

Small Group Guide

“Destination Disease” — Keep Growing. Keep Going.

First Baptist Church of Stanleyville 81st Anniversary Sermon

Middle School & High School Sunday School | 35 Minutes

OVERVIEW

Have you ever finished a big project, won a game, or reached a goal and thought, “Finally! I’m done”? Celebrating an accomplishment is good—but what happens when we stop growing because we think we have already arrived?

“Destination disease” happens when we treat a milestone as a finish line. In our faith, that might sound like: “I’ve been baptized,” “I know the Bible stories,” or “My family goes to church.” Those things matter, but following Jesus is a daily relationship that continues to grow.

Using Noah’s story and our church’s 81st anniversary, this lesson challenges students to thank God for what He has done and consider what following Him looks like **right now**.

Lesson goal: Students will identify one area where they need to keep growing and choose one specific step of faith for the coming week.

Supplies: Bibles, paper, and pens.

35-minute schedule: Opening—5 minutes; Going Deeper—15 minutes; Personal Reflection—5 minutes; Group Application—7 minutes; Closing Prayer—3 minutes.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Milestones are not finish lines.** Baptism, a meaningful camp experience, or learning a Bible verse can mark growth. None means we are finished following Jesus.
- **Yesterday’s faithfulness does not replace today’s obedience.** God wants a relationship with us today—not just memories of a time when we felt close to Him.
- **The gospel changes how we live.** The gospel is the good news of Jesus’ death and resurrection to save sinners. We do not earn salvation through good behavior, but trusting Jesus should shape our words, choices, and relationships.
- **Spiritual coasting can happen quietly.** We can keep attending church while paying little attention to God during the week.

- **Keep your eyes on Jesus.** Our goal is not simply to look religious or stay busy. It is to know Christ and faithfully follow Him.
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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Allow several students to participate without requiring everyone to answer every question. Students may pass on personal questions.

OPENING (5 minutes)

Connect the lesson to students' everyday experiences.

1. **Think about finishing a school year, beating a difficult video game, making a team, or completing a big assignment.** How did you feel afterward? How long did it take before another challenge came along?
2. Imagine an athlete saying, "I made the team, so I don't need to practice anymore." What would you tell them? How could someone have that same attitude about following Jesus?

Teacher transition: Making the team is a milestone, but there is still growing to do. In the same way, we never reach a point where we no longer need to learn from Jesus or follow His lead.

GOING DEEPER (15 minutes)

Read together: Genesis 6:8–9, 6:22; 8:20; and Hebrews 12:1–2.

Allow about 3 minutes for reading and 12 minutes for discussion.

Teacher context: Noah received God's favor, walked with God, and obeyed His instructions. After leaving the ark, he worshiped God. Genesis 9:28 tells us Noah lived another 350 years after the flood. Scripture gives few details about those years, so we should not assume he did nothing faithful during that time. The lesson's challenge is to examine our own response after a major milestone.

3. **Genesis 6:22 says Noah did what God commanded him.** What is the difference between knowing what God says and actually doing it? What might obedience look like at school, at home, or in a group chat?

Possible examples: refusing to spread a rumor, admitting a mistake, including someone, or choosing honesty when cheating would be easier.

4. **After the flood, Noah worshiped God.** When something good happens to you, how do you usually respond? What could help you remember God after a success, instead of only turning to Him when something goes wrong?
5. **Our church is celebrating 81 years of ministry.** Why is that worth celebrating? Why does our church still have work to do—and how can students be part of that work right now?

Prompt if needed: welcoming visitors, helping younger children, serving alongside adults, praying, and sharing what Jesus has done.

6. **Hebrews 12:1–2 tells us to run with endurance and keep our eyes on Jesus.** What makes it difficult to keep following Jesus after the excitement of camp, baptism, or a special church event wears off? What helps us continue?

Teacher emphasis: Following Jesus is not a competition to be the “best Christian.” We depend on His grace, return to Him when we stumble, and keep taking steps of obedience.

PERSONAL REFLECTION (5 minutes)

Give students a quiet moment to think or write. They do not need to share their answers.

7. **Which statement best describes you right now?**
 - I’m still learning who Jesus is and what it means to trust Him.
 - I want to grow, but I’m not sure what to do next.
 - I’ve been going through the motions.
 - I’m growing, and I want to keep going.

What is one question you would like to ask God—or a trusted Christian adult—about where you are?

8. **Is there an area where you have stopped putting your faith into practice?** Maybe prayer has become an afterthought, you avoid apologizing, or you act differently around certain friends. What might one small step of obedience look like?
9. The sermon compared a believer pulling away from Christian community to a coal being removed from a fire. **Who helps you stay encouraged in your faith?** How could you make time for that support this week?

Teacher reminder: Healthy rest is not “destination disease.” Being tired, having questions, or going through a difficult season does not mean someone has failed God. Encourage honesty and support rather than guilt.

GROUP APPLICATION (7 minutes)

Move from reflection to one realistic action.

10. The sermon named four ways to avoid destination disease. Have students fold a piece of paper into four sections and write a short response in each:

Step	Student Reflection
Remember where you started.	Who first helped you learn about Jesus? If faith is new to you, what brought you here?
Know where you have been.	What is one lesson, experience, or person God has used to help you grow?
Assess where you are now.	Where do you need help, encouragement, or a change of direction?
Fix your mind on what lies ahead.	What is one step you can take toward Jesus this week?

Allow 3 minutes to write, then invite a few students to share their next step.

11. **Think of someone at school, on your team, in your neighborhood, or online who needs friendship and the hope of Jesus.** How can you show genuine care this week?

Examples: sit with someone who is alone, check on a struggling friend, offer to pray, invite someone to church, or explain why your faith matters when an opportunity comes.

Complete this sentence:

“This week, I will _____, and I will ask _____ to encourage me.”

Teacher emphasis: People are not projects. Build real friendships, listen well, respect their responses, and let both your words and actions point to Jesus.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Choose one for the coming week. These are take-home options, not additional class activities.

- **Pray for one person by name.** Ask God to help you love them well and recognize opportunities to talk about Jesus.
- **Make room for God.** Set aside five minutes on three days this week to read Scripture and pray. Start with Hebrews 12:1–2.
- **Take one step of obedience.** Apologize, tell the truth, stop participating in gossip, or include someone who is being overlooked.
- **Serve now.** Ask a church leader how you can help. You do not have to wait until adulthood to contribute.

- **Talk honestly with someone.** Tell a trusted Christian adult where you feel stuck or what questions you have.
 - **Remember God's faithfulness.** Write down one way God has helped you and thank Him for it.
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CLOSING PRAYER GUIDE (3 minutes)

Close by praying together. Invite brief student prayers without putting anyone on the spot.

- Thank God for 81 years of ministry at First Baptist Church of Stanleyville.
- Thank Him for the people who have helped students learn about Jesus.
- Ask Him to show each student their next step of faith.
- Pray for friends who do not yet know Christ.
- Ask for courage to keep following Jesus in everyday choices.

Suggested closing prayer:

“Jesus, thank You for loving us and for the people who have helped us know You. Thank You for what You have done through our church over these 81 years. Help us keep growing instead of acting like we have already arrived. Give us honest hearts, courage to obey You, and love for the people around us. Help us take our next step this week with our eyes on You. Amen.”

KEY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Hebrews 12:1–2

This passage calls us to set aside sin and whatever holds us back, run with endurance, and keep our eyes on Jesus.

Remember: Celebrate what God has done. Follow Him in what comes next.