

# Children's Study Guide

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## Introduction

The Mary Hill Davis Offering® for Texas Missions (MDHO) provides support and resources for over 80 ministries across Texas. When you give, you are helping people across the state share the love of Jesus with those who need to know Him as Savior. This lesson will focus on Special Friends Retreats.

## Bible Verses

Romans 10:14-15 (NIRV) “How can they call on him unless they believe in him? How can they believe in him unless they hear about him? How can they hear about him unless someone preaches to them? And how can anyone preach without being sent? It is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’”

## Preparation

The Special Friends Retreats are for individuals with intellectual, physical, or cognitive disabilities, their parents and caregivers, and those who work with individuals with special needs. Each year, Texas Baptists host three retreats across the state in West Texas, the Dallas area, and the Houston area. Campers at these retreats participate in Bible study designed for their learning needs, worship, crafts, and a talent show. Parents and caregivers attend a support group to share their experiences and discover resources. Each year, approximately 400 campers, parents, caregivers, and volunteers from close to 30 churches participate.

At the Special Friends Retreats, everyone encounters God at their level, whether through worship, Bible study, or the talent show. It is an atmosphere of love and acceptance where everyone is welcomed as a friend. Campers can't wait to see their friends from other churches

and share their love for God. It is a place filled with smiles, laughter, and hugs, all while celebrating the gifts that God gives each person.

The Special Friends Retreats could not happen without your gifts to the MDHO. Gifts provide Bible study and craft supplies, lodging for campers, snacks and meals, and travel reimbursement for volunteers, some of whom travel a long way just to help with the retreat. Because of the MHDO, campers can attend at a low cost, lessening the financial burden on families.

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## What You Will Need

- Bibles
  - Cardstock
  - Construction paper
  - Markers or Crayons
  - Stickers
  - Bible times costumes
  - Graham Crackers
  - Marshmallow fluff
  - Chocolate bars
  - Small paper plates
  - Plastic spoons
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## Schedule Options

This mission study can be completed in small or large groups. Activities can be set up as stations in one classroom, or groups can rotate through them in several classrooms. As it is written, groups start with a large group overview activity, then break into smaller groups for a Bible verse activity, craft, mission project, and snack. Finally, groups join back together for a final closing activity.

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# Mission Study

## Large Group Overview

### Say:

*Have you ever been so excited for something that you just can't wait? Every year, the Open Arms Sunday School class at Kingwood First Baptist Church can't wait to go to the Special Friends Retreat! They even have a special rule in their class—you can't ask about camp until after Easter. Everyone is so excited to go to camp and see their friends that some of them repack their suitcase as soon as they get home. They know that when they are at camp, they'll get to spend time with friends, participate in Bible study, worship, make a craft, and be in the talent show. It's their favorite weekend of the year!*

*Today, we're going to learn about the Special Friends Retreats that happen every fall across Texas. The Special Friends Retreat is designed for people with disabilities to come together for worship, Bible study, crafts, and missions, along with their families and caregivers. At the retreats, campers learn about Jesus and how they can share him with others.*

Show the Special Friends Retreat video, found at [iamtexasmissions.org/videos](http://iamtexasmissions.org/videos). Give instructions for how groups will break up and rotate through the activities, then dismiss, one group at a time.

## Bible Verse Activity

### Follow the Footprints—Romans 10:14-15

Print the footprints on cardstock and cut them out. For younger children, tape them to the floor before the activity.

### Say:

*One of the things that campers do at the Special Friends Retreat is learn Bible verses. Today, we're going to learn a Bible verse, too.*

Encourage children to follow the path while everyone says the verse together.

For older children, give each child a footprint, and invite them to work together to lay out the verse in a path. Then encourage each child to walk along the path and say the verse. For an extra challenge, remove two footprints and challenge the group to say the verse again. Continue removing footprints and saying the verse until all footprints are gone.

### Say:

*People cannot hear the good news of Jesus unless we tell them. At the Special Friends Retreats, campers learn how to share the good news of Jesus with others.*

## Acting Out a Bible Story (Mark 2:1-12)

### **Bringing Friends to Jesus**

#### **Say:**

*Campers at the Special Friends Retreat love Bible study! One of their favorite things to do during Bible study is to act out a story. That's what we're going to do now.*

Invite children to volunteer for roles to act out (Jesus, the four friends, the man who was healed, and the people watching). Pass out costumes. Tell the story from Mark 2:1-12 in your own words as children act it out. When you are finished, collect the costumes and encourage children to sit down.

#### **Say:**

*Stacy knows it's important for everyone to hear about Jesus. She saw a new friend sitting by themselves at Bible study time. She knew that her new friend needed to hear about Jesus during Bible study, so she left the group and went over to her friend. She took her friend's hand and led her to Bible study and found a place for her friend to sit next to her. Just like the friends in our story who brought their friend to Jesus for help, Stacy brought her friends to hear about Jesus. Who can you invite to hear about Jesus?*

## Card Writing Mission Project

### **Materials:**

- Construction paper
- Crayons or markers
- Stickers

#### **Say:**

*One thing that campers do at the Special Friends Retreat each year is learn about missions, just like we're doing today. After they learn about how God is using people to share the good news of Jesus, they get to do a mission project that shares the good news of Jesus with others.*

*Sometimes they bring things like soap, shampoo, and toothpaste for a local ministry. Sometimes they bring diapers, blankets, and other baby items. Sometimes they bring socks and hats for a homeless ministry. One thing that they always do is make cards to share the love of Jesus with others. One camper, Lee, loves making cards so much that he makes them all year long! When he arrives at the Special Friends Retreat, he has a folder full of cards ready to share with others.*

Pass out construction paper, markers or crayons, and stickers. Invite children to make a card to share Jesus' love with another person. They can write a simple message like "Jesus loves you" or "I'm praying for you today" on their card, then decorate it. Once children have finished with their cards, collect them to share with a local ministry.

## Snack - S'mores

**Post an allergy alert sign as parents drop off their children making note of any allergies.**

**Say:**

*At the West Texas Special Friends Retreat, campers enjoy a campfire after the talent show. Every year, they make a special snack at the campfire—s'mores! Even though we can't have a campfire, we're going to make s'mores, too!*

Invite children to sit around tables. Give each child two graham cracker halves, part of a chocolate bar, and a spoonful of marshmallow fluff. Show children how to construct their s'mores by spooning the marshmallow fluff onto a graham cracker half, adding the chocolate on top, and finishing it off with another graham cracker half. You may need to help younger children with the marshmallow fluff.

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## Large Group Closing

**What's Your Talent?**

Gather groups back together for a final activity.

**Say:**

*The Special Need Sunday School Class at Mobberly Baptist Church in Longview can't wait for the talent show each year. It's their favorite part! They spend weeks and weeks preparing a special song to share with their friends during the talent show. When it's time for the talent show*

*on Friday night, they clap and cheer for their friends as they share their talents. Some campers sing, some do sign language to a song, some dance, some tell jokes, and some play instruments. Finally, it's Mobberly's turn to share their talent! They all go to the front to sing their song. Everyone smiles as they sing to God. When they're done, everyone claps and cheers!*

*God gives everyone talents they can use to glorify him. At the Special Friends Retreat, each talent in the talent show is an act of worship because campers are sharing the talents God gave them. God gives each of you talents too. What are some of your talents?*

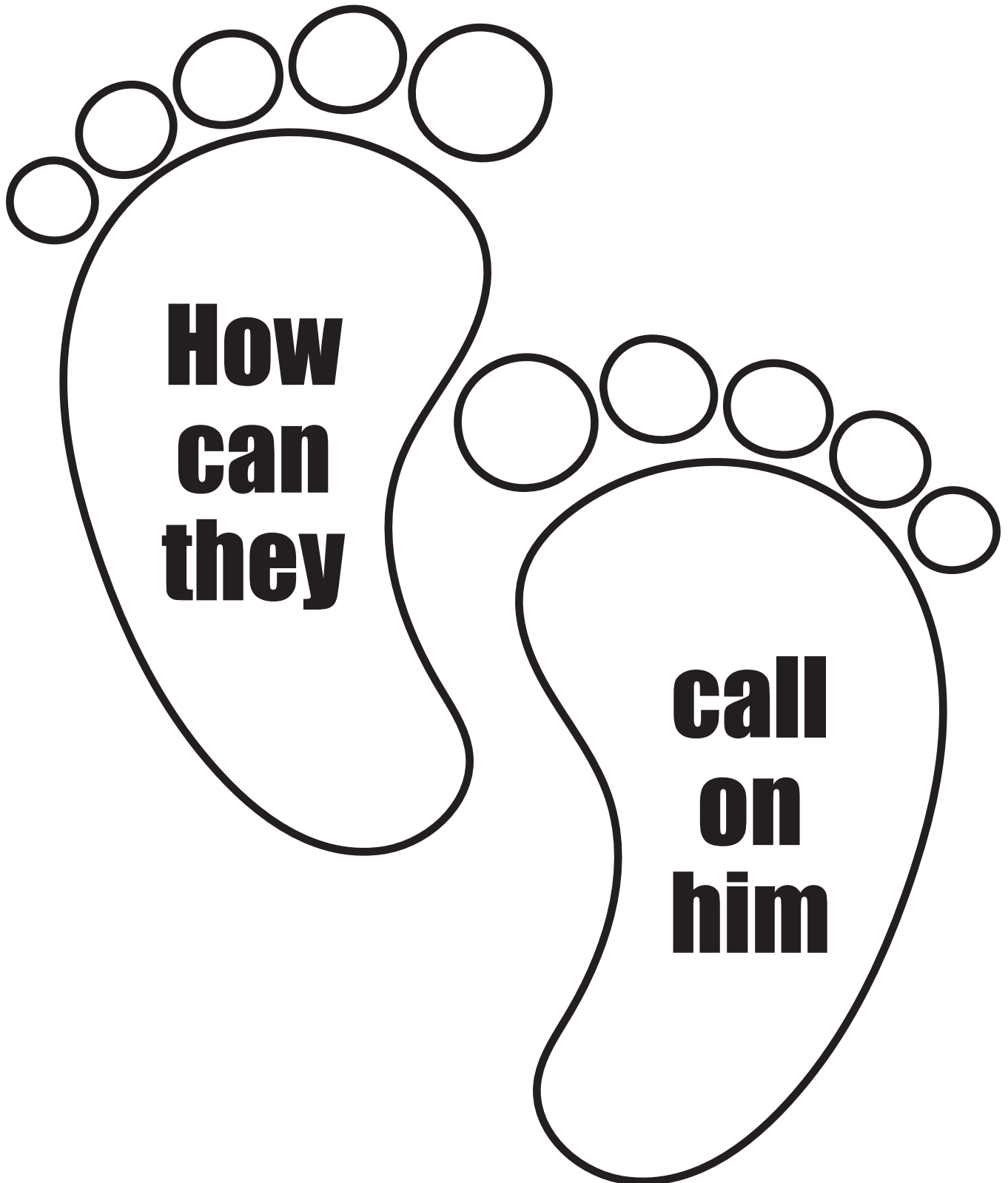
**After children have responded, say:**

*Tonight, we're going to celebrate your talents, just like the friends at the Special Friends Retreat celebrate theirs.*

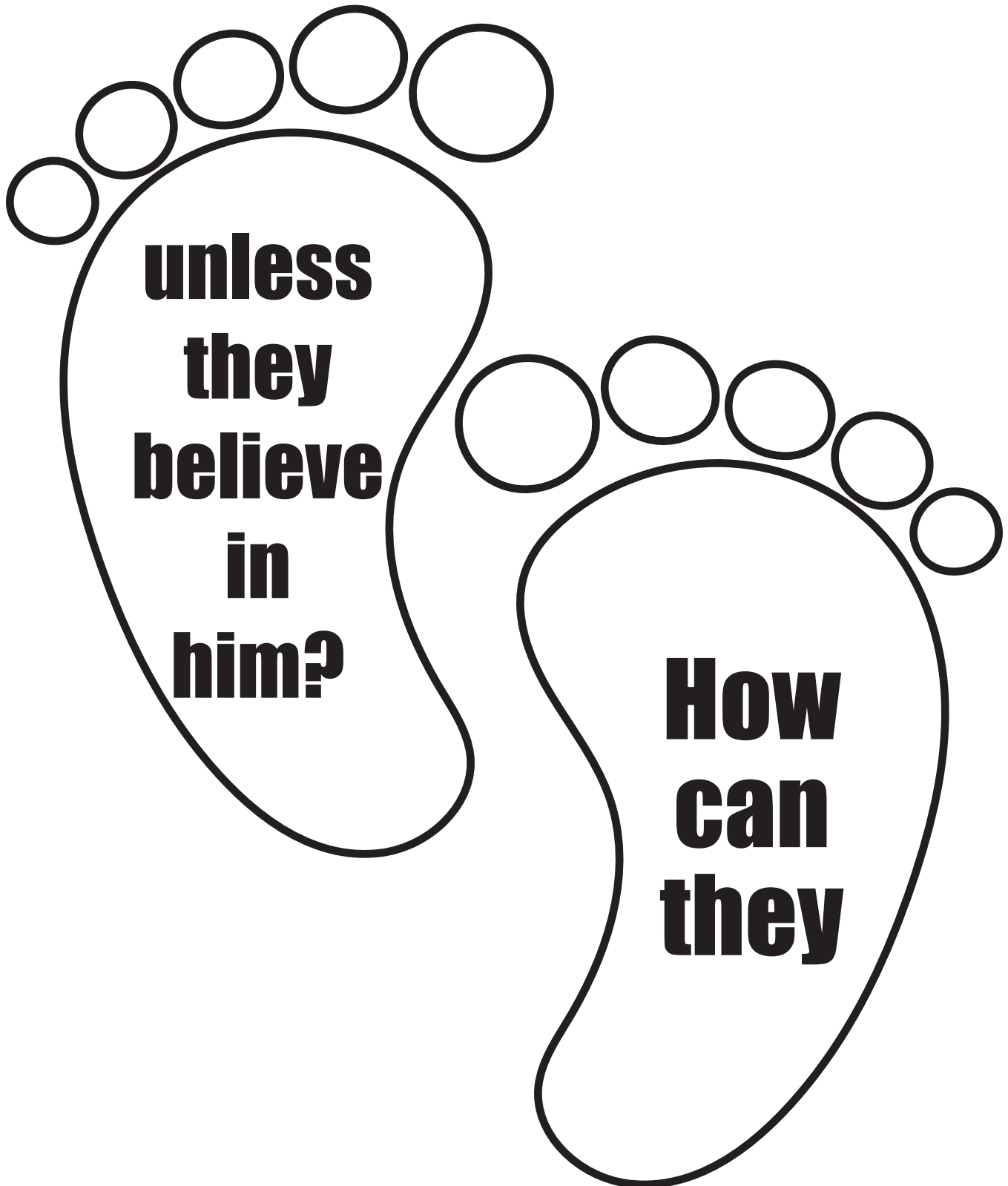
Invite children to share a talent with the group. They may choose to sing, dance, tell jokes, or recite a memory verse. Continue as time allows.

Close by praying for the Special Friends Retreat and everyone who participates.

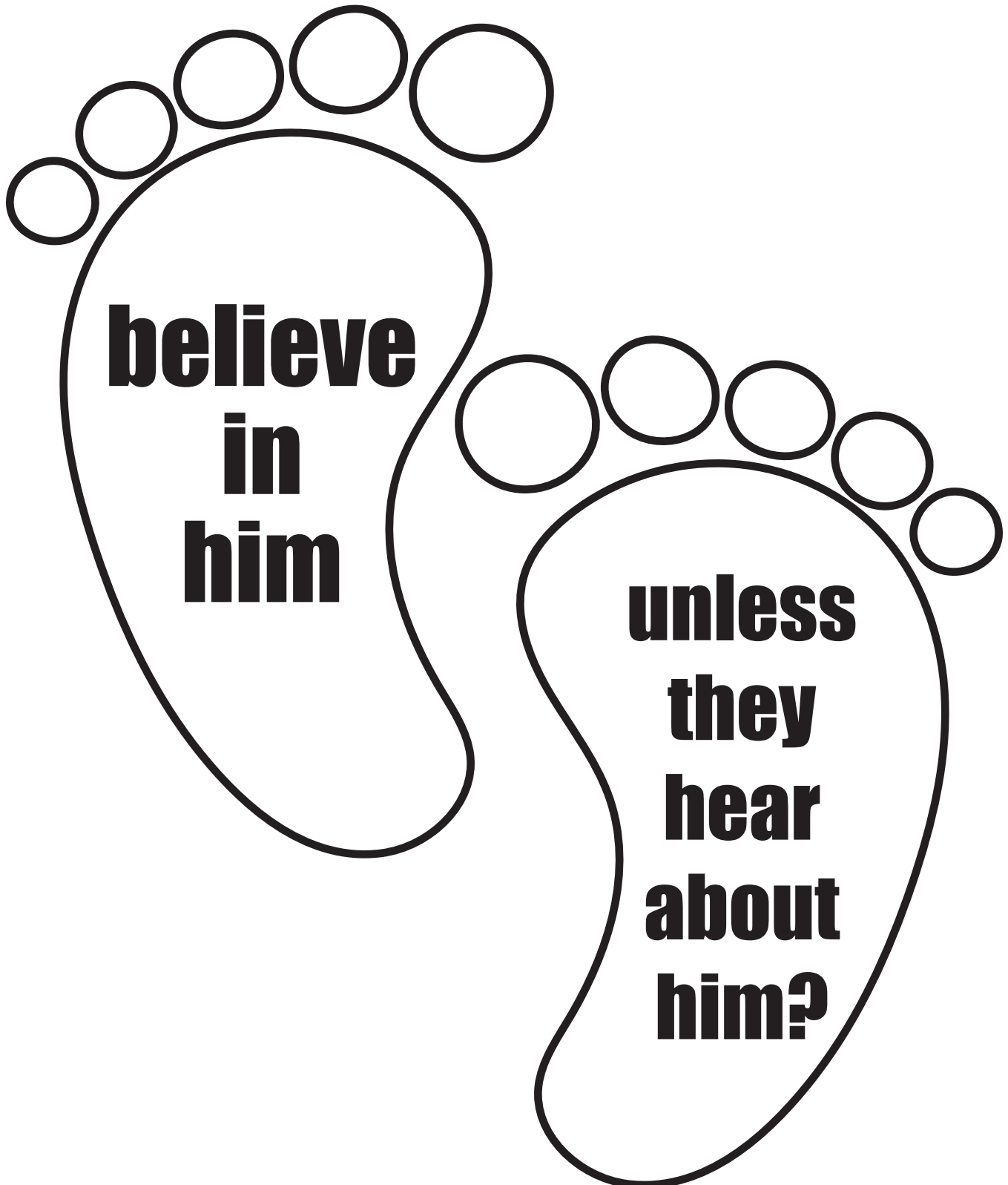
# Follow the Footprints Activity (1/8)



## Follow the Footprints Activity (2/8)

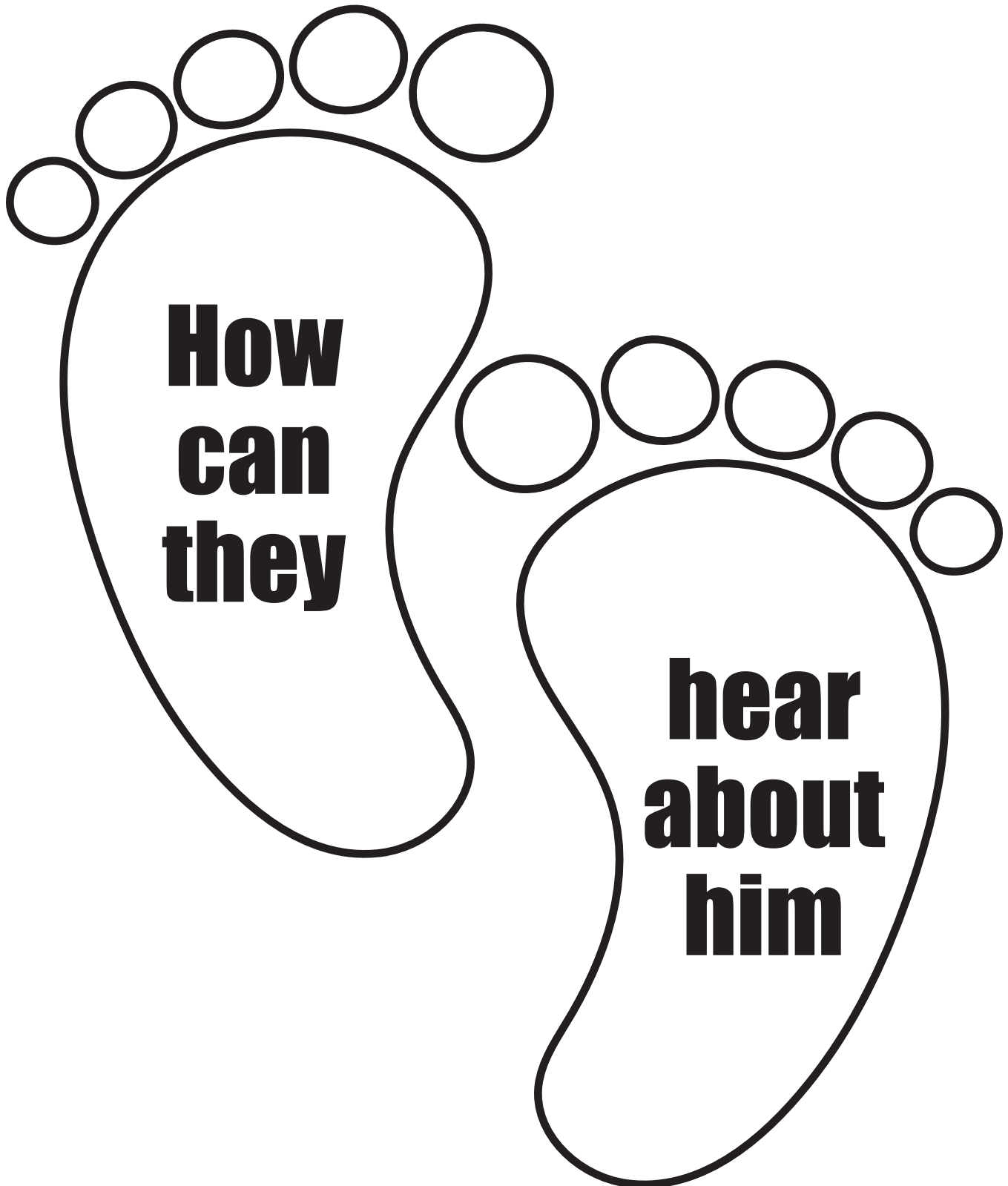


## Follow the Footprints Activity (3/8)

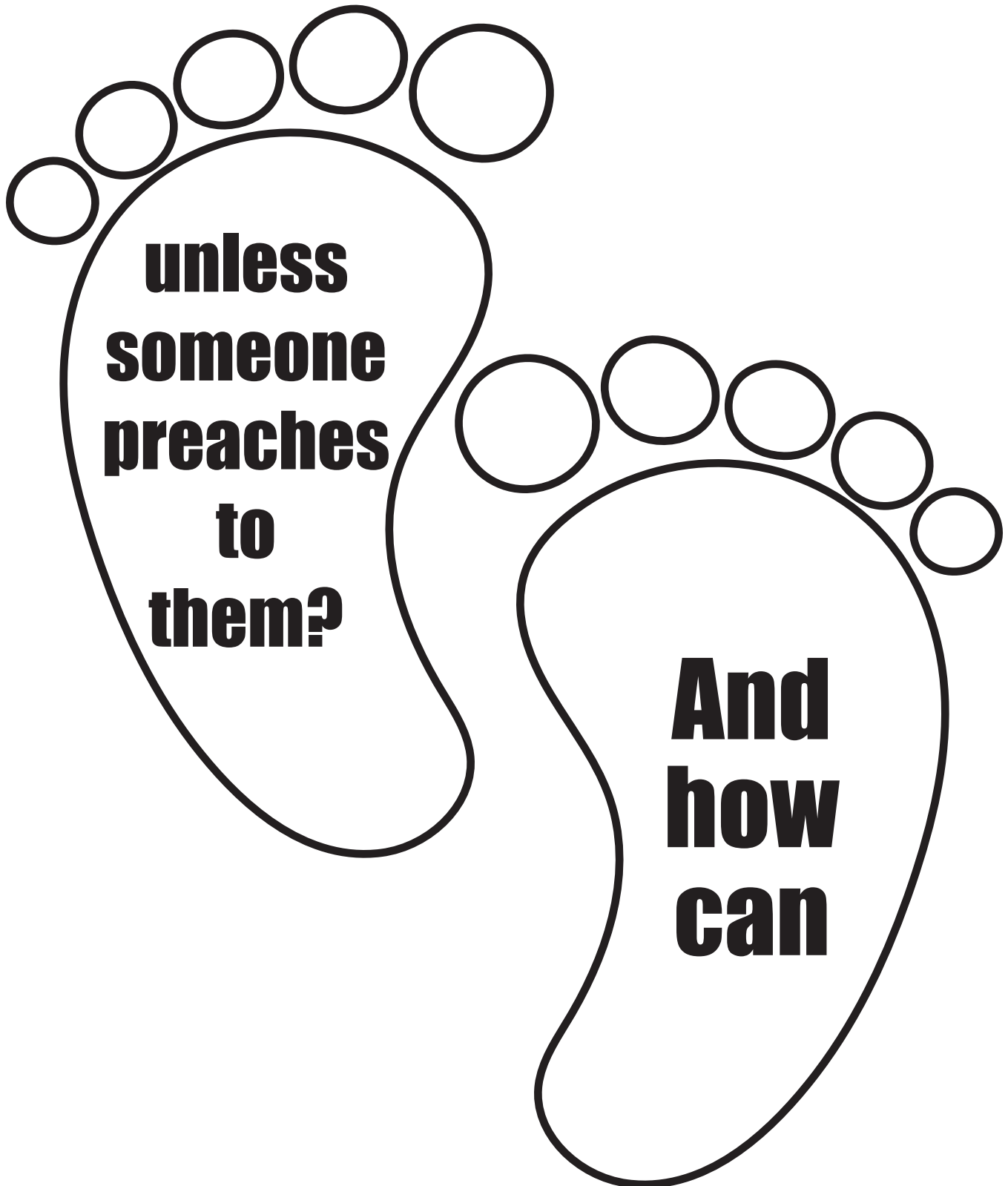




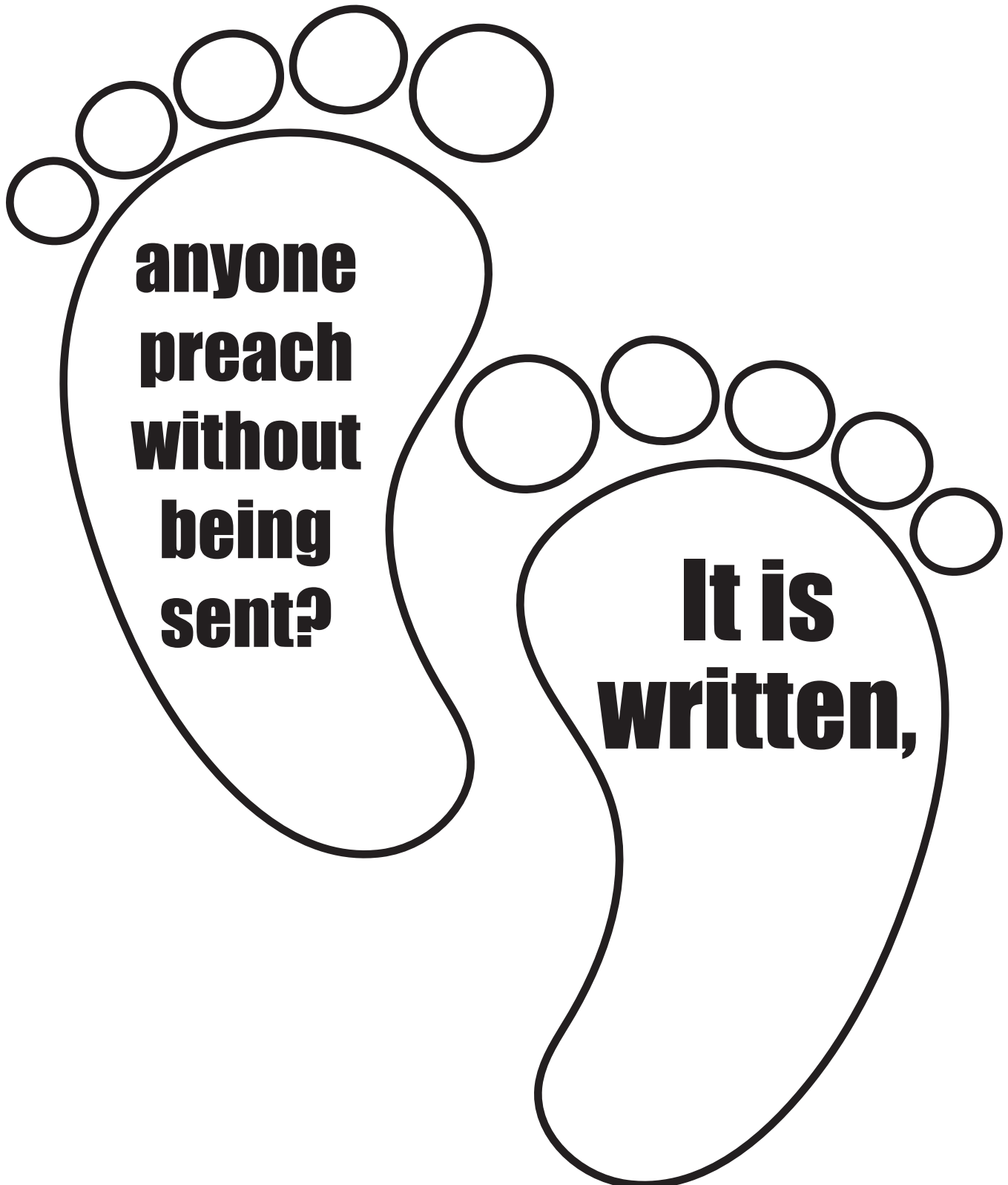
## Follow the Footprints Activity (4/8)



## Follow the Footprints Activity (5/8)



## Follow the Footprints Activity (6/8)



## Follow the Footprints Activity (7/8)



## Follow the Footprints Activity (8/8)

