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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

PreK-K (Ages 3-5)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

Lesson Overview: "Jesus Calls Ordinary Friends!" Oh, little friends, today we'll meet some very special people who answered Jesus' call! When Jesus saw Simon and Andrew fishing, He said, "Come, follow Me!" (Matthew 4:19). Even though they were simple fishermen, they jumped right in, just like us! Jesus loves all of us, no matter what we do or how small we feel. What a wonderful thing to follow Jesus! Andrew told his brother, "We've found the Messiah!" (John 1:42). His excitement is like ours when we hear God's whisper: "Yes, follow Me!" Wonder what God might call us to do today? Jesus calls us too! The Bible tells us Jesus calls everyone, even you! Maybe you'll be like them: bold, kind, or just ready to say "Yes!" to His love. Let's ask God to help us hear His call today, just like our friends did! Praise the Lord! 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 Little Fishers!

One day, Jesus walked near the lake by the water's edge. There were many people listening to Him talk. Suddenly, He saw two brothers, Simon and Andrew, sitting by the water and fishing with a small boat. "Come follow me!" Jesus said to them. They looked at Him and smiled. "Yes, Lord!" they replied, and they left their nets and fishing to walk with Jesus.

Soon, Jesus met another group of friends, James and John, the sons of Zebedee. They were also in the boat with their father mending nets. Jesus called them too. "We will go fishing with you!" they shouted. Jesus took them by the hand and said, "I am ready to learn with you!" They all jumped in and followed Jesus together.

Along the way, Jesus taught them to be kind, brave, and kind. He said, "The fishers of people are coming!" and showed them how to catch hearts with His love. They all laughed and wondered, "Who will help Jesus when He needs us?" Then Jesus smiled and said, "You are the ones I want to teach me how to catch souls!"

This story shows us that Jesus calls everyone to follow Him, even when it's hard. Like Simon and Andrew, we can choose to listen and believe in Jesus today. His love is like the sun, shining brightly in our hearts, and we are called to share it with others! Wonder: How can we help Jesus catch hearts today?

Key Verse

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

Oh, this is a wonderful verse about God's big plan for us! Here's how we can tell it to little ones: --- Jesus was walking by the water, and He said, "Come, follow me!" That means He invited all of us to be His friends. We can do this together, like kids playing in a big, happy group! God wants us to help others feel loved, just like He loves us so much. When Jesus says, "fish for people," it's like He's saying, "Let's find ways to share kindness and smile at others!" Imagine catching fish in the ocean, now imagine catching hearts! We do this by being kind, listening, and helping others feel special, just like Jesus does. Follow Jesus means we listen to Him and do what's right. When we do, we can feel happy and full of love, just like He made us to be! Isn't it wonderful that God wants us to spread His light to the whole world? Let's be brave little helpers! --- Repeat: "Come, follow me!", Jesus is waiting for you to join His fun adventure!

Activities

Activity 1:

Kids retell the story of Jesus calling His disciples by walking through a simple paper trail. They pretend to "leave their nets" and follow Jesus, feeling His love as they go!

1. Draw the Net: Ask kids, "How did Jesus call His first friends?" (Point to Matthew 4:19.) Show them how the disciples left their boats and followed Him, like they're ready to "fish" for faith! Let them color the plate like a big, round net.
2. Cut the Slits: Pre-cut two long slits on each side of the plate (like a fishing net's opening). Ask: "What do nets hold?" (Fish! Write "Jesus calls us to follow!" on the inside.)
3. Add the Handle: Tie a string through the top of the plate to make a handle. "Just like the disciples, we hold our faith with love!" Let them decorate the handle with glitter or stickers.
4. Catch a Fish (Optional): Glue a small fish cutout or draw one on the bottom. Ask: "What are you 'fishing' for today?" (Answers like "Jesus," "friends," or "love"). Play a song like "This Little Light of Mine" to wrap it up!
2. "Follow Jesus Like a Little Fish" Story Walk
6. Set Up the Trail: Lay out the paper strips in a straight line (like a path). Write or draw short phrases on each:
 7. "Boats were empty." (Matthew 4:18)
 8. "Jesus saw them." (Matthew 4:19)
 9. "'Come, follow me!'" (Matthew 4:22)
 10. "They left their nets!" (Repeat joyfully!)
 11. "Jesus loves YOU!"
12. Act It Out: Call the group to the front. "Today, Jesus calls us to follow Him like the disciples!" Start at the first strip. Whisper: "Boats were empty..." Then hold up a net and ask: "What did the disciples do next?" (They left their nets!)
13. Walk the Trail: Have kids take turns walking to each strip while holding a small net. At the last strip, cheer: "Jesus calls us to be His friends, just like the disciples!" Sing "Jesus Loves the Little Children" or point to their Bibles to read John 1:35, 37 ("Follow Jesus!").

14. Close with Wonder: Ask: "Where do you see Jesus calling you today?" (Answers like "to share love," "to pray," or "to play with a friend"). End with a prayer: "Lord, help us follow You with our whole hearts!"
15. Tips for Both Activities:
16. Use simple, repetitive language (e.g., "Boats were empty... they left... they followed!").
17. Keep movements short (e.g., walk the trail, wave nets, or sit in a circle for the story).
18. Praise their creativity: "Wow, your net looks just like the disciples' boats!"
19. For extra wonder, add a "Jesus' Call" song (to the tune of "The Fisherman's Song"):
20. "Jesus called with a happy voice,
21. 'Come follow me!' He said.
22. The disciples left their nets,
23. And ran to follow God."

Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended discussion questions for preschool and kindergarten children based on the story of Jesus Calling His First Disciples:
- Why do you think Jesus called Simon and Andrew to follow Him? How might it feel to be asked by someone very special, like Jesus, to do something big for them?
- (Wonder: "What would you do if you heard the most important voice in your life asking you to help?")
- What do you think made Jesus choose the first fishermen, Simon, James, and John? Were they good at fishing before they followed Him? How can we show kindness, like they did when they worked together to help others?
- (Wonder: "Did Jesus know they would learn to catch more than just fish? How do we show our love for others, just like Jesus taught them?")
- Jesus said, "Follow Me!" to so many people. What do you think it means to follow someone? How could you follow Jesus today, maybe by helping a friend, praying for someone, or being kind like He showed?"
- (Wonder: "Is following Jesus like following a leader who cares more than anyone else? How does that make you feel?")
- Simon, James, and John left everything to follow Jesus. Was it easy for them? What might have been harder, giving up their nets, their home, or their friends? How can you give up something small today to follow Jesus, like sharing your toys or giving a hug to someone who needs it?
- (Wonder: "Did they feel scared? What would make it easier to trust Jesus?")

Prayer Focus

Prayer for Wonder and Friendship (Jesus Calls His First Disciples) First, let's close our eyes and imagine the sun shining bright on the lake... Dear God, we thank You for the day You made, where the water sparkles and the sky is blue! Help us feel Your love like the warmth of the sun, kind and big for us all. When Jesus walked near, He saw two brothers, Simon and Andrew, standing by the water... Oh, God, help us hear His gentle call, like when we see someone smiling and want to run to them! Teach us to listen and to love others just like He does. And then Jesus said, "Follow Me!", and they leaped into the boat to go with Him... Dear God, make us brave like Simon and Andrew, ready to step into adventures with Jesus! Help us feel His joy and wonder in everything we do today. Let's open our eyes and remember, Jesus calls us to be friends with Him! Thank You, Lord, for calling us to love and trust You. Amen!

>> 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).