

sunday school lesson

CHILDREN

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Purpose:

To encounter Jesus, who called his followers to follow him.

Bible Story:

Jesus Calls the Disciples (Matthew 4:18-22)

Memory Verse:

“Jesus said, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.’” Matthew 4:19 (NRSV)

Bible Background

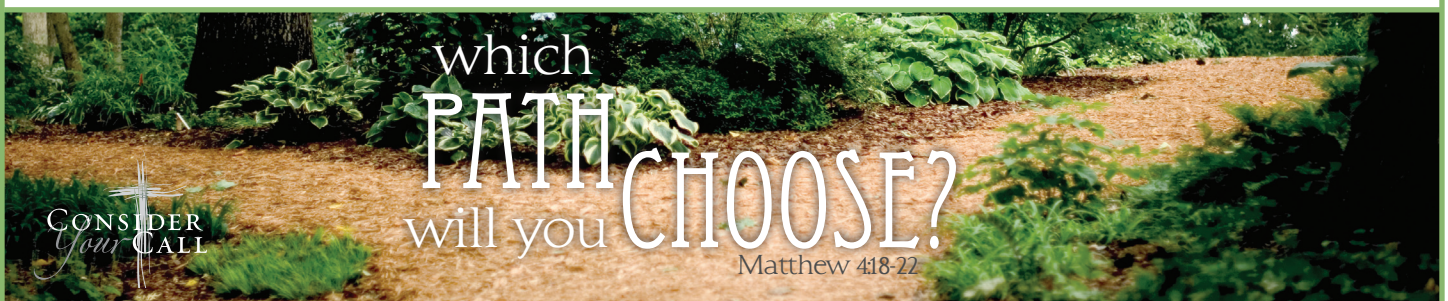
Read Matthew 4:12-25. Jesus has come from temptation in the wilderness to learning of John the Baptist’s arrest. He “withdraws” to Galilee where he makes his home by the sea. He begins to proclaim John’s message: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” In Matthew’s Gospel, the story continues with Jesus calling the first disciples.

In those days, rabbis did not seek out followers. Their followers came to them, asking to become disciples. As witnessed throughout the Gospels, Jesus does not follow the social norm. Jesus comes upon men in the middle of their work and asks them to stop in that moment and follow him. These men would have been working to support themselves and their families. Fishing was not the leisure activity we think of today, but a necessity for some to bring provision to their household. Fishing often took place along the shore using long nets (sometimes 100 feet long), which fish would be driven into by the boats rowing from shore toward the nets. Fishing was a difficult, tiring, smelly task. If you had your own boat, you were lucky. Often fishermen borrowed boats and used nets for their catch. By borrowing a boat, you would owe the boat owner for use of the boat.

Given the nature of the work, it is not surprising that these men would leave their work as fishermen to follow Jesus. Jesus says that they will “become fishers of men,” perhaps indicating that the task before them would not be easy, for being a fisherman was difficult work. Jesus calls Simon Peter and Andrew as they are casting their net into the sea. He calls out to them to follow him. They leave their nets and follow. There’s no time in this text for talk or pulling in the nets. There is a call and an action in response.

Jesus calls James and John as they are mending their nets in the boat with their father. Again, Jesus calls and action takes place. The men immediately follow, leaving their father to the work in the boat.

There must have been something about Jesus that these men desired to follow. His presence, his very word, was such that these men followed him after he commanded them to follow him. He did not ask, but chose them to become his first followers, his first disciples.



which
PATH
will you CHOOSE?
Matthew 4:18-22



There was power in Jesus' words. There's no conversation, no real questioning, but powerful authority coming from Jesus to these four as he calls them: "Follow me."

You may compare the various Gospel accounts of the call of the disciples by reading the account found in Mark 1:16-20.

Recall your own call experience as a follower of Christ. Can you resonate with the call of these first disciples? We see the result of Christ's calling a few. Christianity has grown over the last 2000 years. You are the result. We become Christ's disciples and practice in love, faith, and devotion to Christ's teachings.

The New Interpreter's Bible volume on Matthew & Mark, edited by Leander E. Keck; the online commentary of Sarah Dylan Breuer (http://www.sarahlaughed.net/lectionary/2005/01/third_sunday_af.html); and the Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary on Luke by Richard B. Vinson were consulted for this lesson, in combination with meditation and exegesis of the text.

Preparing the Environment for Learning

1. Locate images of Jesus calling the disciples. If you do not have access to Bible pictures, consult children's Bible story books in your local or church library. Place Bible pictures in the classroom and have the books with images marked for easy location during the Bible story time.
2. Hang up nets in the space where you will have the large group time.
3. Provide Bibles for students and books from your church or local library.

Online Resources for Images

Various images can be viewed online and printed for use. Please note and follow all permissions and restrictions specified by each site and artist. Reflection on the story can take place as you view the art from a variety of cultural and historic settings.

Illustrations of Peter and Andrew:

<http://www.sermons4kids.com/hmartin.htm>

An image of Jesus calling the disciples:

<http://www.servicioskoinonia.org/cerezo/dibujosA/10OrdinarioA3.jpg>

A contemporary image of Christ and his disciples:

http://www.msperu.org/grafic/graficoslit/aTO/03_to_a.htm

Fine art images:

http://www.textweek.com/art/calling_disciples.htm

Preparing for the Learning Experience

Preparation for Introductory Learning Activities

1. Duplicate "Jesus and Disciples" word search; secure highlighters.
2. Cut the Bible picture into puzzle pieces.
3. Secure poster board and marking pens.

Preparation for Bible Study Time (Large Group)

1. Gather books marked with images of the story in an accessible location.
2. Read the story through 3 times. Write the story on paper. Draw the story. Carry it with you in your pocket and read it again when you think about it. Soon you will be able to tell the story from memory. As you ponder the story, you will explore the text in new ways. You may even surprise yourself.
3. Write each word of the memory verse on fish cutouts (fish pattern included) and shuffle the fish in a bucket or turned upside down on a flat surface.
4. Using masking tape, make a large Tic-Tac-Toe board on the classroom floor; squares should be large enough for child to sit cross-legged. Make five (5) "Xs" and five (5) "Os" to place on children's chests as visual reminder of the two teams.

Preparation for Application Activities

1. Drama: Gather large pieces of fabric or make simple Bible costumes, using 2.5 yards of muslin; fold the fabric in half, cutting hole in fold; use cording or belts to secure the fabric around child's waist. Use 45" square fabric for head covering for children.
2. Art: Gather 6' of white butcher/craft paper as well as 9"x12" white drawing/construction paper and fine-tipped magic markers. Consider adding scraps of colored construction paper, fabric scraps, and chenille sticks for children to use in their drawings.
3. Music: gather 3 or 4 hymnals and chart paper.

Guiding the Learning Experience

A. Introductory Learning Activities (10 minutes)

As children arrive in the classroom, let them choose from a variety of learning experiences:

1. **For Younger Children (1st grade):** Cut the Bible picture of Jesus' calling out his disciples into 24 pieces; allow children to work together to complete the Bible puzzle. Talk with the children about the Bible story as they complete the Bible puzzle.
2. **Poster Group – "Disciple: Who? What? Where? When?":** Discuss with the children (older) the above questions related to being a disciple; allow them to write their responses on the poster paper. If time permits, they may draw pictures of a disciple. They may also search through secular and religious magazines for photos of disciples and add photos to the poster board. Check with church office or WMU for religious magazines.
3. **"Jesus and Disciples" Word Search:** Provide highlighters for children to complete the word search; they may work in teams of two if they wish.
4. **"Follow Me" Game:** This is a "copycat" game. Limit the group to 5 or 6 children. Move about the room (and perhaps outdoors), with the children following and copying your movements. Reflect with the children: Why did you follow me? Why did you come with me? Why did you copy me? Accept the children's responses.
5. **Computer Group:** Secure laptop with access to the internet. Allow 2 or 3 children (older) to search websites that you provide that relate to art images of Jesus calling the disciples.

B. Transition to Large Group (3 minutes)

Play some soft music and ask the children to help clean up. Once they have cleaned up and washed hands (if needed), ask the children to gather together for Bible story time. Designate a space in the room to have the Bible story. Place the images and marked books in this space, visible to the children and accessible to you.

C. Bible Study Time (20 minutes)

Open your Bible to Matthew 4:18-22.

Say, "Matthew is the first book in New Testament." Tell me what "testament" means (agreement, covenant). Who wrote the book of Matthew? Matthew is one of the four Gospels in the New Testament. Tell me the names of the other three Gospels. The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) tell us about the life and ministry of Jesus."

Using your own words, tell the story of Jesus calling the disciples. Tell the story from memory, use facial expressions and your voice to bring attention to the story as you tell it.

Show the Bible picture(s) of Jesus calling the disciples. With younger children, ask: "Which person do you think is Jesus? Why do you think that is Jesus? Where is Andrew? And Peter?"

Review the Bible Story: Human Tic-Tac-Toe

After the Bible story time, say "Let's play 'Human Tic-Tac-Toe' to help us remember facts about the Bible story." Divide the children into two teams, "X" and "O." If Team 1 answers a question correctly, the team chooses where to place their team member on the Tic-Tac-Toe "board." If Team 1 doesn't answer correctly, Team 2 receives the same question and may decide where to place their team member on the "board." Questioning returns to Team 1. Do you understand how we will play our review game?"

Tic-Tac-Toe Discussion Questions:

1. Where was Simon Peter when Jesus spoke to him?
(fishing with a net)
2. Why were Simon Peter and Andrew fishing?
(job, livelihood, to make earn a living)
3. What did Jesus ask Simon Peter and Andrew to do?
(to leave their fishing and follow him)
4. What does it mean for Simon Peter to “follow Jesus”?
(to go where Jesus goes, to learn from Jesus, to walk beside Jesus)
5. Who else did Jesus ask to follow him in this story?
(James, son of Zebedee; and his brother John)
6. What were James and John doing?
(sitting in a boat with their father mending their nets)
7. What did Zebedee say to his sons?
(in the story he said nothing)
8. Name one of the disciples Jesus called to follow him.
(Simon Peter, Andrew, James, John) (repeat until all are named)

Learn the Memory Verse

Have each word of the memory verse written on fish and place the fish in a bucket or net. Have the children “fish” for them using their hands or a pole. As they pull in the fish, ask them to put the memory verse in the correct order and repeat it as a group. Each child may read it aloud. After they have done this once, the children may toss the fish back into the bucket or net and play again, this time saying the entire verse as they catch a fish. Children may help one another as needed in reciting the verse.

Pray

Ask the children what they are thankful for. Ask them who needs our prayers today. Write their responses on the marking board. You can construct the prayer from their words.

An example prayer: “Dear God, we thank you today for [children’s responses]. We are glad that you know each of us by name. We name those who need our prayers today [children’s responses]. Thank you for Jesus and for the disciples. Help us to follow Jesus each day. Amen.”

D. Application Activities (20 minutes)

Allow children to choose which application activity they wish to complete: drama, art, or music.

Drama Experience

Lead the children through the planning process: Who will be Jesus? Who will be Andrew, Peter, James, and John? Where will the Bible persons stand? What represents the boats? Will Jesus speak? Will the brothers speak? Will we have a narrator to read the Bible story? Will we have costumes?

Art Experience

Lead the children to decide if they wish to have one large picture (mural) or several pictures (frieze) to tell the story of the calling of the disciples. If the children decide to make a frieze, help children decide how many “frames” the frieze will need, what “action” is to be in each frame, and who will draw each frame.

As children work/learn, talk with them about ways that they may “call” someone to Jesus (inviting to Bible study, sharing Christian music and DVDs, etc.). How are they following Jesus?

Alternative Art Activity: Children may draw a “cartoon” of themselves telling someone about Jesus – inviting someone to church, telling someone how to become a Christ-follower, etc.

Music Experience

Provide children with hymnals; direct them to locate, using the index, songs related to discipleship. Do they know any of these songs? Have they sung any of these songs in worship? Might they choose one song (such as “Lord, Here Am I”; “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus”; or “Where He Leads Me” in the 1991 Baptist Hymnal) and put it to a different tune?

Alternative Music Activity: Using a tune with which children are already familiar, lead them to write a new song based on the Bible story. Consider using the tune to "Jesus Loves Me" or "This Is the Day That the Lord Has Made."

Talk with the children as they work/learn. Ask: "Do you know any disciples today?"

Closing (5 minutes)

Allow children to share their learning experiences with other children/learning teams in the classroom. Sharing their learning helps you as the leader/shepherd know what they have learned. And "sharing" tells the children that they must do something with what they have learned.

Send the children out with blessings, saying their names and sending them forth with miles and kind wishes for a good week. Be blessed as you bless the lives of the young.