



# Children's Lesson: Growing

This lesson is adaptable for children in a variety of age groups.

## OBJECTIVE:

Teach children about how true growth comes not from trying to make yourself better but from spending time in the Word, in prayer, and in community. (Concept credit: Ortlund, Dane. *Deeper: Real Change for Real Sinners*, Page 89.)

## KEY VERSES: JOHN 8:31-32

***"Jesus said ... 'If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'"***

John 8:31-32, ESV

## KEY ILLUSTRATION: CAKE ACTIVITY

What does it take to grow as a follower of Christ? Is it all about following the rules, or is there something deeper?

Teach your children about the elements of discipleship—spending time in the Word, in prayer, and in community—through this cake illustration. Much like a cake is not complete without its ingredients and the instructions for baking it, so, too, does discipleship require us to know how God desires us to live and spend time with Him!

## SUPPLIES:

**TEACHER NOTE:** If possible, make prior note of dietary needs in your classroom and accommodate as necessary so all children can enjoy a treat as part of the lesson.

1. Boxed cake/cupcake/treat mix and its corresponding ingredients.
2. Access to baking supplies and an oven or premade cake/cupcakes.
3. Serving materials such as plates, napkins, and forks.
4. Demonstration platform such as a table at the front of the room.
5. Coloring sheet/activity.

## UNPACKING THE ILLUSTRATION: PREPARATION

1. Label the ingredients before class time as follows:
  - a. Egg: Gospel message.
  - b. Oil: prayer.
  - c. Baking pan: learning from other friends about Jesus.
  - d. Cake box instructions: Jesus' commands in the Bible.
  - e. Water: friendship with Jesus.



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## UNPACKING THE ILLUSTRATION: SPEAKING POINTS

1. Hold up the cake box for the children to see.
  - a. Ask: "Is this a cake?"
    - i. Say: "There's a picture of a cake. Is it a cake already?"
2. Show the ingredients for the cake to the children.
  - a. Say: "Now that I have all my ingredients, do I have a cake?"
3. Read the instructions for the children.
  - a. Say: "OK, now I have read and know my instructions. Now do I have a cake? What am I missing?"
4. Walk through with the children why just having ingredients and instructions does not make a cake.
  - a. Say: "You are right! I have to follow the instructions and combine my ingredients in order to have a cake. It takes time, the right ingredients, the right instructions, and someone who knows how to bake a cake."
5. Talk with the children about how they can grow as a follower of Christ.
  - a. Say: "In some ways, growing as a friend of Jesus is just like baking a cake! Simply knowing and following the rules does not help you grow, just like simply reading and knowing the instructions does not make a cake!"
6. Hold up each item as you start to combine the cake ingredients.
  - a. Say: "In order to grow in friendship with Jesus we need:
    - i. [As you crack the egg:] "To first hear the Gospel message and believe that Jesus is God's Son and that He died for our sins and rose again on the third day."
    - ii. [As you pour in the oil:] "To spend time in prayer, getting to know our Heavenly Father, asking Him for the things that you need, and praising His name in worship."
    - iii. [As you pour in the water:] "To spend time reading the Bible and learning more about who God is and how He cares for His people."
    - iv. [As you stir them together:] "Sometimes, hard things will happen. These hard times can help us grow as we learn to cling to God and His care for us."
    - v. [As you pour them into the baking tin:] "God says in His word, '*It is not good for the man to be alone*' (Genesis 2:18, NIV). He wants us to live in friendship with other Christians so that they can encourage and correct us as we grow closer to God."
7. Talk to the children about the role of the instructions.
  - a. Ask: "Now that I have combined all my ingredients and poured them into the tin, do I have a cake? What am I missing?"
    - i. Say: "I need the instructions! The instructions help me know *how* to make the cake. It is the same with our life as believers. We need to know how God wants us to act. As the Holy Spirit helps us to live, act, and think in ways that make God happy, we demonstrate to others that we are growing closer to God."



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8. Read the key verses in John 8:31-32.
  - a. Say: "Jesus says that if we abide in His word, we are truly His disciples. Just like a cake needs ingredients, instructions, and even time to bake, our faith requires many special ingredients, instructions, and time to grow."
9. Have children complete a coloring sheet or activity while the cake/cupcakes bake or for a few minutes before passing out premade treats.
  - a. Talk with the children about how, just like a cake in the oven, it takes time for believers to grow and bear fruit.
10. Once ready, distribute cake/cupcakes to children.
  - a. Talk with children about how abiding and growing in Christ brings joy. That joy is even more complete than the one they experience while eating their treat! The joy from a treat is fleeting, but the joy we find through Christ is eternal.

## OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD CONNECTION

**TEACHER NOTE:** Follow the speaking points in this section if you'd like to incorporate this lesson into your church's or group's Operation Christmas Child project.

When you pack a shoebox gift, you open the door for children to learn about the necessary ingredients to growing in friendship with Jesus. After a child receives a shoebox gift prayerfully packed by someone like you, they hear the Gospel message and are invited to attend a 12-lesson discipleship program that teaches them how to know God, grow in their faith, and share Jesus with others.

## VIDEO OPTION: "CHARAHJA'S STORY: CHILDREN DISCIPLING CHILDREN"

Follow-up Questions:

1. What did you notice the children doing in the video?  
*Reading Bible verses, praying, sharing their faith with others.*
2. Why did the girl in the video start teaching The Greatest Journey?  
*She wanted to share her faith with others.*
3. Did following Jesus make this girl happy?  
*Yes!*



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## STORYTIME OPTION:

In a town in Mexico, Pastor Saul and his wife, Juanita, hosted an Operation Christmas Child outreach event where they shared the Gospel of Jesus Christ and distributed shoebox gifts to children. After the event, they invited children to attend The Greatest Journey classes so they could learn to follow Christ and share Him with others. However, the children's parents feared Pastor Saul and Juanita were trying to trick their children into believing lies! So, the couple began to pray, asking God to soften the hearts of these parents. God's work continued in this community through their efforts.

Undeterred, the couple repeated the outreach events in another community and 12 children enrolled in The Greatest Journey classes. These boys and girls attended each lesson faithfully. They were even eager to continue learning and teaching others about Jesus after their graduation.

The most special part of this story is that Pastor Saul and Juanita also received shoebox gifts when they were children. Those gifts planted seeds of the Gospel in their hearts, which later produced fruit when they encountered Jesus years later! Now they are glad to serve Him and help other children to grow in their faith.