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# Jesus Calls His First Disciples

*Scripture: Matthew 4:18-22, John 1:35-51*

**Theme: Jesus calls ordinary people to follow Him**

*1st-3rd Grade (Ages 6-8)*

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Free curriculum for small and rural churches

## Lesson Overview

Lesson Overview: Jesus Calls His First Disciples Introduction (Engage & Explain): Start by asking kids, "Who do you think Jesus wants to follow Him?" Write their ideas on the board, maybe someone mentions a superhero or a brave athlete. Then share that Jesus didn't just call famous people. Instead, He found ordinary folks like Simon and Andrew (fishermen) and Philip and Nathaniel (simple guys from town) to start His work. "Jesus loves us just the way we are!" Body (Scripture + Story): Read Matthew 4:18, 22 or John 1:35, 51 (simplified: "When Jesus saw the fishermen working, He called them to follow Him!"). Ask, "What made them answer?" Point out that Jesus didn't ask them to be perfect, they were just doing their jobs. Then say, "Even if you feel different today, God wants to use YOU!" Share a short prayer: "Lord, help me trust You like these first disciples." Application (Challenge & Celebrate): Have kids brainstorm ways to "answer Jesus' call" this week, maybe by sharing kindness, praying for friends, or serving in a small way. End with: "Jesus isn't looking for perfect people, just those who say, 'Yes, Lord!'" Hold up a paper "calling card" (with their name) to cheer them on! Closing (Encouragement): End with a heart-to-heart: "Today, you're not just a kid, you're a child of God who's called to follow Him. Even if you're scared, He's right there, waiting for YOU to step out!" Hugs and a high-five for brave volunteers! Optional reflection: children can draw a picture of Jesus helping their friends, then share one way they can help someone else this week. This extra activity supports the lesson's theme and gives teachers a simple, lowprep option for extending the discussion.

## Bible Story

### Jesus Calls the First Fishermen

One day, Jesus walked along the shore of a lake. Nearby, two brothers named Peter and Andrew were fishing with their friends, James and John. They were tired and hungry, but their nets were full of fish. "Let's go back to our father and tell him we're not catching any more," Peter said. But Jesus looked at them and said, "Follow me!" They didn't

know what to think, but they dropped their nets and followed Him right away.

Later, Jesus found James and John mending their nets. They were shocked when He called them, too! "We'll follow you," they said, and Jesus praised them. That day, Jesus called four new friends to help Him teach and spread the good news. The men left everything to follow Jesus, even though they didn't know what they'd find next.

This story teaches us that when God calls us to serve Him, we should answer with faith, even if we're unsure. Jesus isn't asking us to do hard things alone; He'll be with us every step of the way. Just like Peter and his friends, we can trust that God will guide us and prepare us for what comes next.

Why does this matter? Because God calls us too! Maybe you'll feel called to help others, pray for friends, or share God's love in small ways. Like Peter and Andrew, we can answer with joy and trust that God will use us to do great things for His kingdom.

(Application: Ask God today to help you be ready to follow Him, no matter what!)

## Key Verse

### **Matthew 4:19 , 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people.'**

Jesus Calls Us to Follow and Help Others This verse is from the Bible, and it tells us something very important about Jesus and how He wants us to live. Jesus wasn't just talking to His friends, He was calling everyone who wanted to follow Him. His words, "Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people," are like an invitation. Jesus knows we have gifts and talents, just like how fishermen use nets to catch fish. His way of saying "fish for people" means He wants us to use our hearts and actions to help others find God, just like Jesus helped people find His love and forgiveness. Following Jesus Means Using Our Skills for Good Jesus knew what He was doing when He said this. Back in the Bible, fishermen were important because they shared food with others. When Jesus tells us to "fish for people," He's saying we can use our hobbies, our brains, and even our kindness to help people, just like Jesus did! Maybe you love drawing, singing, playing sports, or being kind to others. Those things are like tools to help spread God's love to those who need it. When we use our talents to help others, we're doing just what Jesus taught us to do! We Don't Have to Do It Alone Jesus didn't just tell us to follow Him and leave the rest up to luck. He promised to be with us every step of the way, just like He did with His first disciples. When we follow Jesus and start helping others, we can ask Him for strength and courage. Sometimes, it might feel scary to talk to a new friend or share a kind word, but remember: Jesus already did the hardest part, He came to save us! By following His example, we can trust that He'll guide us and help us share His love, even when we feel unsure. A Simple Way to Start Today This verse can be a great reminder for us to start small in our daily lives. Maybe today, you can: - Share a smile or a kind note with someone who looks lonely. - Ask a friend to pray with you (even if it's just "Let's pray God helps us be brave today!"). - Draw a picture or write a note to someone who might need encouragement. Jesus wants us to be his little helpers, just like He was the Great Helper for others. By following Him, we learn to love, serve, and make a difference, just as He taught us! And the best part? Every time we do good, we're helping others fish for people to meet God too.

## Activities

### Activity 1:

Kids will create story stones with pictures that represent Jesus calling people to follow Him, then play a game to "follow" their new friends!

1. Prep the Nets: Cut a strip of paper into a long, narrow rectangle (about 20 cm wide and 30 cm long). If needed, print templates for easier cutting.
2. Fold and Glue: Fold the paper strip in half and glue the ends together to make a loop. Place a paper clip inside for strength. Let dry.
3. Decorate the Net: Give each child a paper plate and markers. Have them draw a face, eyes, and a mouth on the plate. They can also draw a "boat" or a fish if they want!

4. Act Out Jesus Calling Disciples: Show them how Jesus called fishermen to follow Him. Place a few paper "fish" (cut from paper) on the floor. Say, "Just like Jesus called Peter and Andrew, He calls YOU to follow!" Let them "fish" with their nets, catching the paper disciples and discussing how Jesus invites people into His work.
2. "Follow Me" Story Stones (Disciple Following)
6. Draw or Glue Pictures: Give each child a stone or plate and have them draw or glue a picture of one disciple (or a simple word like "follow me"). If using paper plates, write "Jesus calls!" in a fun font.
7. Read and Discuss: Read the lesson (Matthew 4:18-22 or John 1:35-51) aloud. Ask, "What does it mean to follow Jesus?" Explain that Jesus invited people to be His disciples, just like He did with the fishermen.
8. Play "Follow Me": Scatter the stones on the floor. Call out

## Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended discussion questions for early elementary children (ages 6, 8) based on the story of Jesus Calling His First Disciples (Matthew 4:18, 22, John 1:35, 51). These questions encourage them to think deeply about the story while connecting it to their own lives in a simple, engaging way:
- What did Jesus look like when He called Simon and Andrew, or Philip and Nathaniel?
- (Think about colors, hair, or even how they might have been dressed.)
- Application: How do you think Jesus might have looked today? What does His appearance tell us about Him? (For example, maybe He had warm clothes in winter or a hat in summer.) Have you ever seen a picture of Jesus or another person in the Bible and noticed something interesting about them? How can we learn about God by looking at His pictures?
- Why do you think Simon and Andrew, or Philip and Nathaniel, left everything to follow Jesus?
- Application: What do you think might have been hard about leaving something they loved, like a job, a friend, or even their family? What would make it easier for them to trust Jesus? Have you ever had to make a big choice in your life? How did you feel when you decided to follow something or someone? What can we learn from their bravery?
- What do you think Jesus meant when He said, "Come, follow me!"?
- Application: Does that invitation sound like something Jesus would say to you today? What would you do if Jesus called you to leave something important to follow Him? (Maybe go to church, pray, or help others?) Have you ever been told to do something hard, like practice a new skill or apologize? How did you feel? How can you trust Jesus even when things feel difficult?
- How can we be like Simon, Andrew, Philip, and Nathaniel today?
- Application: These men didn't just follow Jesus, they also told others about Him. What's one thing you could share with your family, friends, or classmates about Jesus? Maybe it's a fun Bible story, a prayer, or even a kind act. Have you ever told someone about something you love? How did they react? What if we told them about Jesus?
- These questions allow kids to share their thoughts, ask follow-up questions, and connect the story to their own experiences in a meaningful way. Would you like any adjustments to fit a specific lesson plan or group dynamic?

## Prayer Focus

*Here's a heartfelt and simple prayer for your young students, inspired by Jesus calling His first disciples: --- "Dear God, today we remember how You called the first disciples to follow You, just like You call us to be Your friends and helpers! Just like Peter and Andrew, James and John, we want to be ready to listen to You, even when it feels hard. Help us to trust You, like those fishermen did when they left their nets and boats. May we always be open to answering Your call, even if it means stepping out in faith. Give us courage to share Your love with others, just as*

*You showed them how to follow You. Amen." --- How to use this with the class: - Read the passage together while pausing to act it out (e.g., pretend to be fishermen casting nets or following Jesus). - Ask: "What do you think it means to be called by God?" (Let them share ideas like trusting, serving, or listening.) - End with the prayer and ask: "How can we answer God's call today?" (e.g., by praying for someone, helping a friend, or sharing kindness.) Extra tip: Add a simple action (like holding hands or singing a short verse) to make it interactive!*

### >> Missions Spotlight

The fishing communities around the Sea of Galilee in Israel still use boats similar to what Jesus' disciples used. Missionaries working with fishing communities around the world, from Lake Victoria in Africa to the coast of Brazil, find that the call of the fishermen resonates powerfully.

### -> To the Cross

Jesus called fishermen, tax collectors, and ordinary people, not religious experts. He still calls ordinary people today. And following Jesus always leads to the cross: 'Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Me' (Matthew 16:24).