Jesus helps us follow him.

Bible Verse
“Follow in his steps” (1 Peter 2:21b).

Growing Closer to Jesus
Children will
- realize that Jesus went to heaven to live with God,
- understand that Jesus wants us to tell others about him,
- teach Pockets to spread the good news about Jesus, and
- know that Jesus is always with us.

Teacher Enrichment

Bible Basis
- Jesus rises to heaven.

**Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:6-11**

We all know that Jesus appeared to his disciples multiple times after his resurrection. But we don’t often note the number of times he appeared or the number of people he appeared to over the 40 days he remained on earth. Luke emphasizes that in Acts 1:3-4. The “convincing proofs” left no doubt in his followers’ minds that Jesus had truly risen from the dead. And following the commission he had given them, they were ready to spread the word to their world!

Before Jesus physically departed for heaven, he gave his followers a plan to use in reaching that world. First they were to wait. The power would come when the Holy Spirit came on them. Then they were to move out from Jerusalem step by step, eventually reaching the ends of the earth. That plan is a good one for us to follow as well. If we have the Holy Spirit in our lives, he’ll empower us to reach others for Christ, whether it’s across the street or across the world.

As Jesus was ascending to heaven, angels came to give the disciples one last prod and one last promise. It did no good for the followers to stand looking into the sky. They needed to get going on the plan Jesus had laid out for them. The promise the angels gave was that Jesus would return—in a powerful and unanticipated way—as he had departed from them.

In our lives it’s easy to be comfortable in our faith in Jesus and not worry too much about others. But we, too, must remember that Jesus is coming back to take his followers to live with him in heaven. And he has given his followers the charge to share his love with everyone until he comes. That’s not just something we should do. It’s what our lives should be about!

Prayer
- Read Acts 1:8.
- When are times you find it hard to share your faith?
- Pray: Lord, please strengthen me and give me the courage to tell the world about you. Help me especially when…
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 “Today I Learned…” handout (at the end of this lesson) to send home with your children.
- Pray for the children in your class and for God’s direction as you teach the lesson.

This Lesson at a Glance

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*See the end of this lesson for extra-time ideas and supplies.
Welcome Time

**SUPPLIES:** “Cross Name Tags” (p. 14), markers, safety pins or tape

- Bend down and make eye contact with children as they arrive.
- Greet each child individually with an enthusiastic smile.
- Thank each child for coming to class today.
- As children arrive, ask them about last week’s “Today I Learned…” discussion. Ask questions such as “In what ways did you follow Jesus last week?” and “What did you discover that you believe in even if you can’t see it?”
- Say: **Today we’re going to learn that →Jesus helps us follow him.**
- Hand out the cross name tags children made during Lesson 1, and help them attach the name tags to their clothing. If some of the name tags were damaged or if some of the children weren’t in class that week, have them make new name tags using the photocopiable handout.
- Direct children to the Let’s Get Started activities you’ve set up.

**Let’s Get Started**

Set up one or more of the following activities for children to do as they arrive. After you greet each child, invite him or her to choose an activity.

Circulate among children to offer help as needed and to direct children’s conversation toward today’s lesson. Ask questions such as “Why is it important to follow Jesus?” or “What’s the best thing about following Jesus?”

**Option 1: Going Up!**

**SUPPLIES:** photocopies of the “Jesus Is With Us” handout (p. 127), crayons, scissors, glue sticks, and cotton balls

Before class, make photocopies of the “Jesus Is With Us” handout. Be sure to make a copy for each child plus a few extras for visitors.

Set out crayons, scissors, glue sticks, and cotton balls. Give each child a handout, and help them write their names on the blank line. Direct each child to color the picture and then carefully cut out the card along the bold lines. Help children fold their cards on the center line; then pinch the top center of the card and fold the sides together, tucking the center portion inside the card. Crease the folds. Now the card will open and close and the figure of Jesus will pop up through the clouds. Have children glue pieces of cotton on the clouds around Jesus. As children work, remind them that →Jesus helps us follow him. Tell them that today’s Bible story is about the time that God lifted Jesus to heaven.
Option 2: Walking on Clouds

SUPPLIES: pillows

Scatter three or four old pillows in one corner of the room. Invite children to take a walk on “heavenly clouds.” Let children carefully step from cloud to cloud or crawl over the clouds.

As children play on the clouds, ask questions such as “Where do you think heaven is?” and “Where do clouds go?” Tell children they’ll hear a story about how God lifted Jesus up through the clouds to live in heaven. Explain that since Jesus went back to heaven, now it’s our job to go everywhere and tell people about him. Remind children that Jesus helps us follow him and that we can follow Jesus by telling others about him.

Option 3: Cloud Building

SUPPLIES: cotton balls

Set out a large bag of cotton balls, and invite children to build interesting things out of “clouds” such as feathery buildings, fluffy flowers, and cloud towers. Stimulate children’s imagination by asking questions such as “What do you think heaven might look like?” and “What do you think a choir of angels sounds like?” Mention that they’ll hear a story about how Jesus went to live in heaven. Point out that Jesus helps us follow him and we want to tell others about the place Jesus is making for us in heaven.

When everyone has arrived and you’re ready to move on to the Bible Story Time, encourage the children to finish what they’re doing and get ready to clean up.

Pick Up Our Toys

SUPPLIES: CD player

Lead children in singing “Pick Up Our Toys” (track 2) with the CD to the tune of “Skip to My Lou.” Encourage children to sing along as they help clean up the room.

If you want to include the names of all the children in the class, sing the song without the CD, and repeat the naming section. If you choose to use the CD, vary the names you use each week.

SING

We will pick up our toys.
We will pick up our toys.
We will pick up our toys,
And put them all away.

There’s [name] picking up toys.
There’s [name] picking up toys.
There’s [name] picking up toys,
Putting them all away.

(Repeat.)

Make sure you have plenty of adult supervision as children walk on the pillows.
Bible Story Time

Setting the Stage

SUPPLIES: paper, marker, tape, yarn or ribbon, stickers, paper bag

Tell the children you'll clap your hands to get their attention. Explain that when you clap, the children are to stop what they're doing, raise their hands, and focus on you. Encourage children to respond quickly so you'll have time for all the fun activities you've planned.

Before class, write the letters N, S, E, and W on separate sheets of paper. Tape the appropriate letters to the north, south, east, and west corners of the room. On another sheet of paper, write: “Look under the table.” Then roll the paper and tie it with yarn or ribbon. Place a sticker for each child in a paper bag, and set it under a table in the room. Leave the backing on the stickers.

Say: Let's play a game. See the letters on the walls? They stand for north, south, east, and west. When I point to you, call out any direction, and then go to the letter on the wall that stands for the direction you chose.

Make sure everyone understands the directions, and then begin play. When everyone is standing by a letter, hold up the roll of paper tied with the ribbon. Say: This is great! We're spread out all around the room—to the north, south, east, and west! And look! There's an important message on this paper. I'll hand it to a messenger and whisper what it says. The messenger will run to someone else and hand him or her the paper and whisper the message. Then the first messenger will sit down and the new messenger will travel to another person to spread the message. We'll play until everyone has heard the message and is sitting down.

When everyone is sitting, ask:
• How did the message get to everyone? (We told the message; we spread the message; we traveled all over the room.)
• Would a message make it to everyone if even one person hadn't wanted to be a messenger? Explain. (No, the message would've stopped; yes, maybe someone else would have told the message.)
• Where did we carry our message? (To everyone; to every corner of the room.)

Say: We carried our message to the north, south, east, and west—all around our room! When a message is important, people want to be told. Today, we'll hear about the special message Jesus wants us to tell all around the world. Jesus helps us follow him, and one way to follow Jesus is to tell others about him. Now let's read the message. Have a child untie the ribbon around the paper. Read the message aloud, and have children find the bag. Open the bag, and hand each child a sticker. Don't take the backing off your stickers, because in just a few minutes we'll use these stickers as we listen to the Bible story.
**Lesson 8**

**Bible Song and Prayer Time**

**SUPPLIES:** Bible, construction paper, scissors, CD player, basket or box

Before class, make surprise cards for this activity by cutting construction paper into 2x6-inch strips. Prepare a surprise card for each child plus a few extras for visitors. Fold the cards in half, and stamp the *flame stamp* inside one of the surprise cards. Bookmark Matthew 28:16-20 and Acts 1:6-11 in the Bible you’ll be using.

Have children sit in a circle. Say: **Now it’s time to choose a Bible person to bring me the Bible marked with today’s Bible story. As we sing our Bible song, I’ll pass out the surprise cards. Don’t look inside your card until the song is over.**

Lead children in singing “Read God’s Book” (track 3) with the *CD* to the tune of “The Muffin Man.” As you sing, hand out the folded surprise cards.

**Sing**

Now it’s time to read God’s book,  
Now it’s time to read God’s book.  
Let’s hear a Bible story.  
(Repeat 3x.)

After the song, say: **You may look inside your surprise cards. The person who has the fire flame stamped inside his or her card will be our Bible person for today.**

Identify the Bible person. Ask the Bible person to bring you the Bible. Lead the class in clapping for the Bible person, cheering, and making fun applause sound effects by slapping your thighs with your palms. Help the Bible person open the Bible to the marked place, and show children where your story comes from. Then have the Bible person sit down.

Say: **[Name] was our special Bible person today. Each week we’ll have only one special Bible person, but each one of you is a special part of our class! Today we’re all learning that †Jesus helps us follow him.**

Let’s say a special prayer now and ask God to help us learn that †Jesus helps us follow him. I’ll pass around this basket. When the basket comes to you, put your surprise card in it and say, “God, please help us follow Jesus.”

Pass around the basket or box. After you’ve collected all the surprise cards, set the basket aside, and pick up the Bible. Lead children in this prayer: **God, thank you for the Bible and for all the stories in it. Teach us today that †Jesus helps us follow him.** In Jesus’ name we pray, amen.

**Hear and Tell the Bible Story**

**SUPPLIES:** Bible, crayons, glue stick, stickers from “Setting the Stage”

Set out crayons, a glue stick, and the *batting* and remaining *gauze square* from the Learning Lab. Spread the Learning Mat: Follow Jesus on the floor.

Say: **Let’s play a story game to**
see how much you remember. Leave the backing on your sticker, and lay your sticker on a footprint on the mat. I’ll ask a story question. If the answer is “yes,” move your sticker forward two footprints. If the answer is “no,” move it back one footprint. We’ll follow the footprints and see where they lead. Ask the following “yes” and “no” story questions.

- Did Cleopas and his friend know who Jesus was at first? (No.)
- Were Cleopas and his friend glad that Jesus was alive? (Yes.)
- Will Jesus help us follow him? (Yes.)
- Did Thomas believe without seeing? (No.)
- Does Jesus answer our questions? (Yes.)
- Did Thomas finally believe that Jesus is alive? (Yes.)

Say: You’ve traveled quite a way on the mat. Where did the path lead?

Have children take turns telling about the pictures their stickers are beside. Point out the fact that everyone’s sticker is on a path leading to Jesus. The path on the Learning Mat always leads to Jesus. We want to follow Jesus every day. I’m glad that Jesus helps us follow him. Hold up the Bible. Our story today comes from the books of Matthew and Acts in the Bible. Point to the Learning Mat. The Learning Mat shows us pictures of the Bible story. Point to the picture of Jesus ascending to heaven.

Ask: What’s happening in this picture? (Jesus is going up to heaven; he’s leaving to go be with God.)

Say: Sometime after Jesus visited Thomas, Jesus and 11 disciples went to a mountain. Let’s have two volunteers color the mountains in the picture. Pause as your volunteers begin coloring. You may continue as they finish. Jesus said to his disciples, “Therefore go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Ask: What did Jesus tell his disciples to do? (Teach others about him; go all over the world to tell people about Jesus; remember that Jesus is always with us.)

Say: Jesus told his disciples to tell everyone about him. And you know what? He wasn’t just talking to his disciples—he was talking to us, too! Jesus wants us to tell others about him.

Ask: Who can you tell about Jesus this week? (My neighbor; my aunt; my friend.)

Say: In our story, it sounds as if Jesus was going somewhere. Let’s find out where he was going. Continue with the story. God sent the Holy Spirit to help people remember what Jesus had said and to remember how much Jesus loves us. Let’s put a robe on Jesus to remind us how his love is all around us like a warm coat. Let one child be the gluer and another child stick the gauze square on Jesus’ robe.

As Jesus talked to his disciples that day, he began to rise into the air. Up and up he went, until a cloud hid him from sight. The disciples were amazed! Let’s add the clouds to our picture. Have two children attach the batting for the clouds.

Suddenly two men in white stood beside the disciples. “Why are you standing here staring into heaven?” they asked. “Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!”
Jesus went to live with God in heaven. If we believe in Jesus, someday we'll live in heaven with Jesus, too. Until then, we can have Jesus as our very best friend here on earth. That's great news! Let's play a game to help us remember that Jesus loves us and Jesus helps us follow him.

Do the Bible Story

**SUPPLIES:** CD player, newspaper

Hand each child a sheet of newspaper. Tell children to crumple the newspapers to make “fluffy clouds.” Have the children stand with their clouds around the room in a large circle.

Say: I'll be Captain Cloud and give you directions to follow using your clouds. We'll see how many good cloud followers we have in our room. If you need help, use your hands to balance the clouds. Give the following commands to the children:

- Skip around the room with your cloud under your arm.
- Walk with your cloud between your knees.
- Put your cloud on your head, and tiptoe around the room. You may use your hands if you need help.
- Balance your cloud on your nose, and hop up and down. You may use your hands.
- Sit quietly on your cloud.

Say: We'll go around the circle and take turns telling which directions were easy and which were hard for you to follow and why. Allow time for children to tell their answers.

Ask: Why was it easier when you used your hands? (It helped balance the cloud; our hands kept the clouds from falling.)

- How was using your hands in this game like how Jesus helps us follow him? (Jesus helps us just like our hands helped us; it's easier to follow when we have help.)
- What are some ways you can follow Jesus this week? (I can read the Bible; I can pray; I can tell my friends about Jesus.)

Say: Jesus helps us follow him in all we do. We learned today that Jesus wants us to follow him by telling other people about him. And Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would help us. So let's each tell someone about Jesus this week! Now let's sing a fun new song about following Jesus and telling others about him!

Lead children in singing “Spread the Good News” (track 13) with the CD to the tune of “Old MacDonald Had a Farm.” Do the accompanying actions for a lively touch. Sing the song through twice.
Spread the good news everywhere (clap in rhythm),
Jesus is alive! (Pat alternating knees.)
Take the good news here and there (clap in rhythm),
Jesus is alive! (Pat alternating knees.)
Step-step-hop (step, step, hop),
Don’t be slow. (Turn around in place.)
Right foot, left foot (step with your right foot and then your left foot),
Do-si-do! (Fold arms and step in a backward circle.)
Spread the good news everywhere (clap in rhythm),
Jesus is alive! (Pat alternating knees.)
(Repeat.)

Say: I’m so glad that we can follow Jesus’ directions and tell others about him. And isn’t it great that ➤Jesus helps us follow him? Now let’s quietly do-si-do and find a place to sit. We’ll see what Pockets is up to today.

Closing

Spread Out

SUPPLIES: plastic knife, rubber band, CD player

Before class, fasten a plastic knife to Pockets’ paw with a rubber band.

Bring out Pockets the Kangaroo. Go through the following script.

After you finish the script, put Pockets out of sight.

Pockets: (Comes in singing mixed-up words to the song children just sang.) “Spread the good food everywhere, Jesus is alive!” Hi, everyone! I’m ready to spread the good food! Are we having peanut butter or strawberry jam?

Teacher: What’s the plastic knife for, Pockets? What’s going on?

Pockets: I’m ready to spread the good food all around. I heard you singing earlier, and I’m ready to…(sings) “spread the good food everywhere, Jesus is alive!”

Teacher: (Laughing) No, Pockets, we’re not spreading good food, we’re spreading the good news! We’ve been learning that ➤Jesus helps us follow him, and he wants us to follow him by telling people the good news. Children, let’s tell Pockets about our Bible story and the good news Jesus wants us to tell. (Encourage children to tell how Jesus wants us to follow him by telling others about his love.)

Pockets: Oh, I get it now. Jesus wants us to follow him, and one way is to tell others about his love.

Teacher: Right! Would you like to sing that song with us, Pockets?

Pockets: I sure would! It makes me glad to know that ➤Jesus helps us follow him. Thanks, boys and girls!
Friends Follow

SUPPLIES: Bible, CD player, cotton balls

Have children form groups of two to four. Hand each group a cotton ball. Say: *Jesus rose to heaven to live with God. But we know that Jesus is always with us, too. How do we know that? The Bible tells us.* Read Matthew 28:19-20 from an easy-to-understand Bible such as the Hands-On Bible.

Ask: • How long will Jesus be with us? (Forever; always.)
  • What does Jesus want us to do? (Teach other people what Jesus taught; tell people about Jesus.)

Say: The cotton ball you have is like a little cloud. It can remind you that even though Jesus went up through the clouds and now lives in heaven, he’s with us always. And Jesus wants us to follow him by telling others about him. When I clap my hands, the person holding the cotton-ball cloud will say who he or she can tell about Jesus this week. When I clap again, hand the cotton-ball cloud to someone else in your group.

Continue until all the children have had a turn. Say: Let’s join hands and pray.

Pray: Dear God, thank you that Jesus is always with us. Help us follow Jesus by telling others about him. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Hand a cotton ball to each child. Say: You may take this little cloud home as a reminder that Jesus is always with us and that **Jesus helps us follow him.**

Say: Before we leave, let’s sing the song about our Bible verse, 1 Peter 2:21b, which says, “Follow in his steps.” Invite children to repeat the Bible verse with you, and remind them that the Bible is God’s Word. Then lead the children in singing “Follow in His Steps” (1 Peter 2:21b) (track 12) with the CD to the tune of “London Bridge.”
Jesus helps us follow in his steps,
Follow in his steps,
Follow in his steps.
Jesus helps us follow in his steps,
Because he loves us!
(Repeat.)

Growing closer to Jesus extends beyond the classroom.

Photocopy the "Today I Learned..." handout (at the end of this lesson) for this week, and send it home with your children. Encourage parents to use the handout to plan meaningful family activities to reinforce this week's topic.
Lesson 8

For Extra Time
If you have a long class time or want to add additional elements to your lesson, try one of the following activities.

Lively Learning: Bubble Up!

Before this activity, make a cloud blower for each child by taping a group of three or four drinking straws together, side by side. Then mix 1 cup water, ⅓ cup liquid dish soap, and 1 teaspoon sugar in a bowl or jar. Stir the mixture until the sugar is dissolved.

Spread newspaper on the floor or take the children outside, and invite them to blow bubble clouds as you review the Bible story together. For each child, fill a paper cup half full of bubble soap. Hand each child a cloud blower. Show children how to dip the ends of their straws into the liquid and then blow bubbles into the air. Challenge the children to follow their bubble clouds as you remind them that Jesus helps us follow him.

Make to Take: Take Jesus to the World

Before class, inflate and tie a blue balloon for each child. Set out green construction paper, scissors, and tape. Distribute blue balloons, and invite children to cut or tear the shapes of pretend countries to tape on the “world” like a globe. As children work, point out that Jesus wants us to go into all the world to make followers of people. Remind them that Jesus helps us follow him. When the balloon globes are done, let children bop them back and forth with a partner and call out the names of places where they could tell about Jesus.

Pick up pieces of any broken balloons immediately to avoid choking hazards.

Treat to Eat: Edible Clouds

Make yummy clouds to eat and enjoy! Hand each child a paper plate, a graham cracker, and a plastic spoon. Place a large dollop of whipped cream in the center of the cracker, and let children use spoons to shape cloud formations such as billowing thunderheads, fluffy cumulus, and wispy cirrus clouds. Remind children that Jesus helps us follow him, and even though he rose to heaven through the clouds, he’s ready to help us follow him here on earth, too.

Story Picture: Jesus Rises to Heaven

Hand each child a photocopy of the “Today I Learned…” handout. Set out cotton balls, glue, and a yellow highlighter pen. Allow children to stretch cotton balls and then glue them on the picture as clouds. Let children trace the sunbeams with a yellow highlighter pen.
Jesus Is With Us

Photocopy this page and cut along the solid lines. Fold on the dotted lines.

“I am with you always.”
Matthew 28:20b

“Jesus is with ______.”
Today your child learned that Jesus helps us follow him. Children learned that Jesus rose to heaven but said he’d always be with us. Children talked about telling others about Jesus.

Verse to Learn
“Follow in his steps” (1 Peter 2:21b).

Ask Me...
- What did Jesus tell the disciples as he rose to heaven?
- Who can you tell about Jesus?
- What are some ways our family can follow Jesus?

Family Fun
- Make Crazy Clouds with your child for a fun family treat.
  Beat 3 egg whites, 1 teaspoon vanilla, and ¼ teaspoon cream of tartar. Slowly add 1 cup white sugar, and beat until stiff, glossy peaks form. Cover a cookie sheet with a brown paper sack. Let your child mound cloud shapes on the paper. Bake at 275 degrees for 1 hour. Cool in the closed oven for 2 hours. Enjoy the crazy clouds while your child tells how Jesus rose to heaven and wants us to tell others about him.