

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](http://gospelproject.com). For free training and session-by-session help, visit [MinistryGrid.com/thegospelproject](http://MinistryGrid.com/thegospelproject).

## 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*

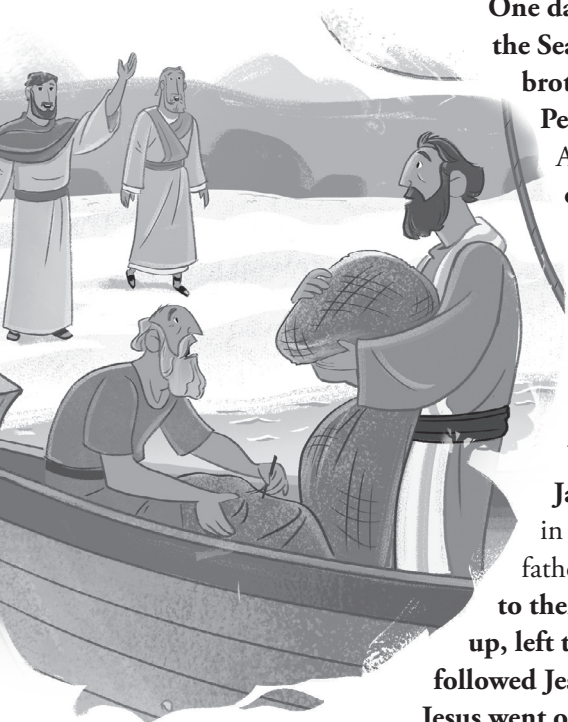
Jesus' ministry had begun. He traveled around, preaching about God and telling people to turn away from their sins. People started talking about Jesus and the things He was teaching. They were interested in what Jesus had to say. **Large crowds followed Jesus around and listened to Him teach.**

**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

Note: Be sensitive to kids who may struggle to make friends.

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)

• "A Change of Pace" activity page,  
1 per kid  
• pencils or markers

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?

**LOW  
PREP**

- aluminum foil
- basin
- water
- small weights, pennies, or marbles (optional)

## 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  
· reflective vest  
· hard hat

*[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.

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

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. ·Giant Timeline

**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!



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

## 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.

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

## Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 20, Session 4" questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about when they like, or dislike, God's plan. Guide them to discuss what makes it easy—or hard—to trust God.

• "Unit 20, Session 4" Questions from Kids video



## Missions moment (3 minutes)

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.

• "How Kids Can Help MAF" printable

**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.** He calls us today to follow Him, too.

## Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together John 3:30. Then sing "He Must Increase, but I Must Decrease (John 3:30)."

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

**LEADER** • When John the Baptist said these words, he was explaining to people who had been following him that it was time to follow Jesus instead. When Jesus

called people to follow Him, they left everything to do so. We can follow Jesus too!

### **Sing (4 minutes)**

• “Jesus Messiah” song

**LEADER** • We follow Jesus because He is the Messiah. He deserves all our praise.

Sing together “Jesus Messiah.”

### **Pray (2 minutes)**

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

**LEADER** • Father, thank You for sending Jesus to rescue us.

Help us follow Him each day. Give us love for Jesus and for the people we meet each day. Fill us with Your Spirit so we can obey You more. 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 activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- marker
- index cards
- paper clips
- magnet
- stick or dowel (optional)
- string

Write each word or phrase of the key passage on a separate index card. Place a paper clip onto the edge of each card. Attach a magnet to the end of a length of string. You may attach the other end of the string to a stick or dowel. Allow the kids to take turns using the magnet and string to try and “catch” the key passage cards. After kids catch all the cards, challenge them to put the cards in order.

**SAY** • John told people that Jesus is the One they should follow. Today we heard how Jesus called disciples to follow Him. All of us should seek to follow Jesus in a way that glorifies Him and not ourselves.

## Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

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

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help kids find Matthew 4. You may use the New Testament Israel Map to show the kids where the Sea of Galilee is. (D6) Discuss the slightly different accounts found in the gospels. Remind the kids that each gospel is written by a different man, but all their accounts are inspired by God and trustworthy. This is why some of the events in one book may not be in others or are recorded from slightly different perspectives.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. What did Jesus say He would teach His disciples to do? (*fish for people, Matt. 4:19*)
2. What were some things Jesus' disciples left behind to follow Him? (*nets, boats, family, jobs, and so forth; Matt. 4:20-22; 9:9*)
3. With whom did Jesus eat and spend His time? (*sinners and tax collectors, Matt. 9:10*)
4. Why does Jesus love sinners? *Help kids understand that everyone is a sinner, and Jesus loves all people because we are created in God's image. Jesus wants to see people repent of sin, turning to God to be saved. He loves sinners and rescues them. He helps us turn away from sin and glorify God instead.*
5. What might we lose by following Jesus? *Guide kids to talk about the cost of loving and obeying Jesus. Help them think about the ways others might react to them, the influence they may lose, or the persecution they may face. Remind the kids that, in some places, following Jesus may even cost a person her life.*
6. What can we gain by following Jesus? *Discuss the unending joy and eternal life we have with God when we have faith in Jesus. Point kids to the hope they have in life: that we gain new purpose, can resist sin, and are filled with the Holy Spirit's power. Point kids also to the hope we have for the future: that Jesus will return and fix all that sin has broken. On that day, we will reign with Christ as children of God.*

**SAY • Jesus called disciples to follow Him.** If we have faith in Jesus, we are His disciples as well. God forgives us and gives us power to live for Him. That means we can call people to follow Jesus, too!

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

## LOW PREP

- “How Kid Can Help MAF” printable
- crayons or markers

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

### Activity choice (10 minutes)



#### OPTION 1: MAF helpers

Provide each kid a copy of the “How Kids Can Help MAF” printable. Allow kids to color the handout and complete the activities. Help younger kids complete the activities together. Ask kids questions about the airplane they like the best or where they might like to fly one day.

**SAY** • **Jesus called disciples to follow Him.** 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 by telling people to follow Jesus as His disciples did.

#### OPTION 2: Discipleship in the real world

Direct the kids to sit in a circle. Teach them a simple trick or new skill. This can be anything: making a paper airplane, tying shoes in a new way, whistling, winking, or any other skill you can teach. Work with the kids to learn the skill and talk to them about what makes the skill easy or hard to learn. Challenge them to teach that skill to a friend or sibling.

**SAY** • Those new skills were not super important to know, but the way I taught you to do them is a picture of discipleship. **Jesus called disciples to follow Him.** As Christians, we can help to train new Christians to follow Jesus, too. We can show what it looks like to love and obey Jesus in all parts of our lives. By talking to people about the difficulties and joys of obeying Jesus—and showing them what that looks like—we can teach them to do the same.

## Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

- pencils and crayons
- paper
- Bible Story Coloring 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.