

Use Week of:

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.

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Additional resources are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit ministrygrid.com/gospelproject.

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 Called Disciples

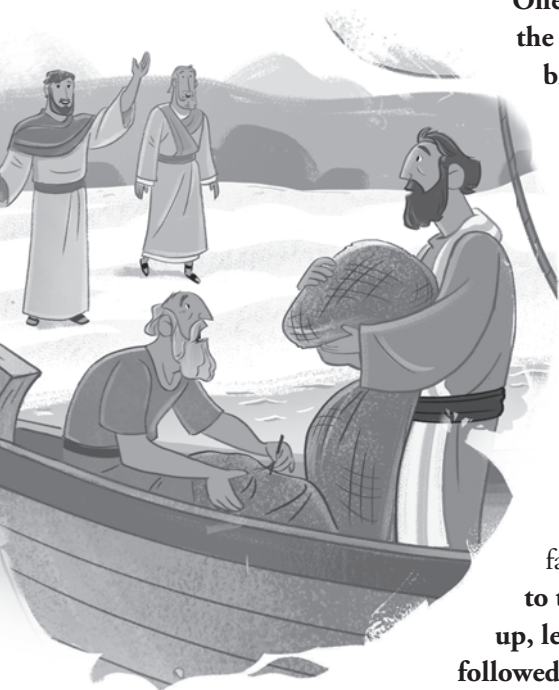
Matthew 4; 9; Mark 1–3; Luke 5–6

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).

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.

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **List names:** Write the disciples' names on a dry erase board and point to them as you tell the story.
- **Use props:** Display fishing nets as you tell about the fishermen who left their nets to follow Jesus.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: 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.

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 share about one or two of their closest friends. How long have they known each other? How did they meet?

Activity page (5 minutes)

- “The Twelve” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete “The Twelve” on the activity page. Guide kids to find and circle the names of Jesus’ disciples. Point out that two of the disciples were named James, so the name *James* appears twice in the word search.

SAY • When Jesus began His ministry, many people followed Him and learned from His teaching. We will see in today’s Bible story that Jesus chose 12 people to be His disciples. *Disciple* means “learner” or “student.”

**LOW
PREP**

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Find a friend

Instruct kids to stand and spread out around the room. Explain that you will call out a description, and kids will

form groups accordingly. Give an example: Find a friend whose birthday is in the same month as yours. Kids should quickly move to stand next to kids who share a birthday month. Groups may consist of more than two kids. Call out additional descriptions as time allows. Consider using the following descriptions: Find a friend who ...

- has the same number of siblings as you
- has the same number of letters in his or her name
- has the same favorite color
- is wearing the same color of shirt

SAY • You formed groups based on specific qualifications. If you had to form a group of people you were going to hang out with all the time, what kind of people would you choose? Today we will hear about the people Jesus chose to be His followers. They weren't famous or powerful. Let's find out more.

OPTION 2: Disciples concentration

Form groups of two to six kids. Give each group two copies of the "Disciple Cards." One player in the group should mix up the cards facedown and arrange them in a grid.

Players will take turns flipping over two cards at a time, trying to find a match. If the cards match, the player collects them. If the cards do not match, the player should turn them facedown again. Play passes to the next kid. The player to collect the most matches wins.

SAY • These cards tell us about Jesus' twelve disciples. **Jesus called disciples to follow Him.** Today we will learn more about who these disciples were and how they responded to Jesus' call, "Follow Me!"

Tip: If a kid is unable to find a friend who fits the description, call out his requirement ("four siblings," for example) to make sure there is no match and then move on to the next description.

• "Disciple Cards" printable

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



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Countdown

· countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

- leader attire
- stop sign
- message board
- Bibles

[Leader enters wearing khaki pants, a reflective shirt or vest, and a hard hat. Leader carries a stop sign made from poster board attached to a tall broomstick. A traffic message board reads FOLLOW DETOURS.]

LEADER • You're back! I'm so glad you've come. This road work is nearly complete and I was a little worried I might miss you. We have a portion of the road closed for paving and set up a detour, so a lot of drivers have been finding alternate routes and avoiding the area altogether. You'd be surprised, though, how many people insist on going around the traffic barriers to take their normal route. I tell them that's not a good idea. When there's a detour, you can't ignore it; you have to follow it! Otherwise you could find yourself in a pretty dangerous situation.

Say, did you bring your Bibles today? *[Encourage kids to hold up their Bibles, or distribute Bibles.]* I have

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

one more story to share with you. It's about a time when Jesus called a group of people to follow Him. Let's find out what happened.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • First, keep our big picture question and answer in mind. *Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to obey His Father's plan and rescue sinners.* Each time you hear a story about Jesus and wonder, *why did He do that?* I want you to remember this question and answer. Everything Jesus did on earth was according to God's perfect plan.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

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

• Giant Timeline

LEADER • Look at our timeline. When Jesus came on the scene as an adult, He went to John to be baptized. **Jesus obeyed God by being baptized.** Then Jesus was tempted by the Devil in the wilderness. **Jesus was tempted and never sinned.** Soon, John's followers started asking questions about Jesus, and **John the Baptist told people to follow Jesus.**

Today's Bible story is about a special group of people Jesus called to follow Him. They were His twelve disciples. Check this out.

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.”

• Bibles
• “Jesus Called Disciples” video
• Big Picture Question Poster
• Bible Story Picture Poster
• Story Point Poster

LEADER • The disciples were busy when Jesus showed up.

Jesus called disciples to follow Him, and isn't it amazing that they immediately left what they were doing and followed Him? They didn't say, "We will follow You, just let us finish up here," or "Let me work through the end of the month and then I'll follow You." What did they do? Look at Mark 1:18. [*Allow kid to read the verse and respond.*] Two brothers even left their dad behind. [*See Mark 1:19-20.*] I wonder what their dad thought about that!

In those days, only the best students approached teachers and asked to follow them. The students watched their teachers very carefully. They tried to be just like the teachers. Teachers didn't allow just anyone to follow them; you had to be a very hard worker, and the teacher had to think you were pretty special too.

Jesus chose His followers from a group of people no one probably ever thought was smart enough to be students. Jesus' followers were called disciples. Jesus chose some fishermen: Peter, Andrew, James, and John. Then He chose a tax collector named Matthew. The other men Jesus chose were Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, James, Thaddaeus, Simon, and Judas. Yes, two of Jesus' twelve disciples were named James! Jesus' disciples would learn from Jesus so that they could tell others the good news about why Jesus came: to save people from their sins.

Christ connection

LEADER • Jesus came to earth to show what God is like and to save people from their sins. This is great news!

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided on page 157 to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

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.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 20, Session 4" questions from kids video.
Prompt kids to think about their own plans and hopes for
the future. Guide them to discuss whether it is easy or hard
to trust God's plan.

• "Unit 20, Session 4"
questions from kids
video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

Give each kid a copy of the "How Kids Can Help
MAF" printable.

• "How Kids Can Help
MAF" printable

Ask for volunteers to read aloud some of the ways that
kids can get involved in helping a mission organization like
Mission Aviation Fellowship. Specifically look at the prayer
list on page 2. Take time together to pray for some of the
requests. Direct kids to keep the printable for a later activity
or to take home.

LEADER • Our prayers for missionaries are very important
and it's important for us to remember that we can be
on mission wherever we go. **Jesus called disciples to
follow Him.** We are Jesus' disciples when we trust in
Him. Everyone in the world needs to hear the good
news about Jesus.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read
together John 3:30.

• Key Passage Poster
• "He Must Increase,
but I Must Decrease
(John 3:30)" song

LEADER • What if we don't decrease in order to increase
Jesus' fame and worth? Is this optional or only for

certain Christians? No, this is the path of all of God's people. Following Jesus can be hard. As we love people and they come to know Jesus, they might be tempted to follow us instead of Jesus. Our key passage creates in us humility that keeps us, like John, pointing everyone to Jesus and away from ourselves as the answer to all of life's problems. Let's sing together.

Lead boys and girls in singing "He Must Increase, but I Must Decrease (John 3:30)."

Sing (4 minutes)

- "Take It to the Lord"
- song
- Bible

Open your Bible and read aloud Psalm 118:28-29.

LEADER • Think about this: God the Son came down to earth to be with us. *Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to obey His Father's plan and rescue sinners.* He calls us to follow Him. He is faithful and good. Let's sing.

Sing together "Take It to the Lord."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, thank You for sending Jesus to save us from our sin. We pray You would work in the hearts of those who don't know You to repent and become followers of Jesus—trusting Him, obeying Him, and telling others about Him. We want to be faithful followers. We need You. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story



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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.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- clothespins or strips of paper
- fine-point marker

Before the session, write each word of the key passage—including the reference—on a separate clothespin or strip of paper. Prepare two sets.

Display the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud John 3:30 together.

Form two teams. Mix up each team's clothespins and pile them at one side of the room. Instruct teams to line up at the other side of the room. Explain that when you say “go,” the first player on each team will run to the pile, grab the clothespin with the first word of the key passage, and then return to her team. Then the second player will retrieve the second word, and so on until a team collects all of its clothespins in order.

If a clothespin is retrieved out of order, a player must return it and pick up the correct word. When a team finishes, players should sit down. Lead both teams to say the key passage together.

SAY • Great job. Who must increase? (*Jesus*) Who must decrease? (*John*) Like John, we must decrease too! Jesus calls all believers to go and make disciples. We point others not to ourselves but to Jesus!

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Distribute Bibles. Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to Matthew 4. Explain that today's Bible story is found in three of the four Gospels—Matthew; Mark; and Luke. Jesus was walking along the Sea of Galilee when He called His disciples. [*Point to the Sea of Galilee (D6) on the New Testament Israel Map.*] Choose a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 4:19-20.

SAY • Jesus told the men He called that He would teach them to fish for people. But they wouldn't use nets or boats; they would use their words to gather people and tell them about Jesus.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. Why do you think Jesus picked fishermen and tax collectors to be His disciples instead of kings or religious leaders? *Invite kids to share their ideas. Share that the Bible says God uses people who have nothing to offer to show His power and strength through them.* (Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 Cor. 1:26-31.)
2. What does it mean to follow Jesus? *Prompt kids to recognize that following Jesus means trusting Him, obeying Him, and telling others about Him.* (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Matt. 16:24.)
3. What do you think might keep someone from following Jesus? *Help kids understand that everyone follows something, and we follow what we value the most. Some people live for family and friends, for themselves, for popularity, or for money. The Bible says we must follow Jesus and nothing else. We can pray that God will soften the hearts of those who do not follow Jesus so that they would come to know and love Him.* (Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 Cor. 1:18.)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster
- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (005802970)

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

LOW PREP

- "How Kids Can Help MAF" printable
- crayons

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment from Teach the Story.

- Gospel Plan Poster
- markers
- index cards
- Bibles

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Explore missions

Provide copies of the "How Kids Can Help MAF" printable. Kids may already have the printable from the missions moment. Allow time for kids to color the handout and complete the activities. Ask kids questions about the airplane they like the best or where they might like to fly one day. Listen for interest in a future mission project to help support MAF or other missionaries.

SAY • When we learn about missionaries and how to support them, we are part of God's plan to reach all people with the gospel. No matter your age, you can be on mission!

OPTION 2: God's plan for us

Use the gospel plan poster to present the gospel to kids. Give each kid a marker and five index cards. Provide copies of the gospel plan poster for kids to reference. Invite kids to draw the gospel plan logos on separate cards and caption the logos. (*crown: God rules; X: we sinned; cross: God provided; present: Jesus gives; hands: we respond*)

Encourage kids to form pairs and practice sharing the gospel, using the icons as prompts. Kids may also read the referenced Bible verses. Suggest kids continue practicing throughout the week to become more comfortable with sharing the gospel.

SAY • *Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to obey His Father's plan and rescue sinners.* He showed people what God is like. When He began His ministry, **Jesus called disciples to follow Him.**

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. The gospel is the good news: the message about Jesus, the kingdom of God, and salvation. You can use these five pictures—drawn on a notebook, on a napkin, in the dirt, or anywhere else—to explain the good news to others.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, praising God for coming to earth to be with us. Thank God for not leaving us dead in our sin but for rescuing us and calling us to join His work in sharing the gospel with the whole world. Pray that kids who have not yet responded to Jesus' call would follow Him.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Connection Point" on the activity page. Kids should decode the messages. (Hint: 1 = A, 2 = B, 3 = C ...).

• pencils
• Journal Page
• "Connection Point"
activity page,
1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.