

LARGE GROUP LESSON

BOTTOM LINE:

I can follow Jesus.

OBJECTIVE:

Kids will learn that Jesus wants us to follow him and be his disciples.

KEY PASSAGE:

Mark 1:16-20, Calling the First Disciples

INTRO:

For several weeks now, we've been following The Life of Jesus. We've seen his birth in a manger in Bethlehem. We've followed him as a 12 year old impressing the teachers of the law at the temple. Then as an adult, we followed Jesus to the Sea of Galilee where he was baptized by John the Baptist. Next we followed Jesus into the desert where he fasted for 40 days and was tempted by the devil and overcame the devil.

When Jesus returned from the desert victorious over the devil's temptation, he was ready to start his ministry of telling the people the good news about the kingdom of God.

Jesus begins by looking for followers. People who will share in the work of spreading the good news. People who will share in the love, the joy, the hard work, and blessing of living for Jesus. He called these followers his disciples.

And he found his first followers in a very unusual place.

READ MARK 1:16-20

MAIN POINT:

You'd think Jesus might have gone to the temple or the synagogue to find wise and learned people to be his disciples. But he didn't.

His first followers were fishermen. This was not the job of the rich and powerful, or the smartest person in class. But Jesus wasn't interested in their status; he wanted people who were willing to leave everything and follow him.

LARGE GROUP LESSON

And that's exactly what Simon and Andrew did. When Jesus said, "follow me" they left their nets right there to become disciples. The same thing happened with James and John. When Jesus called to them, they left right away, with their father still in the boat.

Jesus said that he would make these fishermen, fishers of men. They were no longer going to bring fish into the boat, they were going to help Jesus bring people into the kingdom of God. They were going to point people to Jesus and allow him to change their lives.

Simon, Andrew, James and John were the first four disciples that Jesus called, but they weren't the last. Eventually, he would have 12 disciples that followed him everywhere that he went, learned from him, and obeyed his instructions. These men were Simon (who we know as Peter), Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the Lesser, Simon the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot who would one day betray Jesus. We'll talk more about that in a few weeks.

These were the 12 disciples, but Jesus had other people who were his followers. There was Mary Magdalene. There were the sisters Martha and Mary and their brother, Lazarus. And there were many followers whose names we don't know. The number grew and grew as Jesus went around preaching the good news.

DRIVE IT HOME:

And the number of Jesus followers continued to grow even after Jesus went back to heaven. Paul, who wrote much of the New Testament, became a disciple and apostle of Jesus after Jesus had ascended to heaven.

The number of Jesus followers continues to grow even today. Today we call people who follow Jesus, Christians. And all the Christians together we call the Church.

Those of us who follow Jesus have had our sins forgiven by him and we have had our lives transformed by him. Like those first disciples, we want to go around and share the good news with others, so that they can be forgiven and transformed as well.

Jesus loves you. He is gently calling for you to "come, follow me." Just like those fishermen did, Jesus is hoping you will leave everything behind and join him. You can be a follower of Jesus. You can be a disciple today. That is good news for each of us.

CLOSE WITH A SIMPLE PRAYER:

*Dear God,
Lead us, we want to follow you.
In Jesus' name,
Amen*