each session at the registration table by the person who brings the child to the program and by the person who picks them up.

Here are recommendations for organizing registration:

- Make sure that the registration desk is well organized, with spare registration forms and pens for any parents/guardians who have not preregistered their children.
- Have the list and registration forms of children who have preregistered on hand.
- Ensure that parents/guardians have indicated on the registration form who has permission to pick up the child at the end of the session.
- Issue every child with a nametag* and ensure all the leaders are wearing their nametags.
- Once children have registered and are assigned to a Small Group, add their name and pick-up information to the Sign In / Out sheet.
- Allergies, special needs, and any pick up issues should be highlighted and Small Group leaders informed.
- Have leaders near the registration desk, especially on the first day, to greet children as they are assigned to their Small Groups.

**You will find templates for Registration, Sign in / Sign out sheet, and name tags in the Extras section.*

Child Protection

Most churches have a child protection policy and procedures for their children's ministry staff and volunteers. This should include:

- Screening of personnel
- Code of conduct or behavioral guidelines for personnel
- Response to disclosure of abuse
- Emergency response plans and crisis management

Check with the person responsible for your children's ministry to ensure the team is informed and trained in this area.

For your convenience, a general "Child Protection Checklist" has been provided in the Extras to help you plan and prepare to protect the children in your care.

Note: All team applications, references, background checks, and child registrations should be kept in a secure place, and care must be taken so that personal information, in hard copy or electronically, is protected.

Who Do You Follow?

Week
3

Materials:

- CD or online source for playing songs
- Name tags
- Pictures of at least 6 famous people
- Old magazines
- Scissors
- Masking tape
- Posterboard
- Black and red markers
- Pencils
- 12 pieces of construction paper for Key Verse
- Bold marker to write Key Verse words

Session Goal

Children will consider who they admire most and who they follow.

Key Verse

Dear children, don't let anyone lead you astray. (1 John 3:7a).

Session Description

Children will consider people they admire and would want to be like. Through the story of John the Baptist, children will identify qualities of a positive leader.

Bible Background

Luke 3:2-14

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 called on 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 in the nature of children to look for heroes—people they admire and want to be like. Children have always needed guidance in choosing heroes or role models who will have a positive influence on their lives. Today, children are bombarded with a myriad of possibilities of people they could emulate, and they probably choose their heroes without really noticing that they've made a choice!

Today's lesson will help children think about the values of the people they most look up to, through the challenges John the Baptist presents.

As You Prepare

1. For your personal preparation, think about famous people, or not-so-famous people, whom you admire or wish you were like. Think back to people you admired or wished you were like when you were a child or young person.
2. Read Luke 3:2-14 so you are familiar with this part of the story of John the Baptist. Imagine that you were alive during John's ministry. How might you have responded to him?
3. Review the discussion questions for the Small Group Bible Exploration.
4. Find pictures of famous people the children in your program may admire or wish they were like: music stars, athletes, actors, TV personalities, political figures, and so on. Try to have an equal number of men and women, and make sure there's good racial and ethnic representation. If possible, put up 6 or more pictures on the walls.
5. Draw a large star on a sheet of posterboard. Hang this poster on the wall where it will be easily seen.

Part 1: WELCOME

AS CHILDREN ARRIVE

- Sign in
- Registration of new children
- Games or activities that can be quickly ended and put away



MUSIC

Play some praise songs as children arrive. When you're ready to start, use one or two songs for everyone to sing together. Encourage everyone to participate, no matter what their ability, reminding them that the Bible invites us to "make a joyful noise the Lord," and to "sing a new song to the Lord."

CONVERSATION

Each week the curriculum includes two conversation starters. One question is something light in tone to help children connect with leaders and each other. The other question is an easy segue into the lesson's focus. If your group is too large for everyone to share, use "Turn and Talk" (with a partner), or have children form groups of 3 or 4 children to talk together.

Say: **It's "Conversation Time" now. It's a chance for us to connect with one another and to get ready to learn more about what it means to follow Jesus. We'll start out with an easy conversation starter. We'd like you to "Turn and Talk," which means you turn to someone next to you and talk about your answers to these questions:**

- a. What is one good thing and one not so good thing that happened this week?
- 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 remember the Key Verse from the week before. Who can say last week's Key Verse from memory?** Have a few children recite last week's Key Verse.

See what amazing love the Father has given us!
Because of it, we are called children of God.
(1 John 3:1)

Part 2: WHOLE GROUP ACTIVITY

LESSON INTRODUCTION

Gather the children and say: **Today we're going to talk about people we look up to or people we would like to be like. Around the room there are pictures of famous people you probably know. I would like you to stand next to the picture of the person you admire the most or the one you would really want to be like.**

Give children a minute or so to decide which picture to stand next to. Encourage children to choose based on their own decision, rather than just going where their friends go. There is no right or wrong answer.

Once every child is standing next to a picture, ask the children at each picture why they chose that person.

Ask: **What do you admire about this person? Why do you think you would want to be like this person?**

Thought:

Children may list some qualities that aren't particularly positive. You may want to gently challenge these issues, but try not to be too judgmental. You will be addressing this issue in more depth during the next session.

Gather the children again and have them sit down. Point to the star poster. Around the outside of the star, using a black marker, write the names of some of the people children chose to stand by. Add other names if the children suggest them.

Say: **I'd like you to give me some words that explain what you admire about these people or why you would want to be like them.** To help children get started, you might choose one of the celebrities and suggest words that describe that person, such as talented, dedicated, strong, smart, etc. As children offer their ideas, with a red marker, write them around the outside of the star in bold print.

Say: **Wow! There are a LOT of things we admire and a lot of choices for who to follow! Next we're going to hear about someone in the Bible that people admired and followed. In your small groups you are going to read about a man who was called John the Baptist. When John the Baptist started preaching and baptizing people (that's why he's named the "Baptist"), no one had heard from God for 400 years. Of course, God's people had the record of earlier prophets, God's messengers, but 400 years had gone by, and there were ZERO messages from God. Then God sent John, and he had a very special and important message. Have fun finding out what that message was and why it had to be shared at that time. You may want to think about whether or not John was a good man to follow!**

Say: **Now we are going to go into our small groups to discover even more about John the Baptist.**

Children will now go with their leaders into their small groups.

Part 3: SMALL GROUPS

Make sure everyone in your small group is settled and able to see you and one another.

Say: **Before we go any further, it's always important to pray and ask for God's help to understand his word. So that we can focus, I'm going to ask that you close your eyes, relax, and put your hands in your lap. (Pause.) Are you ready? Let's talk to God.**

Almighty God, thank you for this time to read and learn from your Word, the Bible. We thank you for being here with us to help us understand and to learn what it means to follow a good leader. Amen.

Make sure each child in your group has a Bible. Review how to use a Bible reference and find the passage you will be studying. Walk them through step by step, including how to use the Table of Contents to find the Gospel of Luke. Show them the big number 3 for the chapter, and make sure everybody has their finger on it. Then ask them to find the tiny number 2. Ask: **What is the first word in verse 2?** (Annas, in the NIV; if other translations are being used, ask children to share the first word from their Bible) Make sure everybody has found the right spot.

Before you start the discussion questions, say: **I'm going to be asking some questions for us to discuss, but the key is that the answers need to come from the verses we are reading together. Some questions may seem almost too obvious or easy, but we need to make sure we have our facts straight before we talk about what the passage means.**

Thought:

At PrimeTime we always want to give our PrimeTime children a chance to interact with the Bible directly, and to help them learn how to find the book, chapter, and verse on their own.

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 3:2-8

Read the Scripture passage out loud with the children following along in their Bibles. You may also like to tell the story in a way that seems best for your group.

Ways to present a Bible passage

- Read the Bible passage out loud.
- Tell the story in first person.
- Roleplay the story.
- Create a drama (even if it's just a 2 person dialogue.)
- Sequence the story.
- Use a multimedia version of the story.
- Use pictures like those from FreeBibleImages.com to create a slideshow of the story.
- Retell the story and deliberately leave out words for the listeners to fill in, or deliberately use the wrong word in places.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. **Looking at just verses 2 and 3, where was John, what was he doing & why?** (Because "God's word came to John;" in the desert; he was preaching that people should be baptized and turn from their sins.)

2. **In verses 4, 5, and 6, we have a quote from the prophet Isaiah. He has his own book in the Bible! Isaiah wrote about a messenger who would come to get the people ready. Hundreds of years later, John was that messenger! What event was he preparing them for?** (Prepare the way for the Lord, so everyone will see God's salvation) **Who do you think "the Lord" was referring to?** (It was Jesus, the King of kings, who was coming)
3. **Isaiah is using a word picture that everyone in his day would have understood. When a king traveled to a town or city, everybody had to clean up their town. In those days roads weren't paved, so they could get REALLY BUMPY. The townspeople would go out and make the roads as nice and smooth as possible, so that the king could arrive with all his vehicles, animals, and servants, and make a grand entrance. What do you think that kind of roadwork would have been like?** (Allow free discussion.) **So who did we say was coming?** (The Lord was coming) **and what was going to happen?** (v. 6, "All people would see God's salvation")
4. **How many of you think that John started a construction crew for fixing the roads? I thought not. Let's look at what John was asking. Have someone read Luke 3:7-8. What was getting in the way of the Lord Jesus' coming?** (The people's sins—they were doing and thinking things that were against God's rules and character).
5. **What do you think about John's message? How would you feel if you were told by God to say those things? How would you feel if John pointed out your sin?** (See sin defined above)
6. **What's really important to John, and how can you tell?** (John told people to obey God; to help other people obey God; he wanted them to be forgiven)
7. **Despite the fact that John was telling people to stop sinning, people poured out of the countryside, the villages, and the big cities like Jerusalem to hear what John had to say; to ask for forgiveness, turn from their sins, and change their lives.**
8. **What can we say about John as a leader?** (He was faithful, obedient, brave, committed and humble: he did not fear people and told them to obey God; he taught people to be honest and generous.)

PRAYER TIME

Depending on your group, you might need to give a brief explanation of prayer, speaking about thanksgiving/thankfulness, as well as asking God for things. As a leader, you may want to make note of their prayer requests to follow up with them in the weeks to come.

Say: **When we meet in small groups, we get to support each other by praying for each other. Is there anything that you would like us to pray for today?**

Children will move back into the main meeting area for the "Wrap-Up" activities.

Idea:

Not everyone is familiar with praying out loud in a group. If you plan for the children to pray, you may want to suggest that each child prays only one sentence.



Part 4: WRAP-UP**KEY VERSE ACTIVITY**

Dear children, don't let anyone lead you astray.
(1 John 3:7a)

Introduce the Verse

Explain that John referred to the followers of Christ as "dear children" to show his love for them, and how believers are part of the family of God. Ask the children to explain why John would say "anyone." Who are these "anyone" people? What does it mean if you "go astray"?

Practice Activity: Vanishing Verse

Write each word on one piece of construction paper. Attach the papers to the wall. Read the verse together a few times. Then ask a child to come up and turn over one word. Keep the paper in place as a marker. The child can point to each word, and the group will read with them. The group will have to fill in the missing word from memory. Repeat the process until the whole verse has "vanished." Point and read a few more times, and then ask for one or two volunteers who would like to say the verse from memory.

Hand out the key verse maze now if you are not going to use it as a bonus activity. Encourage the children to work on memorizing the Key Verse at home.

If you choose to give out prizes for memorizing Key Verses, make sure the children are made aware of this.

Say: **We've been talking about who we admire and would want to be like—the kind of person we would follow. Next time we're together, we'll talk about the importance of following the right person. If you follow the wrong person, you end up going the wrong direction.**

CLOSING PRAYER

Close with prayer, asking God to help the children make wise choices about whom they admire and who they follow.

Part 5: BONUS ACTIVITIES

If your group meets once a week, you will probably have time for only one Bonus Activity. Some Bonus Activities can be done as children arrive. For programs meeting multiple times in one week, you have plenty of options to choose from.

Materials for Key Verse Maze

- "Following the Right Path" maze, one per child
- Pencils

Key Verse Maze

Give each child a pencil and a copy of the maze, 'Don't Let Anyone Lead You Astray!' Children try to find the right path from John the Baptist to the Key Verse.

Materials for Follow the Leader

Anything that can be used to create **obstacles**: cardboard boxes for tunnels, hoops, and cones

Follow the Leader

Set up a course using whatever materials your setting provides: playground equipment, adding whatever else you can: cardboard box tunnel, hoops, and cones. Players follow a leader through the course. For added interest, children can volunteer to be blindfolded and led through the course by a partner, then roles can be reversed.

Guess the Superhero

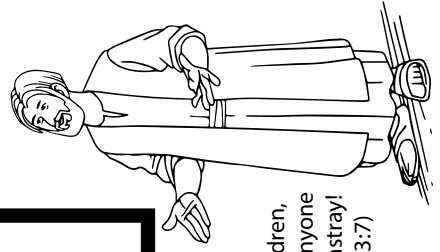
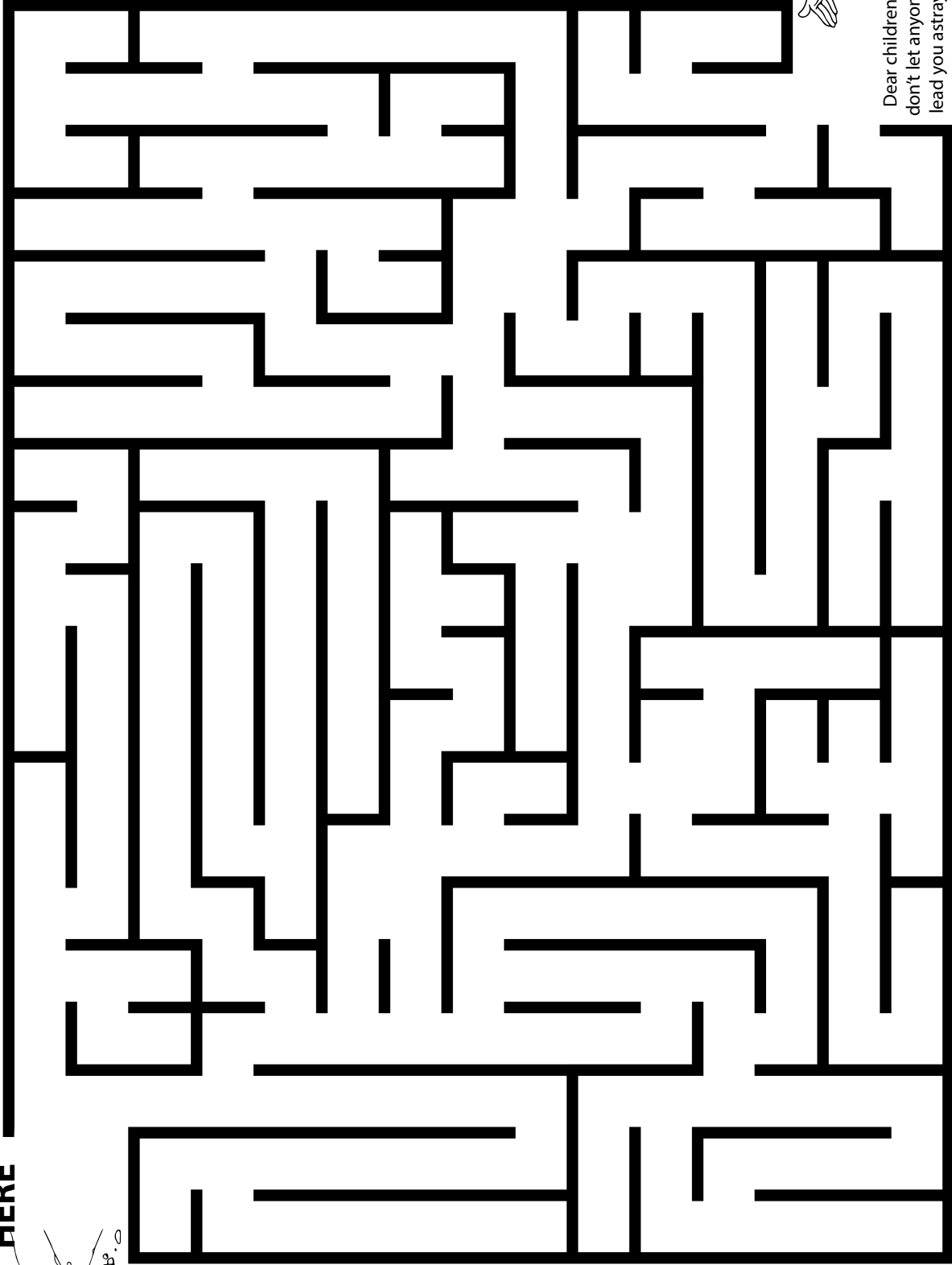
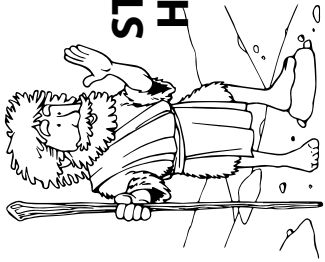
Have children take turns coming up with a superhero everyone in the group will know. The child should not say who it is, only the first letter of his or her name. The other children ask “yes” and “no” questions to try to guess who it is. (Is it a woman? Do they wear a cape?) The first person to guess correctly gets to choose the next superhero. Encourage children to choose superheroes who are positive role models.

Interview Research (for children 9-11)

Have children interview people they know to find out who those people admire most or would like to be like, and why. Invite children to share their interview results with the group. Talk about why interviewees chose the people they did, and what your group can learn from this.

Don't Let Anyone Lead You Astray!

**START
HERE**



Dear children,
don't let anyone
lead you astray!
(1 John 3:7)