

Unit 20 • Session 4
Jesus Called Disciples

Bible Passage: Matthew 4; 9; Mark 1–3; Luke 5–6

Story Point: Jesus called disciples to follow Him.

Key Passage: John 3:30

Big Picture Question: Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to obey His Father's plan and rescue sinners.

Christ Connection: Jesus came to earth to show what God is like and to save people from their sins. This is great news! Jesus told His disciples to tell others about Him, and we are Jesus' disciples when we trust in Him. Everyone in the world needs to hear the good news about Jesus.

Leader Bible Study

In the first century, rabbi was a title given to a respected expert in the law of Moses. A rabbi studied the Scriptures and taught through speaking and writing. Jews wanted to honor God in how they lived, and they looked to the rabbis to instruct them in their behavior.

The word rabbi translates "my master." Jewish students would seek out a rabbi and ask to follow him. A rabbi would choose only a few highly-promising students to be his disciples. If a student was not accepted by the rabbi, he likely returned home to learn a trade. Those chosen to be a rabbi's disciples followed him everywhere. They learned from the rabbi how to think and how to act. They trusted the rabbi, and the goal was to become just like him.

When Jesus chose His disciples, His strategy was unusual. Rather than waiting for students to come to Him, Jesus sought out His disciples among the people who followed Him. He found them working—fishing and repairing nets. Some of Jesus' disciples were introduced to Him by their friends. He approached these ordinary men and said, "Follow Me." Their response? "Immediately they left ... and followed him" (Matt. 4:20,22).

The Twelve—Simon (Peter) and his brother Andrew; James and John; Philip; Bartholomew; Matthew; Thomas; James, son of Alphaeus; Thaddaeus; Simon; and Judas—spent time with Jesus during His ministry. Jesus taught them how to live in light of God's coming kingdom. He commissioned them to teach others about Him. The good news about Jesus is too great to not share with the entire world.

The call to follow Jesus is not an easy one. Jesus said, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). Jesus calls us to do the same—to surrender our lives

for His purposes and perhaps even to die. "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me will find it" (Matt. 16:25)

The Bible Story

Jesus' ministry had begun. He traveled around, preaching about God and telling people to turn away from their sins. People started talking about Jesus and the things He was teaching. They were interested in what Jesus had to say. Large crowds followed Jesus around and listened to Him teach.

One day, Jesus was walking along the Sea of Galilee. He saw two brothers: Simon—who was called Peter—and Andrew. Peter and Andrew were fishermen. Jesus called out to them, "Follow Me, and I will teach you to fish for people!" Right away, Peter and Andrew dropped their nets and followed Jesus.

Later, He saw two more brothers. Their names were James and John. They were in a boat fixing nets with their father, Zebedee. Jesus called out to them, and right away they got up, left their father and the boat, and followed Jesus.

Jesus went on and saw a man named Matthew (who was also called Levi). Matthew was sitting at the tax office. Matthew was a tax collector. Many people didn't like tax collectors because tax collectors were unfair. Jesus called out to him, "Follow Me!" So Matthew got up, left everything behind, and followed Jesus.

Matthew had a big feast for Jesus at his house. Many tax collectors and sinners came to eat with Jesus and His disciples. The religious leaders saw this, and they didn't think Jesus should be friends with people who did wrong things. They complained to the disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

Jesus heard the religious leaders and said, "People who are healthy don't need a doctor, but people who are sick do. I did not come to invite good people; I came to invite sinners to turn back to God."

Later, Jesus gathered His followers together and chose twelve of them to be His apostles. Jesus' apostles would work closely with Jesus and would go out to tell others about Him. These are the men Jesus chose: Simon (who was called Peter), Simon's brother Andrew, James and John (who were called the "Sons of Thunder"), Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus (al FEE uhs), Thaddaeus (THAD ih uhs), Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot (iss KAR ih aht).

Part One: Introduce the Story

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to tell about their closest friends.

Say • Having friends is a great blessing from the Lord. It can be difficult to maintain close friendships with many people, so we often have a smaller group of very close friends. Today we will hear about when Jesus chose some people to be His closest friends and followers.

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the “A Change of Pace” activity page. Direct kids to find and circle the seven differences between the two versions of the Bible story art.

Say • Great job finding those changes. When Jesus came and called His disciples to follow Him, they were in for a drastic change to their lives. Everyone who follows Jesus experiences incredible life changes. I’ll tell you more about that soon.

Session starter (10 minutes)

Option 1: Follow the leader

Instruct the kids to stand in a single-file line. Select a kid to lead the line around the room. She may do various motions or move in silly ways. The rest of the kids in line must mimic her motions and movements. After a minute or so, select a new kid to lead the line. Play as time allows.

SAY • Today we will learn about Jesus’ disciples. Disciples are people who follow someone else. Jesus’ disciples followed Him, learned to obey Him, and were His closest friends. Who would you choose to be your followers and friends?

Option 2: Boats in the water

Provide each kid with a sheet of aluminum foil. Help the kids to form their foil sheets into boat shapes. Provide a basin of water and allow the kids to see if their boats will float. You may use pennies, marbles, or other small weights to see whose boat can hold the most weight before sinking.

Say • Many of Jesus’ disciples were fishermen when Jesus met them. When Jesus called them, they left their boats and followed Jesus immediately. Jesus promised to teach them a new way to fish. What do you think they would catch?

Transition to teach the story

Teach the Story

[Leader enters wearing blue jeans, a T-shirt with a reflective vest, and a hard hat.]

Leader • Hey, everyone! The road work on this portion of the highway is complete. Everything about the road is improved. There are more lanes to drive in, no potholes to avoid, and much clearer signs and markings to direct people where to go.

I’ll tell you one thing I’ve never experienced before: the road is done, but no one is using it! I guess people got so used to the construction and terrible traffic that they all found different ways to get where they are going. That’s why a few friends and I have started a special team. Our job (at least until the next road work assignment) is to wake up each day and drive onto the highway to get around the city. It may seem silly, but our hope is that people will see us driving on the new road and know that it’s open again. Then, maybe they will follow us and use the new road like we wanted them to when we fixed it. In other words, they can follow us as we follow the road.

You know, that idea we had actually reminds me of a Bible story. It’s about Jesus and the time He chose certain men to be His closest friends and followers.

Big picture question (1 minute)

Leader • As we get to the story, let’s review the big picture question. Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to obey His Father’s plan and rescue sinners. Jesus is God the Son, and He loves God the Father. As a result, Jesus wanted to obey the Father’s perfect plan. Jesus also loves people and wants to see us saved from sin. God’s plan for Jesus to die on the cross required Jesus to become human. Jesus wanted to obey God and save people, so He perfectly obeyed God’s plan.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

Leader • Jesus obeyed all aspects of God’s plan. Jesus obeyed God by being baptized. Then Jesus obeyed the Holy Spirit and prayed in the wilderness for 40 days without food. Jesus was tempted and never sinned. When people who had been following John showed confusion about others following Jesus, John the Baptist told people to follow Jesus. This week, we will see that Jesus called disciples to follow Him. And that’s exactly what the disciples did!

spent some time teaching and leading people, but it was time for him to step aside so Jesus—the fully God, fully human Messiah—could lead His people.

Big picture question (1 minute)

Leader • Jesus is God the Son, and it is important to understand why God the Son came to earth as a human. That's our big picture question! Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to obey His Father's plan and rescue sinners. God's perfect plan to rescue sinners required Jesus to be a human to be the perfect sacrifice for sin. Jesus wanted to obey this plan because He loves God and He loves people.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Matthew 4: 9; Mark 1-3; Luke 5-6. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video "Jesus Called Disciples."

Leader • Jesus called disciples to follow Him. You know what I find so amazing about this story? The men Jesus called left basically everything they had to follow and obey Jesus. The fishermen walked away from their boats, and the tax collector left his tax booth. When Jesus called, they answered. They were far from perfect, but they obeyed right away. They seemed to know that what they were giving up was nothing compared to what they would gain by following Jesus.

And again, the men Jesus called were not people without sin. Many of the people who followed Jesus sinned in ways that were very obvious. That's one of the big reasons the religious leaders hated Jesus. They thought that the Messiah would only spend time with and love people who were good (or at least looked and acted like they were good). Jesus knew that if people were righteous—their hearts and actions lined up with God's Word—then He wouldn't have needed to come to earth. But people are not righteous, and God's plan required that Jesus come to earth as a human. Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to obey His Father's plan and rescue sinners. Just as sick people need a doctor, sinners need Jesus. The religious leaders at the time were like sick people who did not believe they were sick.

Christ connection

Leader • Jesus came to earth to show what God is like and to save people from their sins. This is great news! Jesus told His disciples to tell others about Him, and we are Jesus' disciples when we trust in Him. Everyone in the world needs to hear the good news about Jesus.

Dismiss to apply the story

Match the Fish

INSTRUCTIONS: Draw lines connecting the matching fish.



Preschool Activity Pages

Unit 20 • Session 4 Jesus Called Disciples

BIBLE STORY SUMMARY:

- Jesus chose disciples to follow Him.
- Jesus chose fishermen named Peter, Andrew, James, and John.
- Jesus chose a tax collector named Matthew.
- Jesus chose 12 men in all who left everything and followed Him.

KEY PASSAGE: John 3:30

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

- Why did Jesus become human?
Jesus became human to rescue sinners.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:

- In Bible times, disciples chose their teacher. Why is it special that Jesus chose His own disciples?
- What did Jesus say to the religious leaders who thought Jesus should not be friends with certain people?
- Who needs to hear about Jesus?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:

- Play a family game of “Duck, Duck, Goose” except say, “I choose, I choose, you!” Talk about how Jesus chose disciples to follow Him.
- If possible, go fishing with another family. Talk about what Jesus meant about fishing for people.



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