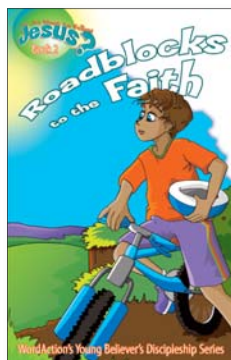
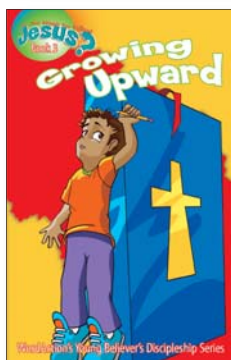


WordAction's Young Believer's Discipleship Series



So...You Want to Follow Jesus? Leader's Guide



Scripture: “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Purpose: The purpose of this Leader's Guide is to provide you with the basic resources to mentor a child following his or her conversion.

Resource List

So...You Want to Follow Jesus? Basic Bible Studies student packet

So...You Want to Follow Jesus? Leader's Guide

The Bible

*Print copies of this guide to give to parents.

Why Follow-up?

As children's workers, we rejoice when a boy or girl receives Jesus as Savior. However, frustration occurs when these children don't grow spiritually. Here are a few reasons their spiritual growth may stall or fail.

1. Lack of assurance. Children may equate being a Christian with feeling happy. When the emotions change, the child thinks he or she has displeased God. Children then may believe they are no longer saved. This problem intensifies if adults forget that a Christian child is still a *child* and place expectations that are too high on the boy or girl.

2. Conditions in their world. The average child spends from four to six hours a day watching TV. From television and other media, children absorb a non-Christian—often an anti-Christian—viewpoint.

How to use this guide:

Prepare by reading the suggested materials and the introductory information. This will help you be ready for questions that may arise during each session.

Create an open environment. Allow the child to ask any questions he or she may have.

Realize you do not have to be an expert. More than anything you teach, the child will remember your love and concern for him or her.

Have fun. You are part of an important spiritual event in the life of a child.

Even if children attend church regularly, the impact of this hour or two a week may be less than that of their daily TV fare.

3. Peer pressure. Middle elementary children and preteens identify strongly with their peers. They may want peer approval more than they want to please their parents or teachers. These children may yield to peer influence and fall away from their commitment to Christ.

4. No parental support. Children from non-Christian homes may have no spiritual support. In some cases, parents may object to their child attending church or carrying out personal spiritual disciplines.

5. Lack of mentoring. Discipleship does not happen by accident. The most common reason children fail to grow spiritually is because they receive no Christian nurture after conversion. Many churches leave it up to the child to “pick it up” from Sunday School and the worship service. Lacking directed instruction, children may not understand what happened when they received Jesus as their Savior and best Friend. They don’t know how to develop their relationship with God or how to live as Christians. This leads to failure, discouragement, and sometimes abandonment of their Christian commitment.

So...You Want to Follow Jesus? is a tool to use in discipling boys and girls who have become Christians. The five books provide children with clear instruction in these areas related to their new life in Christ:

1. Assurance of salvation by faith, not feeling.
2. Developing a relationship with God through prayer and Bible reading.
3. Dealing with peer pressure and temptation.
4. Living the Christian life of love.
5. Taking part in the Christian family, the church.

Every child should receive discipleship training following conversion. This is true regardless of where the conversion took place—Sunday School, Kids’ Crusade, Bible School, camp, a revival service, or through personal evangelism.

Follow-up Programming:

- View follow-up as important as leading a child to Christ. Good follow-up is good evangelism.
- Have a follow-up leader.
- Train mentors and parents to follow-up.
- Meet with new converts weekly. Use *So...You Want to Follow Jesus?* as a tool to help you lead each week's session. There are five books for five sessions.

No printed curriculum can guarantee that a child will mature spiritually. However, *So...You Want to Follow Jesus?* provides a means of nurture that makes spiritual growth more likely. The responsibility of nurturing a child's faith can feel overwhelming. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom to guide children into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. You can depend on Him!

Have a Follow-up Strategy

Do you have a strategy for following-up with a child after his or her conversion? You considered the importance of leading a child to Christ and looked at ways and times to present the gospel to the children in various ministry settings.

But what about follow-up? Do you have a plan? *So...You Want to Follow Jesus?* offers a starting point for following-up with children after their conversion. This leader's guide will help you consider some of the important aspects of a follow-up program. It will help you use the *So...You Want to Follow Jesus?* discipleship books.

Developing a Follow-up Program

If evangelism is a priority for your church, follow-up is just as important. Here are some things you can do for carefully planned follow-up.

The Follow-up Director

Churches with an active evangelism and follow-up program may already have a follow-up director to supervise evangelism/follow-up workers. This person trains workers, assigns new Christians to a follow-up worker, prays for workers and new converts, and receives reports on follow-up. This person also insures all the necessary materials are available.

Notes:

If your church already has a follow-up director, this person can supervise follow-up mentors.

If your church does not have a follow-up director, or if this person is too busy to supervise any more workers, appoint a children's follow-up director. In a small church, the children's director or a Sunday School supervisor could take this responsibility. Larger churches will need a separate children's follow-up director.

Selecting Mentors

A mentor has a very important part in a child's spiritual growth. Ask yourself, "What sermon or Bible lesson do I specifically remember from my childhood?" No answers? Now, try this question, "Who made a difference in my Christian life?" The point should be obvious. We remember the people more than we remember the specifics. And because we remember the people, we remember the lessons we learned from them.

Mentors do not simply teach the truths found in the Bible study books. They must be strong Christian models for children. Children will look to their mentors as their pattern of living and faith for direction in life.

When selecting mentors, look for those who meet these qualifications.

1. The mentor must be a maturing Christian who lives in harmony with the teachings of the Bible and the church. Children are more strongly influenced by what people do than what they say. If a child notices his or her mentor behaving contrary to what the Bible teaches, the child will be confused. This can cause children to reject further Christian teaching.

2. The mentor must pass a criminal background check. Sadly, child abuse in the church is a growing problem. It often seems to be the person you would least expect. To protect your children, your workers, and your church, screen children's workers carefully. When you recruit mentors, tell them what screening processes you will use. Check with your pastor and children's ministries director for your specific policy. Your screening process should

Notes:

include a background check and a formal interview. Also teach mentors what their responsibilities are for reporting suspected child abuse if a child reveals this information.

3. The mentor should have previous experience working with children. Mentors need lots of patience and a real love for children. When selecting them, consider children's workers, parents, and other adults who relate well to children. You may discover older adults, who no longer want to teach a class, serve effectively as mentors.

4. The mentor must be willing to spend time on this assignment. This includes time studying each lesson and weekly visits with the child. The weekly visits with the child will take about 45-60 minutes. Visits should be done in a supervised environment.

5. The mentor must be faithful in carrying out responsibilities. Mentors must meet regularly with the child until the child completes the entire program. Children who don't complete the program will miss important spiritual truths they need to grow in their Christian life.

6. If possible, the mentor should be a person the child knows. The younger the child, the more important this is. However, even older children will feel more at ease with someone familiar to them. It is especially important to assign children who are new to the church to someone they know. This could be a bus captain, the neighbor who brought them to church, or the parent of a friend.

Mentor Conduct Guidelines

Today's society has become very alert to the problem of child abuse. To protect the child with whom you work, your church, and yourself, follow these guidelines as a mentor.

- Cultivate a friendly relationship with the child's parents. Avoid any suggestion that the relationship you develop with the child is superior to the parent-child relationship or excludes the parents. Invite the parents to sit with you during the session.

Notes:

For additional help on child safety, visit with your local pastor for specific church guidelines.

- When you work with the child, keep the door to the room open all the time. Mentor in a supervised setting.
- Be very careful about physical touch.
 - Keep all touches brief.
 - Don't touch any area that is covered when the child wears a bathing suit.
- Never take the child on a social outing. If you feel that outside social contact is needed, always arrange for the parents to come along.
- If a child reveals to you that he or she is part of an abusive relationship, report it to your pastor immediately. The child needs the counseling of professionals to deal with the circumstances. It is not your place to handle the situation. It is your responsibility to report it to the proper authorities beginning with your pastor.

Ways to Use This Study

There are three ways you can use this study.

1. Assign a Christian adult to mentor the child. This individual will meet with the child once a week for five weeks or until the child completes all the *So...You Want to Follow Jesus?* lessons.

This approach makes possible a close relationship between a child and a Christian adult other than the child's parents. Children may be more likely to share their spiritual needs and problems in the one-on-one setting than in a group setting.

2. Let interested Christian parents disciple their own children. The parents should be the primary spiritual influence in a child's life. Scripture gives them the responsibility for their child's spiritual training. The parents may understand better how to guide their child. Also, younger children may feel more at ease with parents than with an unfamiliar adult.

There are some possible weaknesses. Older children may not respond as well to their parents as to another adult. Parents must also discipline themselves

Notes:

to hold to a consistent study time with their child. If parents decide not to mentor the child, invite them to sit with you each session. Be sure to give them resources to help them disciple their children through family devotions.

3. Use *So...You Want to Follow Jesus?* in a class setting. Sometimes there are more children to disciple than adults to disciple them. This sometimes happens following group evangelistic events such as VBS, Kids' Crusade, or summer camp. If a child comes from a non-Christian family, the parents may not welcome visitors or be comfortable with the one-on-one approach.

This class approach provides for the follow-up of children when there are not enough adults to assign one-on-one. However, it is more difficult to build the close relationship that occurs when working one-on-one. Some children will be hesitant to talk about personal matters in a class setting. If you use *So...You Want to Follow Jesus?* in this way, try to provide one worker for every five to seven children.

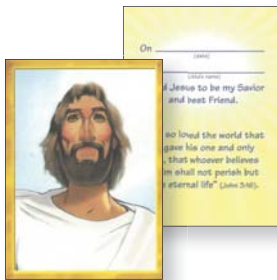
Beginning Follow-up

The mentor's first visit to the newly-saved child and parents should take place within 24 hours after conversion. If this is not possible, visit within the first week.

Visiting the child is important for two reasons. First, once the feelings of excitement subside, the child may feel unsure of what he or she did. The child may think nothing really happened or Christian living is too difficult. Children from non-Christian homes are especially at risk. They have no one to affirm their decision, and they may have to deal with their parents' objections. Visiting children immediately allows you to help them strengthen their assurance of salvation and build a foundation for further spiritual growth.

Second, communicating with the children and their parents immediately shows them the church cares about them. This may help prevent suspicion or misunderstanding.

Notes:



The commitment card is part of the *So...You Want to Follow Jesus?* student packet.

When the follow-up director learns of a child's conversion, take these steps.

- **Call the parents to express joy over the child's conversion.** Explain *briefly* the church's plan for discipling children through *So...You Want to Follow Jesus?* Ask the parents' permission to assign their child a follow-up mentor or offer to supply them with the *So...You Want to Follow Jesus?* materials. If the answer is yes, arrange for the first visit with the family.
- **Select a mentor for the child, or train the parents how to follow-up using *So...You Want to Follow Jesus?*** The mentor and parents should be trained how to follow-up. Do not leave a child's spiritual development to chance. Spiritual growth does not "just happen." Be intentional about the process.

What Do I Do?

It is a wonderful privilege to help children grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ. You can help a child begin a life-long journey with Jesus.

The five books in this packet will help you teach children the basics of what it means to follow Jesus. You will help them understand what happened when they invited Jesus to be their Savior and best Friend. You will give them tools to help them grow into faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

Your role is very important. Just as God gives parents to newborn babies to care for them, He also gives spiritual parents (guides) to care for newborn Christians. Here are some tips to help you use this packet:

1. Meet with the child each week to go over a new book. Meeting each week helps you build your relationship with the child. Each meeting should last no more than one hour.

2. At your first session, give the child the Commitment Card. Print on the back the child's name and the date he or she decided to follow Jesus. This will serve as a visible reminder to the child of the

Notes:

spiritual commitment he or she made. Laminate it for durability.

3. Provide an easy-to-read Bible for the child. It is important for children to have their own Bibles and to understand what they are reading. The answers in *So...You Want to Follow Jesus?* books will come from the New International Version (I DQ) of the Bible. There are other versions that may be easier for children to read. The New International Reader's Version (I DMQ), the New Century Version (I aQ), or the New Living Translation (I O) are also easy to read.

4. Read through each book before meeting with the child. Familiarize yourself with the material in this Leader's Guide. Then, during each session, work through the answers and activities with the child. Answer any questions the child has.

5. Open and close each meeting with prayer. This lets the child know prayer is important. After the first meeting, ask the child if he or she has read the Bible and prayed during the week. Encourage without being pushy. Doing devotions is a difficult habit to start and must be done out of love and not from obligation. You may want to prepare an easy-to-use Bible reading plan for the child. The Gospels are a good place to start. Have the child read a chapter or less per day depending upon his or her reading level. For younger children, have the parents read to them from a Bible story book.

Here are the book titles:

Book 1: I Believe in Jesus, Now What?

This book will help the children understand what happened when they asked Jesus to be their Savior and best Friend. The Quick Start section gives children information that will help them grow spiritually. It is a quick glance at information they will receive in more detail in another book. It also covers a few introductory concepts to help the children understand what it means to be a Christian.

Book 2: Roadblocks to the Faith

This book gives the children insight into how to resist temptation. The children will learn about Jesus' temptations in the wilderness and how He resisted them. They will also look at ways they, too, can overcome temptations in their life.

Notes:



Faith Words are foundational words of the faith that support our spiritual and theological training.



Book 3: Growing Upward

This book helps the children grow closer to God. It introduces God's desire for children to grow as Christians, to pray, and to read and study the Bible. The children will learn the PACT outline to help them pray. They will also work through a passage of scripture to help them understand how to read and apply God's Word to their life.


Book 4: Growing Together

This book will help the children understand the special role of the Church in a Christian's spiritual growth. The Church helps Christians grow, have fellowship with other Christians, and serve the world around them. The children will look at Acts 2:41-47 and learn how the Church began. They will also learn how they can have an important part in their local church.

Book 5: Going Outward

The last book reminds children that following Jesus means more than just "getting into heaven." Being a follower of Jesus means all of Jesus' followers work to transform the world in which they live. Children will learn that transforming their world means they live the way God would want them to live, they tell others about Him, and they serve those who are poor and hurting. It also means they forgive others when those people wrong them.

Faith Words

Faith Words  support our spiritual and theological training. Faith Word definitions will help children understand what each Faith Word means.

I Believe in Jesus, Now What?

Book One

Purpose: The purpose of this book is to review with the child what happened at conversion and give

Notes:

the child a brief introduction to the Christian faith. The quick start guide will help children get started in the Christian life.

Open the session with prayer.

Say, **Deciding to follow Jesus is a big decision. It is important to understand what happened. I want to give you a few pointers to help as you begin to follow Jesus. We will meet each week and review these books. Each book will help you understand what it means to follow Jesus.**

Ask, **Do you have any questions about what happened when you asked Jesus to be your Savior and best Friend? Do you have any questions about what we are going to be doing?** (Give the child time to respond.)

Answer any questions the child has. If the question relates to something in this book, say, **We are going to answer that question in this book. Let's answer that question when we get to the section.** If the child asks a question addressed in another book, say, **We will look at that question more fully in book** (give the book number). Then give a short answer to the question.

What Happened?

Say, **Let's begin. Our first section will review what happened when you accepted Jesus as your Savior and best Friend.**

Review the **What Happened?** section with the child. Answer any questions the child may have along the way.

Be sure to draw attention to the following points:

- God loves him or her.
- A person cannot earn his or her salvation. The child does not have to earn God's love.
- Jesus' death and resurrection make it possible for a person to be forgiven and live a life pleasing to God.

Notes:



Repentance and **disciple** are
Faith Words.

Quick Start


Review the **Quick Start** section with the child.

Say, **This section helps you get started in your Christian life. God doesn't want people to read the Bible and pray because they feel they "have to." Christians do these things because they want to grow closer to God and learn to obey Him.**

Then ask, **Which of these do you think will be most difficult for you to do?** (Allow the child time to answer.) Pray with the child concerning this activity.

Follow Me


Have the child read Luke 5:27-31. Then have the child answer the questions on page 4.

Then say, ** Repentance** is a very important part of being a Christian. It means to turn away from sin and turn to God. Imagine you are riding in the car with your mom and dad, and they realize they are going the wrong direction. What would they do? (Allow the child time to answer.) Then say, **They would turn around and go the other direction. To repent means we realize we are going in the wrong direction, away from God. So, we turn around and head toward God. We begin living our life the way Jesus would. We follow His example.**

A New Identity!

Review **A New Identity!** from page 5 with the child.

Point out the following key points:

- When we ask God, He forgives all our sins. God does not want us to feel guilty all the time. Have the child read Acts 10:43.
- ** A disciple** is a person who follows the teachings and example of another person. Christians are followers of Jesus. This is more than just believing the right things. To follow Jesus means to care about the things He cared about and do the things He did. Jesus had a strong relationship with God the Father, and He

Notes:



Savior, sin, repentance, disciple, forgiveness, and temptation are Faith Words.

cared for people who were hurting and struggling with problems. Have the child read John 12:26.

- Being part of a family is important for children. It is also important for believers. God planned for the Church to help us grow. Have the child read John 1:12.

Salvation Scramble

Help the child unscramble the salvation words on page 6. Then review the definitions of each word: Savior, sin, repentance, disciple, forgiveness, and friend! The last answer is: Jesus is **God's Son**.

A Time to Remember!

Say, **You made a very important decision, and you will want to remember it always.**

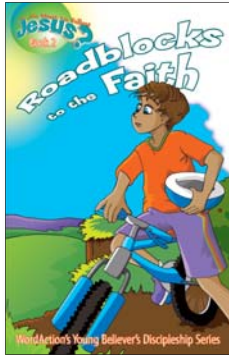
Help the child complete the information on page 7 about his or her salvation experience.

Telling Others

Say, **Telling others about Jesus is important. You will be able to tell people about Jesus in several ways. You will be able to tell them by the way you live. And, you will be able to tell them with your words.**

Turn to page 8. Have the child write the names of three friends or family members who need to know Jesus. Then have the child write some ideas for ways they can show God's love to those on the list. Encourage the child to keep the ideas practical and specific. For example, to witness to the parents, the child may encourage the parents to go to church, but they can also begin obeying them.

Say, **We have covered a lot of information this time. Next week we will look at some roadblocks to faith and find out how to overcome them.** Close with a short prayer. Thank God for the child's decision to follow Jesus. Ask God to help the child become established as a Christian.



Roadblocks to the Faith

Book Two

Purpose: The purpose of this book is to learn how to resist temptation. **Temptation** is anything that makes us want to disobey God. Help the child know everyone faces temptation, temptation is NOT sin, and a person can overcome temptation.

Open the session with prayer. Quickly review last week's book. Answer any questions the child has.

Say, **This week we are going to talk about temptation.** Every person faces temptation, but not everyone handles it the right way. Today we are going to learn how to resist temptation and be obedient to God.

Have the child read the introduction letter and article on pages 2 and 3.

Hot, Hungry, and Hassled! and A Battle in the Desert

Have the child read Matthew 4:1-11.

Everyone faces **temptation**. Jesus faced the temptation of some very powerful forces. He was tempted to use His powers for His own personal gain by turning stones to bread. He was tempted to do the spectacular by throwing himself from the Temple. He was tempted to take a shortcut to ruling the world by serving Satan. Jesus' defense against temptation was to quote the Scripture. Reading and knowing God's Word will help Christians resist when they are tempted.

After the child has finished **Hot, Hungry, and Hassled!** say, **It is comforting to know Jesus faced temptation too. Jesus set the example for how people can overcome temptation. He used the Scriptures.**

Review the definitions from **A Battle in the Desert**, and answer any questions the child has. Have the child read the verse as you discuss the definition

Notes:



Temptation, Holy Spirit, and obedience are Faith Words.



Prayer and church are Faith Words.


of each Faith Word:  ***temptation***, ***Holy Spirit***, and ***obedience***.

Emphasize the following:

- ***Temptation*** happens to everyone.
- The ***Holy Spirit*** helps us resist temptation, and He guides people in what they do.
- ***Obedience*** means to listen to God and do what He says.

You Are Not Alone

Turn to page 6. Have the child fill in two things to practice in order to be a better Christian. ***Temptation*** is included on this list because the more people resist temptation, the better they are at resisting. Christians will still be tempted, but they learn how to overcome it. Spiritual disciplines are ways to “practice” self-control and learn what God desires of His followers.

Review the definitions and explanations of **prayer**, **Bible reading**, and **Church** with the child.  ***Prayer*** and ***Church*** are Faith Words.

Investigative Report

Turn to page 7. This activity will help children realize everyone faces ***temptation***. It is important that the person being interviewed not go into detail about specific sins. The person should focus on the fact that he or she has faced temptation and tell what he or she did to overcome temptation.

Encourage the child to interview someone other than the mentor or the child’s parents. You may need to arrange the interview if the child is new to the church. Plan to have another adult sit with the child following a church service to answer the questions in the interview.

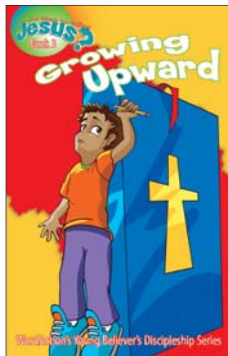
Three Important Questions

Turn to page 8. These questions are important and are asked often by Christians of all ages.

Notes:



Restitution is a Faith Word.




Does **temptation** ever go away?

The answer is no. Temptation is always present in our lives, though what tempts us at one point in our lives may not tempt us in another.

If I give in to **temptation**, will I lose my relationship with God?

Sin damages our relationship with God. But God is not going to give up on us easily. He does not stop loving us because we stumble. The important thing is to stop doing what is wrong, ask forgiveness, and strengthen the relationship with God.

What should I do if I give in to **temptation**?

Ask God to forgive you, and ask anyone you may have hurt to forgive you. Sometimes when we do something wrong, God asks us to make things right with the person we wronged.  The word for this is **restitution**. Remember God is a loving, merciful, and forgiving God.

Close the session by praying for God to help the child resist temptation.

Growing Upward

Book Three

Purpose: The purpose of this book is to help the child develop a strategy for ongoing spiritual growth. It will also help the child view Bible reading, prayer, and the other spiritual disciplines as part of relationship building with God.

Open the session with prayer. Quickly review last week's book. Answer any questions the child may have.

Say, **This week we are going to look at ways to grow closer to God. The best way to grow closer as a friend with someone is to spend time with him or her. In order for our relationship with God to grow, we need to spend time with Him.**

Notes:

The spiritual disciplines are important. Christians should not do them because they have to do them but because they are in a relationship with God. The disciplines help Christians grow closer to Him. But spiritual disciplines are not just a means to grow closer to God. They transform people in the process. Prayer, Bible reading, worship, fasting, and service are ways God uses to transform His followers into Christlike people.

Go over the introductory letter and the **Beyond Pen Pals** section of the book.

Growing with God

Have the child read John 15:1-17 and answer the questions. If the child is younger, read the passage to him or her.

One of the important ways to grow closer to God is by serving others. This is more than just teaching a Sunday School class or helping to take the offering. Loving others means Christ's followers care for people who are hurting and struggling with problems. It also means they treat other people as Jesus would treat them. They love their enemies and do good to people who hurt them.

Growing Strong Roots

Turn to page 5. Say, **We use the illustration of growing because it describes the Christian life very well. It takes time and care for a plant to grow. It also takes time for people to grow spiritually.**

Ask, **What are some things a plant needs to grow?** (Give the child time to respond.)

Say, **Plants need food, water, soil, and the sun to help them grow. Christians need some things to help them grow too.**

Have the child read each section. Ask questions to help clarify the section as necessary. Answer any questions the child has.

Then have the child complete the maze **Three Seeds to Grow** on page 6. The correct path should spell the words talk, listen, and live.

Notes:

God Listens to Prayer

There are several “prayer guides” to help people structure their time of prayer. The PACT method helps people remember they are part of a relationship. Just as they would make a pact with their friends, people can make a pact with God to grow closer to Him. Turn to page 7. Give the child a sheet of paper or a prayer journal.

Praise. During prayer, thank God for who He is and what He has done in your world and in your life. Praise Him for being loving, merciful, kind, and just.

Ask. Because God is our Father, He wants to hear about requests for others and your needs. He wants to hear what concerns you. Be aware that God may not always answer your prayers the way you want or expect.

Confess. If you sin, you need to confess your sin to God and ask for His forgiveness. If you can’t think of something, you can ask God, “Is there anything that keeps me from being what I should be as Your follower?” Sometimes God will point out something you need to change.

Thank. It is important to thank God for the ways He answers your prayers. He is always working on your behalf. You need to say “Thank You” to God just as you would to a person who has done something for you.

God’s Word to Grow On.

Turn to page 8. Say, **Reading the Bible is an important way to learn about Jesus and what God has done. God’s Word is a record of how He has worked in other people’s lives and how He continues to work. When Christians read the Bible, God teaches them how they should live.**

Read through the tips with the child. Answer any questions he or she has concerning the material.

Then say, **Let’s try studying a passage together.**

Have the child read John 3:16-18. You will want to practice this exercise before doing it with the child. Help the child answer the questions. You may want to

Notes:



help the child by giving illustrations from when you did the exercise.

Say, **It is important for us to read the Bible on a regular basis. I try to read my Bible daily.** If the child is a reader, recommend reading from the Gospel of John. Tell the child he or she does not have to make it through a whole chapter, but can read it in parts. Help the child determine the next week's portion of Scripture reading from the Book of John.

Here is a sample:

Monday: John 1:19-28

Tuesday: John 1:29-34

Wednesday: John 1:35-42

Thursday: John 1:43-51

Friday: John 2:1-11


Saturday: John 2:12-17

Sunday: John 2:18-24

Say, **God will help you as you study the Bible and pray. It may seem difficult at first, but God will help.** Close by praying that God would help the child understand God's Word and know He hears the child's prayer.

Growing Together

Book Four

Purpose: The purpose of this book is to introduce the child to the Church.  The **Church** means more than just the local church where the child attends, though this is an important part of the concept. The Church is all believers who continue the mission of Christ to witness to and disciple others.

Open the session with prayer. Quickly review last week's book. Answer any questions the child has. Then have the child read the introductory letter.

Say, **God knows that being His follower is not always easy. He knows we will face temptations. There are times when we will feel lonely. He also knows that being part of a group helps us stick with something because we have support. God gave the Church. A church is more**

Notes:





Church, community, and fellowship are Faith Words.

than a building or people who typically meet on a Sunday morning. Let's look at two words to help us define what the Church should be like.

A Different Kind of Place

Have the child answer the questions on page 3. Then have him or her read the paragraphs following the questions. Answer any questions the child has.

The words  **community** and  **fellowship** mean more than just the area where you live or what you do at a church gathering. Community is a group of people who meet for a common purpose, and fellowship means the people in the church care about each other. There is a bond shared by all believers in Christ. They don't all have to agree and think the same thoughts. They are simply following Jesus together.

The Church Begins

Have the child read Acts 2:41-47. Turn to page 4.

Then say, **When the Church began, something very special happened. The Holy Spirit filled all the believers, and they lived in peace and unity with each other.**

Have the child answer the questions.

The Early Church believed sharing their possessions was an important part of following Jesus. No one in their church should have a physical need. The believers cared for each other so deeply they would sell their possessions to help others. Giving to the poor, the orphans and widows, and the hurting are still a vital part of following Jesus.

Early believers shared meals with each other to develop their relationships with each other. If they could not love other believers, they could not love God.

As a Church, Jesus' followers learn together, worship God together, and serve others together.

Notes:



Worship is a Faith Word.


God's Family

Before meeting with the child, ask yourself the following questions:

- What does it mean for me to worship with other believers?
- What does it mean for me to support other believers and to be supported by them?
- What does it mean for me to encourage other believers and to be encouraged by them?

Turn to page 5. Have the child read each section. Following each section, talk to the child about what the section means to you. Answer any questions the child has.

Live Together

Say, **Christians worship God together, they support each other, and they encourage each other. You will have to do this next exercise at the next church service.**  **Worship** is telling and showing God we honor and love Him. I want you to list some ways Christians talk to each other, listen to each other, and worship together. What are some of the actions they do to express these things?

Turn to page 6. You may want to have the child brainstorm a list of ways we worship. Encourage the child to do this assignment at church. You will need to check on this section during next week's meeting.

Doing Your Part

Each Christian has a role to play in the Church. God gives us financial resources, spiritual gifts, talents, and time that He expects us to use to further His kingdom. The Church provides a place where people put those resources to work.

Being part of the Church is both a privilege and a responsibility. Some people focus on the privilege part. They acknowledge salvation, but then they do nothing. Being part of the Church is a responsibility. Being part of the Church means we accept God's call to fulfill His mission to care for and love the world. We have a responsibility to do more than attend.

Notes:



Turn to page 7. Say, **Being part of God's Church is a responsibility. God calls us to be part of His mission to change the world by telling others about His love and how Jesus can be their best Friend.**

Review each word with the child. Answer any questions the child may have.

The Living Church

Turn to page 8. Say, **The church is more than wood, brick, and glass. The building does not make the church. It is the people inside who are important. Let's write the names of some people in our church. On Sunday, I want you to say hello to them. Have them sign their names on the list.**

This exercise will help the child learn the names of other people in the church. It will also help each person become part of the child's spiritual growth process.

Close the session by praying that God would help the child and the people in the local church grow closer to Him.

Going Outward

Book Five

Purpose: The purpose of this book is to help the child develop an outward-focused faith.

Open the session with prayer. Review last week's book. Check the names the child has for "The Living Church." Answer any questions the child has. Then have the child read the introductory letter.

Many people believe that being "saved" means I get to go to heaven, I get my sins forgiven, and I don't have to go to hell. This is a very selfish focus. People are saved, so they can reach the world with God's love. They can expand the kingdom of God by loving others unconditionally.

Say, **Christians are to live so they show God's love to everyone they meet. This means Christians care for people who are hurting, they**

Notes:

help the poor every opportunity they have, and they think of others first. God wants Christians to love others, even the ones who hurt them.

The Great Adventure

Have the child read each section on page 3. Answer any questions he or she has.

Then say, Forgiving, serving others, and telling others about Jesus may seem a bit scary. Sometimes, it is not easy to forgive people. Telling others about Jesus can seem difficult. Let's read a story to help us understand this better.

The Good Samaritan

Have the child read Luke 10:25-37, and then answer the questions on page 4. If the child is younger, read the passage to him or her.

The Good Samaritan was the last person the Jewish religious leaders expected to help. Jews and Samaritans did not like each other.

Sin is often thought of as something a person does wrong, but sin can also be something a person does not do. If people turn their back on someone who needs help or reject a person, this is sin too. Jesus said believers are to love God with their heart, soul, mind, and strength. They are also to love their neighbor as themselves. This story told the religious leaders that neighbors are everyone—even their enemies.

Reflecting God

Turn to page 5. Have the child read the quote from St. Francis of Assisi (pronounced Ah-see-see).

Ask, What do you think St. Francis meant when he said that? (Allow the child time to answer.)

Say, As Christians, our actions really do speak louder than words. Love is not just a feeling; it is an action. Christians show love by what they do for people and don't do to them. People see God's love in the way Christians live. People also know Christians follow God when they tell others about Him.

Notes:

Have the child read each section. Answer any questions the child has.

On a Mission

Say, **God sends us on a very important mission: to show the world His love for them.** Have the child decode the secret message.

As a Christian, I should:

- Forgive others with my love.
- Serve others with my life.
- Tell others with my lips.

Forgiving Others

Say, **It is not always easy to forgive others. Sometimes, people do things that really hurt. It is important to remember that forgiving does not mean we accept what they did as right. It also doesn't mean we have to hang around with that person all the time.**

Turn to page 7. Have the child write about a time he or she had to forgive someone at school, someone at church, or a family member.

Pray, thanking God for the child's willingness to forgive others.

You've Done It!

Say, **Congratulations! You have finished all five books. This is the end of the books, but only the beginning of following God.**

Turn to page 8. Have the child read the paragraph and several of the verses.

Then ask, **What do these verses tell us?** (Allow the child to answer.)

Close with prayer, asking God to help the child continue to grow closer to Him.

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