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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

Nursery (Ages 0-2)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

"God Loves Us!" Jesus said, "Come follow me!" He calls even little ones, just like you! God loves you so much, and He wants you to be His friend forever. Let's sing and dance to show our love! 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

God's Love Calls Little Fishers!

Once, Jesus was near the water. He saw two brothers, Simon and Andrew. They were fishing with nets. Jesus said, "Come follow me!" They jumped right in, just like that! God loves us so much that He calls us to trust Him.

Next, Jesus walked more. He saw two other brothers, James and John. They were with their father, Zebedee, mending nets. Jesus said, "Come, be my friends!" Like magic, they left their work to follow Jesus. God's love is like sunshine, it shines for everyone!

Some men, like Andrew and John, asked Jesus a question. "What's God's secret?" Jesus smiled and said, "The lambs are His, the sheep are His." God's love is like a tender hug, He loves all His children! Even little ones like you.

God's love is big and small, He calls you, He calls me! Just trust and follow Him, He'll make you His friend!

--- Why This Matters: Jesus calls everyone, just like He called the first friends! God loves you so much that He wants to be your best friend too. When you follow Him, you're learning to trust and be brave, just like the disciples. That's how we grow in God's love, just like little fishers!

Key Verse

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

"Jesus loves you so much!" "Come follow Jesus, He's kind and always here to help you. He wants to share love and take care of you too!" (Repeat: "Jesus loves you!")

Activities

Activity 1:

Toddlers mimic walking toward Jesus while listening to His voice, just like the disciples did!

1. Show the Bible: "Jesus called two friends to be His disciples, just like God loves us!" (Point to the scripture.)
2. Paint the fish: Give each child a fish paper. Let them color it with crayons (or add a simple fish shape if cutting is hard).
3. Glue & sing: Glue the fish to paper strips to make a "boat." Sing: "God's love is like the ocean's wave / He calls us, He loves us, He gave!"
4. Water play (optional): Place fish in a bowl of water. Say, "Jesus loves us so much, just like water loves the fish!"
2. "Follow Jesus' Call" (Movement & Bible Story)
6. Storytime: Hold up the Bible. Say, "Jesus saw Simon and Andrew, He called them to fish with Him!" (Point to the scripture.)
7. Movement game: Lay out the blanket as "water." Place the picture/stuffed fish near it. Call out: "Jesus calls! Walk toward Him!" Let toddlers crawl or toddle over.
8. Repeat phrases: Say: "Jesus loves you! Follow Him like the disciples did!" (Add arm movements like walking.)
9. End with hugs: Gently touch each child's shoulder. "God's love is like a hug, He calls you to Him every day!" (Repeat "He loves me" if needed.)
10. Tip: Keep it short, toddlers learn best through simple actions and repetition! Sing the "God's love is like the ocean's wave" song if you have it.

Discussion Questions

- Here are four simple, open-ended questions to help babies and toddlers explore God's love through Jesus calling His first disciples:
- "What do you think Jesus saw when He was walking by the water? How do you think He felt to call friends to be His helpers?" (Encourage them to imagine the story.)
- "If Jesus called you to be His friend, what would you do? What would you say to Him?" (Let them play pretend with simple words like "Jesus loves me!" or "Come follow me!")
- "In the story, the disciples left their fishing to follow Jesus. What do you think God wants you to do with your time? How can you show Him you love Him?" (Open-ended to explore their ideas.)
- "If Jesus is always calling us to be His friends, what is one way you can smile at Him today? How can you be kind to Him?" (Focus on small, tangible ways to respond to love.)
- (Repeat phrases like "Jesus loves you!" or "Follow me!" for easy memorization.)

Prayer Focus

"Dear God, Love us so much, You are always here with us. Jesus calls little friends, just like us, to come and follow Him. He wants us to know Your love, always, always, always! Amen." (For repetition:) "God is love! God loves us! God calls us!"

>> 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).