

What Would Jesus Do?

BACKGROUND

Following Jesus is one of the most important decisions a person will make, and many make this decision around seventh or eighth grade. The following three lessons show students what it means to follow Jesus. In the first lesson, students will learn what leadership means. For Jesus leadership is about respecting others and paying attention to those who no one pays attention to. In Luke 9: 46-48, the text for lesson one, the disciples are arguing over who is the greatest. Up to this point it seems that they have not understood the message that status is not the issue. To illustrate his point, Jesus puts a child in front of the disciples. Children had very little status at that time. They were one of the lowest of the low in that culture.

Jesus continually elevated those who had very little status, either in the society as a whole, or in religious circles. In lesson two, students will learn how Jesus chose his friends. He did not choose his friends because of what they could give him or because of their social status. In fact, his friends made others think less of him. He chose to associate with people that no one else wanted to hang out with. Tax collectors were hated in that time because they were thought to be collaborators with the government. Tax collectors set their own rates of pay, and were known for taking advantage of people. However, when Jesus saw that these people wanted to repent, he ate with them. In that culture, much like today, eating with people was an important event. It showed friendship and care for the other person. It would be very unlikely for Jesus to eat with people he didn't like.

In the final lesson in this strand students will look at how Jesus treated enemies. The Samaritans were hated in Israel because at the time of the exile in the Old Testament about half the Jews were deported to another country. The ones who stayed behind married with other groups of people, and created some of their own religious traditions. Jews hated the Samaritans because they saw them as cooperating with the deportation of Jews. Like racism or the fear of national enemies, much of the hatred of Samaritans had little to do with the actions of any actual Samaritans. The story of the good Samaritan shows that when Jesus asks us to love our neighbor, he is asking us to love those who we dislike the most, or who scare us the most.

Throughout these lesson students will be learning what it means to follow Jesus from Jesus himself.

Dear Parent,

The unit we are now starting in Bible class focuses on understanding how Jesus acts. The first lesson deals with learning what Jesus meant by leadership, who Jesus made friends with, and how Jesus wanted us to treat our enemies.

The Bible passages for these lessons are: Luke 9:46-48, Mark 2:13-17, and Luke 10:25-37. Consider reading these verses with your child and asking them what they've learned about each set of verses. Additionally, you may try discussing the following topics, which relate to the course content.

- Share with your child about practicing servant leadership.
- Talk to your child about their friends. Ask them to tell you their favorite qualities of each of their friends. Talk to them about your friends and their best qualities.
- Talk to your child about world events; talk together about a good Samaritan response to national enemies.
- Pray with your children about leadership, friendship and enemies. Help them to take their problems, concerns and joys to God in prayer.

Talking to your children about faith is one of the most important ways they learn about it. Be as honest as possible with your child and help them to understand that all life is a learning experience, including your faith journey.

Blessings on the journey!

What Would Jesus Do?

LESSON 5: FOLLOWING JESUS

Objective

Students see that following Jesus means learning to act like Jesus did.

Key Concepts

- Disciples are people who choose to follow Jesus
- Disciples didn't automatically know what to do, but Jesus taught them.

Estimated Lesson Time: 45 minutes

Materials

- Five copies of "I'm Better Than You" (pg.66)
- Student Bibles
- Student Journals
- Paper for journaling

Teacher Preparation

1. Make five copies (one for each actor) of the "I'm Better Than You" skit (pg.66).

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Follow the Leader. Begin with a game. Choose one student to leave the room. Have the rest of the students get in a circle and choose a leader. When the student who left the room returns, classmates do exactly what the leader does. For example, if the leader scratches his or her nose, then everyone must do it. The student who was sent from the room has to try to guess who the leader is. If they guess, the leader is then sent from the room. Have a number of different students serve as the leader.

Ask the students who had to leave the room how they figured out who was the leader. Remind students that Jesus was a leader and wanted his followers to act like him, but they didn't always get it right.

LESSON STEPS

1. **I'm Better.** Recruit five volunteers for the "I'm Better Than You" skit. Have them perform the skit in front of the class.
2. **Exploring Scripture.** As a class, read Luke 9:46-48. Ask the students what Jesus was trying to teach the disciples. Tell the class that Jesus wanted his disciples to respect others and to put others before themselves. If we want to follow Jesus, we also have to act the way he acted. Remind them of the game they played at the beginning of the class, and how everyone had to do exactly what the leader did.

3. Reflect. Invite the students to think about people that seem to be leaders in their lives. Who leads them? Who do they act like? Who do they follow? Write these names and qualities on the board.

4. Apply. Distribute paper to each student. Invite students to write in their journal some of the people they follow. Then, ask students to list the qualities from the board that they see in themselves. Have students reflect on whether they are leaders or followers and which they'd like to be.

EXTEND THE LESSON

(This activity will extend the lesson to longer than 45 minutes.)

• **Being a Leader.** Invite a leader from a local church come to talk to the class about the responsibility of being a leader. They can also speak about how they look to Jesus as a model for leading.

• **Memory Work.** Practice the memory work (1 Corinthians 9:24-27, 10:13). Have the students stand in a circle around the perimeter of the room. Each student says one word of the verse; the next student supplies the next word. Allow students to help those who get stuck.



I'M BETTER THAN YOU ARE!

A SKIT FOR FIVE ACTORS

Narrator: One day Jesus was teaching his disciples about God, when the following fight broke out.

Student 1: I'm better than you.

Student 2: No, I'm better than you! My friends tell me I'm the best every day.

Student 3: Well, I know I'm better than all of you, because I'm awesome.

Student 1: No you're not.

Student 2: Yeah, I'm better. I can do all kinds of great stuff.

Student 1: No you can't. You can hardly walk without tripping.

Student 3: Yeah, besides, you can't be the best, because I'm the best.

Teacher: (stepping in) Hold it. Hold it. You want to see who's the best?

Student 1: Well we didn't mean you. I mean you are the best.

Teacher: See that little child? That little child is the best.

Student 2: Wait, what's so special about that kid?

Student 3: Yeah, I don't get it. I'm way better than a child.

Teacher: No, you don't get it, whoever welcomes the smallest, most insignificant person among you is the best, and whoever welcomes the most insignificant person also welcomes me, and then you really are the best.

What Would Jesus Do?

LESSON 6: JESUS AND FRIENDS

Objective

Students understand how Jesus chose his friends.

Key Concept

- Jesus didn't choose his friends because of what they could do for him, or because they were popular. He chose his friends because he knew that God loved them, and he wanted to show them that love.

Estimated Lesson Time: 45 minutes

Materials

- Student Bibles
- Student Journals
- Bible Commentaries
- Bible Dictionaries
- Study Bibles
- Concordances
- “Who Were the Tax Collectors?,” (pg.69) “Who Were the Scribes and Pharisees?,” (pg.70) and “Eating Together” (pg.71) worksheets

Teacher Preparation

1. Gather a variety of Bible Commentaries, and Bible Dictionaries. Be sure they include either Luke 2 or references that will help students answer the worksheets.
2. Make copies of the three worksheets: “Who Were the Tax Collectors?,” (pg.69) “Who Were the Scribes and Pharisees?,” (pg.70) and “Eating Together” (pg.71) so that each group has one type of worksheet, but each student has his or her own copy.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Friends. Ask the students to make a list in their student journals of several of their friends. Ask them to name one thing they like about each friend. Give them 5-10 minutes to do this.

LESSON STEPS

1. Review. Remind the students that the class has been talking about following Jesus and figuring out how Jesus made his decisions. One type of decision is related to making friends. Read Mark 2:13-17 as a class.

2. Groups. Divide students into three groups (or six groups if your class is large). Hand one of the worksheets to each group. Each student should have his or her own worksheet, but each group should have a different worksheet. Give students commentaries, study Bibles, concordances and dictionaries to help them respond to the questions on the worksheets. Provide a brief explanation of how to use these resources.

3. Share. Have each group report to the class about what they've learned from this passage about Jesus' friends. Encourage students to take notes on the answers from the other groups.

4. Scripture. Repeat the memory work (1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 10:13) as a class. Then have the class stand in a circle. Have each student say one word of the verse with the student to their left saying the next word. Be sure to help those who get stuck.

5. Prayer. End the class time in prayer. Invite Jesus to provide discernment for each student as they choose and interact with friends. Pray that God will assist each one in demonstrating love to others.

EXTEND THE LESSON

(These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 45 minutes.)

- **Peer Pressure.** Lead a discussion about about friendship and peer pressure. After some general discussion, divide the class by boys and girls and invite them to discuss unique challenges they face.

- **Thinking about Friendship.** Give students time to write in their journal. Invite them to reflect on the following questions:

How did you meet your friends?

Why are you friends with the people you are friends with?

Have you ever considered being friends with someone that others didn't like?

Who Were the TAX COLLECTORS?

Look up Mark 2:13-17 in a few commentaries or a Study Bible.



Why weren't tax collectors very popular?

Look up "tax collector" in a Bible dictionary. What does it say?

Why would Jesus hang out with a tax collector?

What does this tell you about Mark 2:13-17 and who Jesus was friends with?

Who Were the SCRIBES & PHARISEES?

Look up Mark 2:13-17 in a few commentaries or a Study Bible.

What does it say about the scribes and Pharisees?



Look up “scribes” or “Pharisees” in a Bible dictionary.
What does it say?

Why would they be offended by who Jesus was eating with?

What does this tell you about who Jesus was friends with?

Eating Together



Look up “eating” and “food” in a concordance.

Write down all the times when Jesus ate with someone or a group of people.

Look up “Table Fellowship” in a Bible dictionary.

What does this mean?

Why do you think Jesus spent so much time eating with people?

What does this tell you about who Jesus was friends with?

WORKSHEET RESPONSES—

Answers will vary.

Tax Collectors

- Tax collectors were considered dishonest.
- They were also ritually impure because of their contact with Gentiles.
- They were also considered to be part of the oppression of Jews since they collaborated with the government in collecting taxes.
- Jewish society shunned tax collectors because they stole from the poor by charging more than what was fair. Tax collectors were often rich and had gotten that way through dishonest means.
- This was a Jew hired by the Romans to collect taxes.
- Jesus was friends with those whom no one else wanted to associate with.

Scribes & Pharisees

- Scribe is a Hebrew word that means to write, to count and to put in order. In New Testament times scribes were men who wrote copies of the Scriptures. To be sure they had not made a mistake in copying, they would count the number of letters on each line they wrote. Scribes were educated; some served as secretaries, royal assistants or teachers.
- Pharisee means “the separate people.” They were a Jewish religious group who followed the religious laws and customs very strictly.
- Scribes and Pharisees were people who devoted themselves to the study of the Law or the Torah. They strictly observed the law by only eating with those who were pure and following all the purity laws.
- Because tax collectors were ritually unclean and because they had been considered traitors to the Jewish cause, the scribes and Pharisees couldn't believe that a teacher like Jesus would be eating with them.
- Jesus didn't make friends with the people who were the most well-respected or powerful people.

Eating Together

- References of Jesus eating with people: Matt 9:11, 15:38, 24:38, 26:26; Mark 14:14; Luke 5:30, 12:19, 17:27, 24:43; John 4:31
- Eating together was a significant custom in that time. The evening meal was very important and people tried to show how prominent they were by the kind of people they invited to dinner. They tried to invite others who were very influential or powerful.
- Like today, food and eating together is a way to show people that you care about them. It is a way to fellowship together.
- Jesus did not follow the custom of the day and dine with people to show status. Instead he chose to eat with people who were less respected and less important than he was.

What Would Jesus Do?

LESSON 7: JESUS AND ENEMIES

Objective

Students will begin to understand how Jesus asks us to relate to our enemies.

Key Concepts

- Jesus told his disciples to love their enemies.
- Enemies can be mean and hurtful, but Jesus also loves them, and expects us to do the same.

Estimated Lesson Time: 45 minutes

Materials

- Student Bibles
- Student Journals
- Copies of “Who is My Neighbor?” (pg.75)
- Several sections of the newspaper, or newspaper articles.

Teacher Preparation

1. Make enough copies of “Who is My Neighbor?”(pg.75) for each student.
2. Bring about a week’s worth of the national or global news sections from a newspaper. To save time you may want to choose specific articles and cut them out for each group.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Telling the Story. Invite students to act out Luke 10:25-37 while someone reads it from scripture. Assign character roles and have students mime the actions as the scripture is read.

LESSON STEPS

1. Neighbors and Enemies. Hand out “Who is my Neighbor?”. Have students spend time working individually. When students have completed the assignment, spend some time discussing their responses as a class.

2. Worldview. Divide the class into small groups. Hand each group a national or world news section of the newspaper. Ask each group to find a story that talks about enemies. Have students uncover what the people in the article are suggesting be done to the enemy or enemies. Then, ask students to talk about what Jesus would do with the enemies. Have them summarize the article and their ideas and report to the class.

3. Pray. Close the class session with prayer, inviting God to give wisdom when dealing with our so called enemies.

EXTEND THE LESSON

(This activity will extend the lesson to longer than 45 minutes.)

- **Solutions.** Expand on the newspaper activity by asking students to come up with concrete solutions for helping national or global enemies, like the Samaritan did. Have students share their ideas with the class.

- **Bible Drill.** Have a contest to see who can look up the following verses the fastest. Students should be seated at their desks and have their Bibles closed on top of the desks. The first one to find the verse should stand and start reading it. When one person is chosen as the winner, wait to read the whole verse until everyone has found it. Offer a prize to each person who finds a verse the fastest. The prize could be that they can go a few minutes early to lunch, or you could bring in a special snack or treat. Some passages to give:

- Matthew 5:44
- Proverbs 25:21
- Matthew 5:38-42
- Matthew 5:43-48
- Luke 11: 4
- Luke 6:27-36

Who is My Neighbor?

answer key

Jesus told his followers that they should love their neighbor as they love themselves. One follower wanted to know who his neighbor was, so Jesus told a story that is very familiar. **Read Luke 10:25-37**, then **summarize the parable** of the Good Samaritan below.

Answers will vary, but the basic story points should be listed; students should mention the actions of the Priest, Levite and the Good Samaritan.

In Jesus' day Samaritans were hated by the Jews because they were considered religiously and ethnically impure. Many of the Jews were very prejudiced against them. They were considered enemies of many Jews. **Why would Jesus tell a story about a Samaritan who helped a Jew, even though he was considered his enemy?**

Jesus probably told this story to break down a stereotype of Samaritans. He wanted to show that even enemies were human. Jesus was helping his audience understand that the Samaritan showed true love which in turn showed Jesus' acceptance of a racial minority despised in Israel. It contrasted the importance of truly loving someone (action) with religious beliefs (words).

Jesus tells the man who asked the question "who is my neighbor?" to act like the Samaritan.

What do you think that meant?

Jesus meant that we were to care for those we consider our enemies, even to the point of giving up our time, energy and money for them.

What would it mean for you to act like the Samaritan toward someone who is your enemy?

Answers will vary.

Who is My Neighbor?

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Jesus tells the man who asked the question “who is my neighbor?” to act like the Samaritan. **What do you think that meant?**

What would it mean for you to act like the Samaritan toward someone who is your enemy?

Assessment: Strand 2

What Would Jesus Do?

Name _____

Multiple Choice: Circle the best answer

1) When the disciples were arguing about who was better, who did Jesus say was the greatest?

- a. the tallest
- b. the smartest
- c. the least
- d. the richest

2) Jesus compares the most important to...

- a. a dog
- b. a child
- c. a king
- d. a slave

3) One of Jesus' friends was Levi, son of Alpheus. What was his profession?

- a. tax collector
- b. pharisee
- c. tent maker
- d. fisherman

4) When questioned by the Pharisees about his dinner partners, Jesus compares his ministry to sinners with:

- a. the wealthy's need for a servant
- b. the sick's needs for a physician
- c. the poor's need for money
- d. the slave's need for freedom

5) In the first century, eating with people was used as a sign of?

- a. wealth
- b. service
- c. status
- d. hunger

6) Tax Collectors were disliked because...

- a. they had a reputation for being dishonest
- b. they were ritually impure
- c. they collaborated with the government
- d. all of the above

7) Pharisees means...

- a. snobby
- b. the righteous people
- c. the separate people
- d. saved

8) Scribes and Pharisees devoted themselves to the study of...

- a. science
- b. law
- c. medicine
- d. art

9) Who helped the man in Jesus' story about being a good neighbor?

- a. Levite
- b. Priest
- c. Jew
- d. Samaritan

10) In the story about being a good neighbor, Jesus praises the one who shows what?

- a. mercy
- b. judgment
- c. friendship
- d. justice

Memory Work: Fill in the blanks.

Do you not know _____

_____?

Run in such a way that _____.

Athletes exercise _____ ; they do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one. So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air;

but I _____
_____, so that after _____

_____ I myself should not be disqualified. No testing has _____

_____ to everyone. God is _____,

and he will not let you be tested beyond your _____, but with _____

so that you may be able to _____ it.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27, 10:13

What Would Jesus Do?

Name **Answer Key**

Multiple Choice: Circle the best answer

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Memory Work: Fill in the blanks.

Do you not know **that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize?** Run in such a way that **you may win it.** Athletes exercise **self-control in all things;** they do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one. So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air; but I **punish my body and enslave it,** so that after **proclaiming to others** I myself should not be disqualified. No testing has **overtaken you that is not common** to everyone. God is **faithful,** and he will not let you be tested beyond your **strength,** but with **testing he will also provide the way out** so that you may be able to **endure** it.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27, 10:13