We should follow God no matter what happens.

Bible Verse

“Serve only the Lord your God and fear him alone. Obey his commands, listen to his voice, and cling to him” (Deuteronomy 13:4).

Growing Closer to Jesus

Students will
- explore ways to follow God,
- discover how feelings or circumstances can “block” them as they follow God,
- explore characteristics of God, and
- commit to following God one way this week.

Teacher Enrichment

Bible Basis

God rescues Daniel in the lions’ den.

Daniel 6:1-28

At the beginning of Daniel 6, we find that Daniel is the victim of a scheme to get rid of him as overseer of all the leaders of Babylon. These jealous leaders set a trap based on Daniel’s devotion to his God. Knowing that Daniel would pray only to his God, the leaders convinced the king to write a decree stating that whoever prayed to anyone but the king in the next 30 days would be thrown into the lions’ den. When Daniel was found praying to God, King Darius, who greatly valued Daniel, was trapped. In Medo-Persian law, once a king confirmed a law, it could not be changed. Of course, Daniel went right on praying to God—even a death threat couldn’t keep Daniel from following and communing with God!

When the leaders saw Daniel praying and reported it to the king, the king didn’t respond in anger toward Daniel as they had hoped. He didn’t want to have to execute his best leader. In fact, we see that he set about to find a way to avoid following through on his order. But Daniel’s enemies reminded the king that according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, his decree could not be changed. Daniel went into the lions’ den.

As unlikely as it seemed that Daniel could still be alive the next morning, Darius was the first one to the den to find out if God had saved Daniel.

Daniel’s life of faith and his trust in God saved him from destruction and brought glory to God.

Prayer

- Read Daniel 6:10.
- Think about how faithfully you have followed God despite the challenges you’ve faced.
- Pray: God, help me to follow you openly, especially in…Give me the courage I need to stand for you. As the children in my care face challenging situations, help them turn to you with the same faith and trust Daniel had.
Before the Lesson

- Collect the necessary items for the activities you plan to use, referring to the Classroom Supplies and Learning Lab Supplies listed on the chart.
- Make photocopies of the “Hands-On Fun at Home” handout (at the end of this lesson) to send home with your students.
- Pray for your students and for God’s direction as you teach the lesson.

This Lesson at a Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Students Will Do</th>
<th>Classroom Supplies</th>
<th>Learning Lab Supplies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attention Grabber</strong> Block It!—Block others from catching gizmos, discuss what may block them from following God, and read Deuteronomy 13:4.</td>
<td>Bible</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Worthy to Follow</strong>—Read Scripture passages to find qualities of God, and discuss whether today’s heroes have those qualities.</td>
<td>Bibles, newsprint, masking tape, markers, index cards, CD player</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What’s to Fear?</strong>—Learn Deuteronomy 13:4, explore possible results of following God, and commit to following him.</td>
<td>Bible, paper, pencils</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Closing No Matter What!</strong>—Choose ways to follow God, and commit to praying and encouraging each other to follow God.</td>
<td>Thick craft glue, papers from previous activity, paper, pencils, tape, scissors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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Welcome

As kids arrive, ask them how they applied last week’s lesson to their lives. Ask questions such as, “What’s one accomplishment you gave God credit for last week?” or “How did you give thanks to God for good things in your life?”

Tell kids that whenever you shake the noisemaker, they are to stop talking, raise their hands, and focus on you. Explain that it’s important to respond to this signal quickly so the class can do as many fun activities as possible. Practice the signal two or three times.
Module Review

Use the casual interaction time at the beginning of class to ask the kids the following module-review questions:

- **What choices have you made lately that will help you be spiritually healthy?** (I have been reading my Bible more; I have been praying more.)
- **How did God help you stand up for what’s right recently?** (I had to choose not to let someone cheat off my paper; my friends got mad at me because I wouldn’t steal.)
- **What good things did you give God credit for last week?** (My family and I thanked God for my dad’s new job; I thanked God for helping me be brave to do right.)
- **What is your favorite of what you’ve learned in the past few weeks?** (I really liked learning about how Daniel and his friends chose to eat good stuff; I liked learning about the fiery furnace.)
- **How is your life different as a result of what we’ve learned in class this month?** (I am closer to God; I understand more about standing up for what’s right.)

Attention Grabber

**Block It!**

**SUPPLIES:** Bible

Say: *We’re going to play a game, and I need four volunteers.*

Choose four volunteers, and help them pick gizmos from the Learning Lab box that they can safely toss to one another. When each volunteer has chosen a gizmo, ask the volunteers to go to different sides of the room and stand facing the center.

Say: *Our volunteers will be the Tossers. The object of the game is for the Tossers to toss the gizmo to one another in whatever order they choose. The rest of you will be the Blockers. You’ll try to block the throws. If you block a throw and grab the gizmo, tap one of the Tossers on the shoulder, and take his or her place. If no one blocks a throw in one minute, I’ll call time and choose new Tossers. Ready? Here we go!*

When everyone understands the rules, begin the game. Play several rounds, making sure that each student gets a chance to be both a Tosser and a Blocker before you end play. Then have kids form pairs or trios to discuss the following questions. After each question, invite partners to share their answers with the rest of the class.

Ask: *Which did you prefer—being a Tosser or a Blocker? Explain.* (A Blocker, because it was easier; a Tosser, because it was exciting.)

- **When you were a Tosser, how did you feel when the Blockers tried to block your throws?** (I was really frustrated; I wanted to win.)
- **When you were a Blocker, what was it like to block a throw and grab the gizmo?** (I felt excited; I felt proud.)

Say: *In this game, the Tossers had a job to do, but the Blockers tried to keep them from being successful. Sometimes in life, others try to block us...*
from being successful at the job we’re supposed to do—and that job is to follow God!

Ask: • When has someone tried to block you from following God? (I wanted to go to church, but my coach scheduled a makeup practice for us on Sunday; I wanted to read my Bible, but my friends made fun of me.)

• What does it mean exactly to follow God? (To do what he says; to do what’s right; to obey him.)

• How can you know for sure what God wants you to do? (Read the Bible; listen to your teachers and parents.)

Say: Sometimes it’s hard to follow God because others try to block us from doing what he wants. Other times, it’s hard to follow God because we may be confused about what he wants us to do.

But today’s Bible verse tells us exactly how God wants us to follow him. Listen to what it says. Open your Bible to Deuteronomy 13:4, and have a volunteer read the verse aloud: “Serve only the Lord your God and fear him alone. Obey his commands, listen to his voice, and cling to him.” This verse is great to know because it can always remind you how to follow God. Even if others try to block your way, you’ll know what God wants you to do.

Our Bible story today is about a brave man who wanted to do everything this verse says to do. This man served only God, he obeyed God’s commands, he listened to God’s voice, and he clung to God. Following God was the most important thing in his life! This man was ready to follow God no matter what—even if it cost him his life!

Let’s find out who this brave man was! As we go through the lesson, watch for ways this man followed God, no matter what. Then remember— We should follow God no matter what happens, too!

Bible Exploration & Application

Daniel’s Choice

SUPPLIES: Bibles, “No Lyin’! Drama Starters” handout (p. 156), paper, pencils, newsprint, colored markers, scissors, construction paper

Before class, photocopy the “No Lyin’! Drama Starters.” Cut the handout in half so you’ll have directions to give to each of two groups.

Say: Today we’re going to look at the story of how a brave man named Daniel followed God, even though it meant being thrown into a very scary situation. Open your Bible to Daniel 6, and show kids the chapter. This story comes straight from the book of Daniel. Here’s what we’ll do.

Have kids form two groups, Group A and Group B. Explain that each group will act out half of the story for the rest of the class. Say that you have a basic set of directions for each group to follow, but that kids can do whatever they want to enhance their stage productions.

Give each group a Bible, a paper crown, construction paper, markers, a stripe stick, and a section of the handout. Also make sure each group has newsprint, colored markers, and a supply of paper and pencils. Tell kids they’ll have about 10 minutes to get ready to perform their plays.
Say: **First, choose someone in your group to be the Reader, who will read the Bible passage aloud for the group. Then decide how to act out your group’s part of the story. One person can be the Lion Narrator, another can be Daniel, and someone can be the King. The other group members can be Lions, Administrators, Soldiers, or Set Designers. The actors in the play should work together to write their own scripts and decide how to use the props I’ve given you. The Set Designers can draw scenery to hold up behind the actors during their productions. Ready to start? OK—lights, camera, action!**

Give kids about 10 minutes to prepare their plays. Tell kids to have fun writing their scripts and preparing their scenery—hamming it up is encouraged! Be ready to offer help and suggestions as needed. After about seven minutes or when kids seem ready, shake the *noisemaker*, and give a three-minute warning.

After another few minutes, shake the *noisemaker* again. Read or briefly summarize Group A’s section of the Bible story. Then let them present the first half of the Bible story. After the production, lead everyone in a round of applause. Then read or summarize Group B’s part of the Bible story, and let them present the rest of the Bible story. Applaud their efforts also.

Return the props to the Learning Lab. Then have kids discuss these questions in their groups. After each question, invite volunteers to share their answers with the rest of the class.

Ask: • **What did the other administrators do to try to stop Daniel from following God?** (They tricked King Darius into making a law that would trap Daniel.)
  • **Why did they do that?** (They didn’t like him; they were jealous of him.)
  • **What choice did Daniel have to make after he heard about the new law?** (He could obey the law so he would be safe; he could keep praying, no matter what happened to him.)
  • **As Daniel prayed, do you think he worried about getting caught and being thrown to the lions? Explain.** (Yes, because he knew the king had to follow the law; no, because he trusted God no matter what.)
  • **If you’d been in Daniel’s shoes, what do you think you would have done?** (I think I would have kept praying because I love God; I don’t think I could be that brave.)
  • **When have you had to choose between following God and doing what everyone else was doing?** (When I was nice to a person no one liked; when I chose not to watch the movie my parents told me I shouldn’t watch.)
  • **How did God help Daniel in the lions’ den?** (God kept him safe; God shut the lions’ mouths.)
  • **When has God helped you when it was hard to follow him?** (When I hadn’t studied for a test and just took the F; when my best friend lied about me.)

Say: **Sometimes following God is hard. We may feel scared, or we may worry about what others will think of us. Some of you may have been nervous about performing in front of the class today. If so, that’s a lot like how we feel sometimes when we try to follow God. We may feel like everyone is looking at us, and that can be uncomfortable.**

For Daniel, following God was downright dangerous. It meant risking his life. But God helped Daniel be brave enough to follow him, and then God kept Daniel safe. God will help you follow him, too! Like Daniel, **we should follow God no matter what happens.** Now let’s learn more about why we should follow God.
Worthy to Follow

SUPPLIES: Bibles, newsprint, masking tape, markers, CD player, index cards

Before class, tape two large sheets of newsprint on the wall at kids’ eye level. At the top of one sheet, write in large letters, “God Is…” At the top of the other sheet write, “Today’s Heroes.” On individual index cards, write one of these Scripture references: Exodus 34:6; Deuteronomy 32:4; 2 Samuel 7:28; Psalm 18:30; Psalm 145:17; and Hebrews 6:18.

Ask kids to call out the names of heroes people have today. They may call out the names of sports stars, movie stars, or music stars. Write the names they call out on the “Today’s Heroes” sheet. For each name, brainstorm with kids what qualities make that person a modern hero. Write the qualities next to each name.

Then have kids form six small groups. Give each group a Bible, a marker, and an index card with one of the Scripture passages on it.

Say: There are lots of people today who follow popular, famous, or rich people. They think that following the examples of those people will make their lives better. But is that really a good idea? Let’s look a little deeper at who we should follow and why.

Each group has a card with a Scripture passage written on it. Read your passage aloud in your group. As you read, find words or phrases that describe qualities of God—what God is like. Write the words or phrases you come up with in large letters on the “God Is…” paper on the wall.

As kids work, play “Quiet Moments” (track 17) on the CD. As the music fades out, have children finish writing. Shake the noisemaker, and gather everyone in front of the two sheets of paper.

Say: I’m eager to hear what you found out about our God. When I point to your group, call out the words you wrote about God on the paper.

After all the groups have shared responses, ask:

• Which of these qualities you listed for God does [name of hero written on paper] possess? (This hero is slow to anger; this hero is powerful; this hero doesn’t have any of the qualities.)

Ask kids which of God’s qualities each of the heroes they named have.

• Do any of the heroes have all of the qualities you listed for God? Why or why not? (No, none of them have all of God’s qualities; only God has all those qualities.)

Say: Look at the qualities we wrote for God and the qualities we wrote for the modern heroes.

Ask: Why are God’s qualities better than the heroes’ qualities? (God’s qualities make a real difference; God’s qualities are available to us.)

• Based on your answers, who do you think we should follow, God or these modern heroes? Why? (God, because those heroes can’t really help us; God, because he’s more powerful than the heroes.)
God is the only one worth following. God is truly more wonderful than any other hero! You know, Jesus is a name we definitely need to have on our list of heroes. Jesus has all of God’s qualities, because Jesus is God! Jesus is the perfect hero! One reason he came to earth as a human was so we could get to know what God is really like. Because of his death on the cross and his resurrection, Jesus made it possible for our sins to be forgiven so we could live forever in heaven. No wonder we should follow him!

Daniel trusted God. He knew that we should follow God no matter what happens. Let’s find out more about following God.

### BIBLE VERSE

**Deuteronomy 13:4**

Serve only the Lord your God and fear him alone. Obey his commands, listen to his voice, and cling to him. (Deuteronomy 13:4)

### Hands-On Bible

Make sure children have their Hands-On Bibles. Set out paper plates, scissors, glue, markers, yarn, and staplers.

Say: Daniel was willing to follow God no matter what! Let’s look a little closer at Daniel. Open your Hands-On Bible to the Daniel Bible Hero Biography by Lamentations 3, and read more about Daniel. Then we’ll do the “You Can Trust God—No Lyin’!” activity.

After children read the biography and complete the craft, have them sit in a circle with their lion faces. Give each child a paper slip and a pencil, and have kids each write about one situation where they’re tempted to turn away from God. Go around the circle, and ask each child to name the situation and then place the paper slip in the lion’s mouth. After everyone has shared a situation, pray for your students, asking God to help each one follow God, no matter what.

Tell kids to take their crafts home with them and add paper slips each time they’re tempted not to follow God. Encourage kids to use their crafts to tell their families the story of Daniel in the lions’ den.

### What’s to Fear?

**SUPPLIES:** Bible, paper, pencils

Have the kids form trios. Give each group a piece of paper and a pencil, and set out the Learning Lab items.

Say: Our Bible verse for today is Deuteronomy 13:4. Open your Bible, and show kids the verse. Have a volunteer read the verse aloud for the class. Then lead kids in saying the verse together: “Serve only the Lord your God and fear him alone. Obey his commands, listen to his voice, and cling to him” (Deuteronomy 13:4).

In your groups think a minute about some of things you fear might happen if we follow God by obeying his commands, listening to his voice, and clinging to him. One person in your group will be the Recorder and
write down the idea your group has. The other two will demonstrate your idea to the rest of us. When you have decided on an idea, choose an item from these supplies that could represent that consequence. For example, if you decided to follow God by praying before you eat lunch at school, other kids might laugh and make fun of you. You could choose the smiley face bouncy ball to represent other people laughing.

Give the groups about three minutes to decide on a gizmo and possible consequence. Have the groups present their ideas one at a time. Then ask:

• How does the fear of these consequences affect the choices you make? (I sometimes don’t do the things that God wants because I don’t want these things to happen.)

• What consequence did Daniel face? (He faced death; other people didn’t like him.)

• How did this affect Daniel’s choice? (He cared more about pleasing God than death; he was probably still afraid, but he did the right thing.)

Say: We may never have to face death as a consequence of following God the way Daniel did, but it really can be hard to follow God no matter what happens. Let’s explore how to encourage each other to do that.

Closing

No Matter What!

SUPPLIES: thick craft glue, papers from previous activity, paper, pencils, tape, scissors

Cut a fabric square for each student. Make the squares as large as possible. Have the kids remain in the trios from the previous activity. Hand each group more paper and pencils, glue, tape, and a fabric square for each child.

Say: Let’s look again at the consequences you wrote on your papers. Now I want each of you to think of another situation where it might be difficult for you to follow God. For instance, you might think, “Praying before I eat lunch at school,” or “Showing God’s love to a person who isn’t very nice to me.” Write your idea on a piece of paper.

Give kids a few minutes to write. Then have kids glue their papers on their fabric squares, using only a tiny amount of glue. Show kids how to roll the paper inside the fabric and fasten the roll with tape. When everyone has finished, have kids form one large circle. Then have kids toss their fabric rolls into the center of the circle.

Say: When I say go, grab one of the fabric rolls, and return to your places. Ready? Go!

Have kids read the words on their papers. If kids get their own papers, have them trade with another person. Say: Daniel faced opposition when he followed God, and we might face pressure, too. This week, I want you to pray for the person facing the situation on your scroll. You may not know who that person is, but you can pray that he or she will have the strength to follow God no matter what happens. Take your fabric and paper home with you to remind you to pray.
Then close with a prayer similar to this one: Dear God, thank you for being a wonderful God to follow. It’s great to know that you’ll always lead us the right way. Help us be brave followers like Daniel this week. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Growing closer to Jesus extends beyond the classroom.

Photocopy the “Hands-On Fun at Home” handout (at the end of this lesson) for this week, and send it home with your kids. Encourage kids and parents to use the handout to spark meaningful discussion on this week’s topic.
**Group A**

Read Daniel 6:1-18. Have one person be Leonard the Lion, who will narrate this part of the Bible story. Choose people in your group to act out the characters in the story.

**Make sure to:**

- Read the Bible passage out loud in your group.
- Have your actors write scripts for themselves.
- Have your set designers draw scenery to hold up behind the actors during your play.
- Include everyone in your group!

Here's a way for Leonard to start:

“Hi! Let me introduce myself. I am Leonard the Lion. I live in a den with lots of my friends, near the palace of the king of Persia. I want to tell you about the most amazing thing that happened to us. We all still talk about how cool the whole thing was. It all started…”

**Group B**

Read Daniel 6:19-28. Have one person be Lawrence the Lion, who will narrate the second half of the story. Choose people in your group to act out the characters in the story.

**Make sure to:**

- Read the Bible passage out loud in your group.
- Have your actors write scripts for themselves.
- Have your set designers draw scenery to hold up behind the actors during your play.
- Include everyone in your group!

Here’s a way for Lawrence the Lion to start:

“Hey there! I’m Lawrence the Lion. I see my pal Leonard told you about some of the wild stuff that went on around here with that Daniel guy. So, Daniel was thrown in with us and that’s when it got really crazy! That night…”
We should follow God no matter what happens.

“Serve only the Lord your God and fear him alone. Obey his commands, listen to his voice, and cling to him” (Deuteronomy 13:4).

Fun Facts

Daniel was held captive in the city of Babylon. Did you know that Babylon

• had double walls around the entire city that were wide enough for chariots to ride on? One wall was 21 feet wide and another was 11 feet wide.

• was home to the famous Hanging Gardens, one of the Seven Wonders of the World? The gardens were grown on suspended terraces at the palace of the Babylonian king and had to be watered using special hoists.

• might be where the famous tower of Babel (see Genesis 11) was built? Archaeologists have dug up ruins of a tower-like building that some people think was the tower described in the Bible.

Fun Food

Get your family together to make a “pride of lions.” Put shredded coconut in a plastic bag with several drops of yellow food coloring, and shake the bag until the coconut turns yellow. Stick two large marshmallows together with peanut butter. Spread peanut butter on the top half of one marshmallow. Press coconut into the peanut butter to make a mane. Use peanut butter to stick on four miniature marshmallows for legs. Break off a small piece of licorice, and stick it in the back of your lion for a tail. Put a miniature marshmallow at the end of the licorice, spread it with peanut butter, and sprinkle coconut on the tail. Take turns telling one another about times it’s hard to follow God. Then eat your lions, and ask God to help you follow him.