

Who Are You Following?

By RLD Editorial Team

for use as
STEP 1 

Lesson 1**Focus:**

Do you love Jesus or
just follow the crowd?

Lesson 1**Bible Basis:**

John 12:12-19

Lesson 1**Memory Verse:**

Then . . . stand firm and hold fast to the
teachings we passed on to you.
—2 Thessalonians 2:15

Students will watch a video about an experiment in herd mentality as they evaluate whether or not they are following Jesus or the crowd.

Materials:

- Interesting-looking, medium-sized stuffed animal (or image of an interesting-looking stuffed animal to display on your screenshared document)
- Whiteboard and marker (or screenshared document)

As students join your class, direct the large group to a table or chair where an interesting-looking, medium-sized stuffed animal sits (or is displayed on the screen).

Ask students to think to themselves about a name that would be fitting for this stuffed animal. Call on volunteers and write the suggested name on the board (or screenshared document). Go around the group and ask about one-third of the students to provide name ideas, then wrap things up by saying, **“There are some great names on the board—which one do you like best?”** Invite all students to call out their favorite name and place a checkmark next to each name that is suggested. Leave the top three (most requested) names up and erase (or delete) all of the other suggestions. Tell the class they need to pick one name for this animal. Be prepared for some noisy calling out! When one name is verbalized more emphatically than the others, say, **“_____ seems to be the most popular”** (fill in the blank). Choose the name that students agree is the one everyone likes best and then erase the other two.

Regroup in a classroom setting. Ask:

- **How did you feel if your choice for the name was erased?** (Invite students to share. Answers will vary, but may include bummed, didn’t care, happy, it was a dumb name, etc. There are no wrong answers.)
- **Did you ever feel pressured to go along with a name even though you didn’t like it?** (Ask student volunteers to share when and how they felt pressured.)
- **Do you think there was any peer pressure that happened here in coming up with the final name choice? Explain.**

➤ **If not peer pressure, what do you think made the group come to an agreement on the name?** (Answers will vary.)

There are many names for what we just experienced: groupthink, peer pressure, consensus, following the crowd, conforming, herd mentality, etc. Let's learn a little more about this.

Show the following video [4:16; stop at 3:33]:

Asch's Experiment and Social Conformity: Why Do We Follow the Group?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Q_XNpKHK58

Participants in the experiment choosing the wrong line length like in the video was harmless, but it says a lot about the way people respond to peer pressure. We want to belong or fit in with others. We may end up following others without stopping to think that we have a choice. We may follow even when what the others are doing is not what we should or want to do.

➤ **Even though participants had the right answers, the majority of participants went along with the actors at least once. Perhaps they felt odd for being different. How does a person keep from giving in to that kind of pressure?** (Answers will vary.)

➤ **When have you felt pressured to follow the crowd or follow just a few friends?** (Answers will vary.)

It's easy to follow the crowd. Jesus often had crowds around Him, but were they all true followers? That is something to think about. Loving Jesus and not following the crowd is what we're going to talk about today.

(Continue on to Steps 2 and 3 in your teacher's guide; your Step 4 appears below.)

Who Are You Following?

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STEP 4 

Lesson 1
Focus:

Do you love Jesus or
just follow the crowd?

Lesson 1
Bible Basis:

John 12:12-19

Lesson 1
Memory Verse:

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Materials:

- Paper
- Pencils or pens

If your class is meeting online, invite students to bring supplies with them to class.

As we learned in today’s Bible passage, John 12:12–19, it’s easy to cheer and praise when the going is good. Ironically, a week later, the same crowd yelled for Jesus’ crucifixion. “Do you live out your love for Jesus, or do you tend to follow the crowd?” is something each one of us need to consider.

Have students pair off or get into small groups and talk about one peer pressure that they are facing. (If your class is meeting online, you can use the breakout room feature of your video chat software or have an entire class discussion with those who feel comfortable sharing.) All young people face pressures, whether the comparison of wanting to be like their peers who may have more freedom or money or privilege, or the desire to do things that they know are wrong.

After students have had a chance to share, distribute supplies (or invite students to have them ready at home). Instruct students to write down the question, “Do you live out your love for Jesus, or do you tend to follow the crowd?”

Ask students to answer the question they just wrote. Give students a few moments to answer privately on their pieces of paper. Some students will answer that they’d rather love Jesus but may admit that the lure of the crowd is strong. It isn’t easy to stand out as a Christian or to do the right thing. Share with the group:

Some of Jesus’ worshipers who threw down palm branches and shouted, “Hosanna” may have felt horrible yelling, “Crucify Him!” within a short number of days, yet they still went along with the large persuasive groups in both instances. Understanding that we all have a weakness to follow the crowd and conform to what others are doing is an important thing to understand before we make a commitment to love Jesus.

Close today's study time by reflecting on the objective: Students will evaluate whether or not they are following Jesus or the crowd. Share with your students that it is a hard thing to reflect on because most of us will want to do both things—love and follow Jesus and occasionally follow the crowd. Let students know that being aware of this pull to follow the crowd is a good thing. God will help Christians who love Him to stay on track, but we need to ask for His guidance and help. Encourage your students to use this next week to evaluate their responses to various things they face at home and school—are they following Jesus or just following the crowd?

Optional: If you feel comfortable, you can play the following video, a song by Casting Crowns about loving Jesus [4:40]:
Loving my Jesus—Casting Crowns
<https://youtu.be/OnJFGtAXxGs>

End today's time in prayer thanking Jesus for His love for us and His willingness to be the One we desire to follow.

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