

THE DAILY CHOICE

Relying on Jesus is a
choice we make
every day.

Matthew 4:18-22
Joshua 24:15

SESSION SUPPLIES

- ★ Bibles
- ★ large index cards
- ★ two bedsheets
- ★ Styrofoam “burger” boxes
- ★ construction paper and glue
- ★ tape and markers
- ★ gold plastic coins
- ★ newsprint
- ★ photocopies of the fish-shaped box (page 123)
- ★ photocopies of 1 Timothy 4:10 (page 127)
- ★ photocopies of the Power Page! (page 79)

MIGHTY MEMORY VERSE

We have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe.”
1 Timothy 4:10

(For older kids, add in this portion of Joshua 24:15: “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. . . . But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”)

SESSION OBJECTIVES

- During this session, children will
- ★ understand that we have choices in life
 - ★ realize that choices must be made wisely
 - ★ explore ways to choose Jesus as our Savior
 - ★ profess their belief in Jesus as Lord

BIBLE BACKGROUND

From the moment we awaken until the minute we fall asleep, we all make choices. From what to wear and eat to how we spend our time and money, we are big-time decision makers who know that no choice can be made lightly. Peter and the other disciples learned something else about choice, that choosing Jesus is not only the best choice anyone can make but is also a choice we must make every day! Jesus gives us free choice to accept, follow, and love him—and the rewards of doing so are more precious than gold! Isn’t it wonderful that a choice so perfect—and perfectly simple—is summed up in one word? Jesus!

Kids love making decisions! They feel satisfaction in choosing clothes to wear, how to style their hair, and which foods they want in the school lunch line. But as kids get older, they realize not all choices are fun or easy; some come with dire consequences, and all require thought for the moment and for tomorrow. Use this lesson to help kids discover the best decision they can make each and every day of their lives: the decision to follow Jesus!

POWER FOCUS

Before class, write one each of the following on index cards:

- ★ Hop like a kangaroo and give someone a bear hug.
- ★ Touch your nose with your tongue as you tickle your tummy and pat your head.
- ★ Shake someone's hand.
- ★ Tell someone "good morning."
- ★ Take off your shoes and tickle your feet.
- ★ Choose someone to waltz with.
- ★ Smell someone's socks.
- ★ Give the leader a big, juicy kiss.

Prepare as many cards as there are children plus two more. If you need to repeat some, that's fine! On the backs of the cards, draw colorful shapes such as stars, hearts, suns, flowers, and diamonds.

Before kids arrive, place the cards face down on a table so only the shapes are showing. Don't let kids see or touch the cards.

Gather kids and invite them to tell about times they've made choices, such as foods for dinner, friends to play with, or even toys they might buy. Then say: **We make choices every day. Some choices are easy to make, but some may be hard or take lots of time. Let's play a little game about choices. When I say "go," quickly come to the table and choose a card, then return to your seat. Be snappy and fast—I want to see how quick you can be! Ready? Go!**

After kids have made their choices, tell them to silently read the backs of the cards. Read cards in a whisper for younger children. Then say: **Now we're going to act out the things on your cards. Is that fine with you?** Most kids will probably say yes, but some, afraid to look silly acting out their choices, will say no. Respond: **Some of you don't seem too anxious to act out the choices you made. Why is that?** Allow kids to tell their reasons, then ask:



Lesson 8

- ★ Why did you choose the cards you did?
- ★ Do you think you made a good choice? Why or why not?
- ★ How could you have made a wiser decision?
- ★ How does this game show the importance of making careful, wise choices?

Say: **Decisions and choices must be made carefully and with wisdom, because all choices have consequences of some kind.**

Good choices have good consequences, but wrong choices may have very bad consequences. Now I'll let you make another choice. You can act out your card only if you choose to!

Invite kids who choose to act out their cards do so. Then say: **Choices can be fun, too! We'll be learning about choices today and discovering what is the most important choice we have to make every day. We'll also review our Mighty Memory Verse that tells us the best place to put our hope! But now, let's discover what choice several of Jesus' friends made when Jesus asked them to follow him.**

POWER POINTERS

Let choices become a part of your classroom management! Offer kids responsibility and experience in making wise choices about learning God's Word and keeping their promises.

THE MIGHTY MESSAGE

Form two groups and hand each a bedsheet. Explain that the sheets are pretend fishing nets. Say: **In Jesus' time, men fished for food and traded fish to make a living. The fishermen wove large fishnets from sturdy rope fiber and would toss the nets into the water either from shore or from boats. Then the fishermen would drag the nets to scoop up fish. Many men in Jesus' day were fishermen on the Sea of Galilee—and that's where our Bible story takes place. You can help tell the story by following along with the words and by spreading your fishnets on the pretend water.**

Retell or read aloud the Bible story from Matthew 4:18-22 as you prompt kids to act out the story at the appropriate times: **One day, Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee when he saw two brothers.** (Approach one group of kids tossing their net.) **The brothers' names were Peter and Andrew, and they were fishermen. The brothers stood on the shores of the sea casting their nets into the water hoping for a good catch of fish.** (Have kids toss the bedsheet net onto the floor, then pull it in several times.)

Jesus said to Peter and Andrew, "Come, follow me. I will make you fishers of men!" And what choice did the brothers make? They chose to follow Jesus! They dropped their nets on the shore and followed Jesus on his way! (Have kids drop the bedsheet and follow along to the next group of kids.)

Walking a bit farther, Jesus saw two more brothers. Their names were James and John. Just like Peter and Andrew, they were fishermen. They were in a boat with their father, casting their fishing net upon the sea. (Have kids toss the bedsheet nets onto the water and pull it in several times.)

Then Jesus said to James and John, "Come and follow me. I will make you fishers of men!" And what choice do you think these brothers made? They chose to follow Jesus, just as Peter and Andrew chose to follow! (Have kids drop the bedsheet and follow along. Parade around the room one time, then gather kids in one group.)

After everyone is seated, say: **Wow! When Jesus called to the two sets of brothers, they had a big choice to make: should they leave everything behind to follow Jesus or stay in the places they had always known? What would you choose?** Let kids tell their ideas, then ask:

- ★ Why do you think the brothers made wise choices?
- ★ What does following Jesus mean? What are things we might have to give up to follow him?
- ★ Why do you think Jesus wants us to choose to follow him and not be forced to follow instead?
- ★ In what ways does our choice to follow Jesus every day reflect our love for Jesus? our trust? our hope in him?
- ★ In what ways can we follow Jesus?

Say: **You know, Peter chose to follow Jesus that day he was fishing. But Peter had to make many more decisions to follow Jesus during his life. One of those times was when Jesus told Peter to reach into a fish's mouth to find a coin to pay taxes. Do you think Peter chose to follow Jesus then?** Pause.

He did! And there was a coin in the fish's mouth, just as Jesus knew there would be! It's a good thing Peter chose to follow Jesus! And just like Peter, we must make the wise choice to follow Jesus every day in every way. Ask:

- ★ What happens when we make a good choice to follow Jesus?
- ★ What can happen if we make the wrong choice not to follow him?

Lesson 8

Say: **Let's make a fish like the kind Peter and the disciples might have caught to remind us of the value of choosing to follow Jesus—every day!**

Help kids mark Matthew 4:18-22 in their Bibles with the blue book-mark ribbons they've been using for several lessons. If anyone has lost or didn't make a bookmark, let that child make one now using an 8-inch length of blue ribbon and the Bible icon from page 123.



THE MESSAGE IN MOTION

Before class, photocopy the fish box from page 123 for each child.

You may wish to make a swishy-fish to show kids as a sample craft. Be sure you have a Styrofoam or cardboard burger box and one plastic gold coin for each child. Styrofoam carry-out boxes from restaurants will work if you can't find burger boxes.

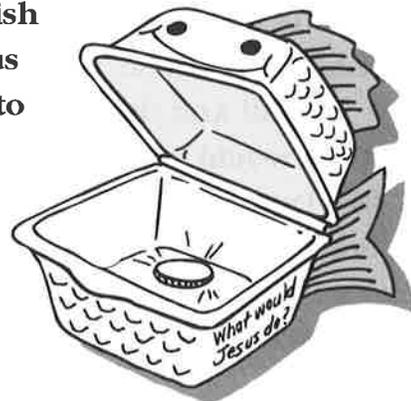
Hand each child a Styrofoam burger box and a photocopy of the fish box. Explain that the opening in the box will be the fish's mouth. Then invite kids to use markers and construction paper to decorate their fish. Hand kids the copies of the fish box and instruct them to glue or tape the boxes to the sides of their fish. As kids work, chat about the value of choosing to follow Jesus in our lives and what that entails.

When the fish are finished, hand each child a plastic gold coin and ask:

- ★ **How are the good choices we make like precious treasures?**
- ★ **In what ways can bad choices make us feel broke and like we've lost something of value?**

Say: **When we have money, we use it carefully. We make good choices on where to spend money and how to save it, too. The choices we make can return great treasures or make us go broke! It's the same when we're deciding if we should follow Jesus! If we make the wrong choice, we'll be in deep trouble! But when we make the choice to follow Jesus every day, we're making the right choice—and that's something to bank on! Put your coins in your fish as a reminder of how Peter chose to follow Jesus over and over and how that's the choice for us to make, too!**

Allow kids a moment to put their coins in the fish, then say: **Now we'll discover how choosing to follow Jesus gives us hope and happiness—and we'll use our Mighty Memory Verse to help.**



SUPER SCRIPTURE

Invite several volunteers to repeat aloud 1 Timothy 4:10, then repeat the portion of the verse you worked on last week three times in unison. Use the cross and display you made last week to help.

Say: **When we make the choice to follow Jesus every day, we're placing our hope in the living God, just as this verse tells us. But there's another portion to 1 Timothy 4:10, and it says that Jesus is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe.** Ask:

- ★ Why is it important to believe in and rely on Jesus?
- ★ How does having hope help us follow Jesus?
- ★ In what ways do choosing to love and follow Jesus help us live more bravely? more wisely?
- ★ How can relying on Jesus make the choice to follow him easier?

Say: **This Scripture verse is very powerful, for it tells us that we have hope in the living God, in our Savior Jesus, when we choose to believe. The Bible also has other powerful verses about choosing to serve the Lord. Joshua 24:15 tells us to choose today whom we will serve.** Read aloud Joshua 24:15c: **"But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."** Ask:

- ★ Why is it good for your whole family to choose Jesus?
- ★ How can we help one another choose to love and follow Jesus?

Hand each child a photocopy of 1 Timothy 4:10 to tape or glue to the fish made during the Message in Motion. If you have older kids, help them learn a portion of Joshua 24:15: "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. . . . But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." Have older kids mark this verse with their bookmarks.

Say: **Last week we learned that Jesus promises to be with us forever. Jesus also promises to help us follow him. Just like Peter and the other disciples, we can choose to follow Jesus every day. And even when that choice might seem hard, we know it's the right choice! Let's offer a promise and prayer to Jesus to express our thanks for the wonderful choice we have in loving and following the Lord of love!**

A POWERFUL PROMISE

Before class, write the words to the Choice Rap from later in this activity on newsprint. Attach the newsprint to the display with the cross and index cards you made last week.



Lesson 8

Have kids sit in a circle and ask for a moment of silence, then say: **We've learned today that choices are very important and must be made carefully and wisely. We've also discovered that we can choose to love, accept, and follow Jesus every day. And we've learned more about our Mighty Memory Verse, which tells us where to place our hope.**

First Timothy 4:10 says (pause and encourage children to repeat the verse with you), **"We have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe."** If you have older kids, repeat the shortened version of Joshua 24:15 also.

Then hold up the Bible and say: **Jesus wants us to make the right choice to follow him and promises to help us when we make that choice. Let's make our own loving promise to Jesus right now. We can choose to love, accept, and follow Jesus each day this week. As we pass the Bible around the circle, we can say, "I choose to follow Jesus every day."** Pass the Bible until everyone has had an opportunity to make a promise. Close with a prayer thanking Jesus for his love and asking for his help in making the right choice to follow him every day. End with a corporate "amen."

Gather kids in front of the newsprint with the words to the Choice Rap on it. Have kids clap, snap their fingers, or tap their feet in time to the rhythm of the words as they repeat the Choice Rap. After the first repetition, substitute the word *love* for the word *follow* in the rap. On subsequent chants, use the words *obey*, *serve*, and *praise* in place of *follow*.

CHOICE RAP

The choice is mine—I'll make it wise;
I choose to FOLLOW Jesus all my life.
He helps and loves and forgives me—
Jesus is the number one choice for me!

Save the newsprint with the words to the rap to use next week. End with this responsive good-bye:

Leader: **May Jesus' love be with you.**

Children: **And also with you!**

Distribute the Power Page! take-home papers as kids are leaving. Thank kids for coming and encourage them to keep their promises to Jesus this week.

POWER PAGE!

IT'S YOUR CHOICE!

Use the key below to discover good choices to make every day.

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Voice of Choice

We make lots of choices each day. List the choices you made today, then number them according to their importance.

Did you choose God first?
Remember: Always make the Lord your #1 choice! (Read Joshua 24:15.)

Fill-'em-In

Use 1 Timothy 4:10 to fill in the words. The first letter to each word is already in place.

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