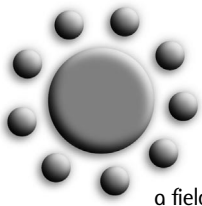




young people



set the scene

Find a picture or poster of a field filled with wheat. Or project a similar image as a slide or in PowerPoint. On a table in front of this scene place a single grain of wheat (from a granary loaf), a pile of earth and the words *lose, follow, honour and glory*.



be active

1 Counting the cost

In John 12.25-26 Jesus talks about the cost and the rewards of discipleship. Give your group a chance to explore these verses and to talk about how they can practically engage in this. What would it mean to lose their life or to follow and serve Christ? Invite the group to undertake an agreed task over a number of weeks. It may seem small and insignificant but so does a grain of wheat. Could you collect money for a special cause, take on a prayer project, make the effort to mend a friendship, decide not to gossip ... ?



make connections

- The Greeks in verses 20-22 seem to disappear from the story. Was their appearance just a way for John to connect with the Greek readers he was writing for? The exciting news is that Jesus is interested in everyone and not just the Jewish nation. Whatever background people in your group come from, they are included.
- In this passage, Jesus struggles with what he knew he had to do. Isn't it encouraging that Jesus wanted to chicken out? However, as he prayed, his resolve strengthened and



get started

1 Popcorn

If possible, make some

popcorn together – or look at popcorn seeds and the finished article. This provides an explosive demonstration of the potential found within a seed and shows one way a little seed can change. Don't forget to eat the popcorn.

2 This is tough

Imagine that you are trying to start a new religion. What would you offer people to persuade them to become your followers? Excitement, world-changing drama, status, power, and material rewards? Before reading today's passage, brainstorm some of the things Jesus offered his followers – both the hard and the wonderful things.

2 Honour

In this passage – which seems very bleak – there are glimpses of wonderful hope. What might it mean for us to be honoured by God for serving Jesus? Fame, fortune, or something rather different?

3 Follow the footsteps

(An ongoing activity from previous weeks.)

Note the words of Jesus in John 12.33, which provide another indication to those who spent time with Jesus as to how he would meet his death. Review notes from previous weeks to see the progression.

God blessed him. There are many struggles facing young Christians. Can Jesus' experience help them see that theirs is not an isolated experience?

- Is there a difference between 'hating your life' as Jesus used the words, and hating yourself? The stark language of this passage may resonate with young people dealing with serious issues like bereavement or low self-esteem. Be ready to engage gently with such matters.



use the bible

1 Picture this

To illustrate the Gospel text as it is read out, create a series of pictures, OHP slides, a computer presentation or even a video. These could be literal representations like seed planting and harvest, or more symbolic, like storm clouds representing the troubled soul. Use a 'chillout' CD as background music.

2 Covenant

Read with the group the Jeremiah reading, which talks about a new covenant and of people knowing the Lord. How does it relate to Jesus' mission? Pay attention to the last line from Jeremiah, which assures us that God will no longer remember our sins. Link this to Christ's sacrifice.



pray it through

You need a large bowl or pot of earth and a seed for each person to hold. Use the prayer below, based on today's Gospel passage, allowing time for each member of the group to plant their seed. Remember to tend the seeds so that the promise of bearing much fruit can be seen.

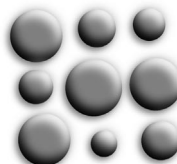
You hold in your hand a seed,
small and brittle,
new life that can only be realised
when that seed is buried in the dark earth,
tended by water and sun.

Our lives are like that seed,
filled with potential,
yet buried in darkness,
while we wonder if new growth will come.
(Invite the group to plant their seeds.)

Tended by the light of Christ,
and the water of your word,
bring forth new life,
and draw us closer still to you.

Amen.

resources



Lord I come to you (TS)
I thank you for the cross (SV)
The cross has said it all (SV)