

LESSON 1: JESUS CALLS MATTHEW TO BE HIS FRIEND

Leader Guide for Ages 3-6

Classroom: Monkeys

 Matthew 9:9-13

03/08/2020

Teachers Dig In

Dig In to the Bible

- Read: Matthew 9:9-13
- In This Passage: Jesus sees a tax collector named Matthew and calls him to be a disciple. When the religious leaders see Jesus eating with Matthew and his friends, they don't approve. They think tax collectors are scum. But Jesus is our friend, and he was a good friend to Matthew.
- Bible Point: Jesus is our friend...
- Application: ...so we're good friends to others.
- Summary Verse: "A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need" (Proverbs 17:17).

Dig Deeper

- You'll Be Teaching: *Jesus is our friend*. Friendships among kids can be fickle. Help kids see that Jesus was a good friend even when it wasn't good for his reputation. Jesus befriended the unpopular guy! Help kids realize that Jesus wants to be their friend, too.
- Think About: Who in your life has been a friend like Jesus?

Dig In to Prayer

- Pray that kids would feel accepted in their friendship with Jesus and extend his friendship to others.

Quick Tip

- Use this lesson as a chance to evaluate friendships among your kids. Be sensitive to those who may be new or who may not have many friends at church. If you have several "loners" in your group, pair them together and encourage them to use this lesson as an opportunity to forge new friendships.

This Lesson at a Glance



OPENING

Preschoolers share about a topic related to the lesson.

Supplies

- Bible



CORE BIBLE DISCOVERY

Preschoolers play a “following” game, act out the story, and talk about being good friends.

Supplies

- Bible
- small snacks (1 per child)
- small cups of water (1 per child)

Easy Prep

- Place the snacks and cups of water away from the center of the room so kids will be able to move to them after the “following” game. If you have a table, place the snacks and water there.



LIFE APPLICATION WRAP-UP

Preschoolers pose to show ways Jesus is our friend.



OBJECT LESSON

Preschoolers pick up chenille wires with magnets.

Supplies

- chenille wires (at least 1 per child)
- magnetic wands (1 for every 5 kids)

Easy Prep

- Form a chenille wire into 2 stick people by cutting the wire in half. Then cut each half into 1 large and 2 smaller pieces. Create a loop at the end of a larger piece to make a head, and then twist 2 smaller pieces around the wire to make arms and legs. Make at least 2 stick people per child.



HIGH-ENERGY GAME

Preschoolers move balloons using fans.

Supplies

- balloons (2 or 3 per child)
- paper plates (1 per child)
- painter's tape
- upbeat music (optional)
- music player (optional)

Easy Prep

- Inflate the balloons.
- At one end of the room, tape a rectangle on the floor large enough for all the balloons to fit inside, and place the balloons in the rectangle.
- At the other end of the room, tape another rectangle of roughly the same size as the first.



PRESCHOOL PUPPET SKIT

Recommended for preschoolers.

Supplies

- Theophilus the FaithRetriever™ Puppet (order [here](#))
- roll of crepe paper
- bag of uninflated balloons
- painter's tape

Easy Prep

- Attach the roll of crepe paper to one of Theo's paws and the bag of balloons to the other paw.

- music player
- music



LOW-ENERGY GAME

Preschoolers play a version of bowling.

Supplies

- plastic beverage bottles or pool noodles cut to 6-inch lengths (6 for every 6 kids)
- rubber playground balls (1 for every 6 kids)
- upbeat music (optional)
- music player (optional)

Easy Prep

- For each team of 6 kids, set up 6 bottles or pool noodle pieces in a bowling pin formation.
- Place a rubber ball about 5 feet away from each set of “bowling pins.”



CRAFT

Preschoolers make stethoscopes.

Supplies

- fabric-covered plastic headbands (1 per child) (find 6-packs at a dollar store)
- masking tape
- 12-inch lengths of wide ribbon (1 per child)
- 2x2-inch foam squares (1 per child)
- foam heart stickers (1 per child)
- other foam shape stickers
- stapler
- dolls and stuffed animals

Easy Prep

- Cover the ends of each headband with masking tape to make sure the ends won't poke preschoolers' ears.
- For each child, loop one end of a length of ribbon around the center of a headband and staple it in place.
- Make a sample craft to show kids.

**Marked supplies can be reused from Core Bible Discovery*

Let's keep kids safe! You can help by using supplies as instructed for only ages 3+, purchasing child-safe items, and being aware of allergy concerns.



Supplies

- Bible

Welcome

- Thank kids for coming.
- Just for fun, have preschoolers give an “elbow-five” to three friends.
- Make announcements.
- Introduce new kids.
- Celebrate birthdays by having preschoolers do jumping jacks as many times as the birthday child is old. With each jumping jack, they’ll say “happy birthday!”
- Collect the offering.

Introduce the Lesson

Say: **Today we’ll find out that Jesus is our friend, and we can be good friends to others, too. We’ll hear how Jesus made a new friend named Matthew and spent time with Matthew at his house. Let’s start by talking about our friends.**

Share

- Share about *your* best friend and what you like to do together.
- In leader-led small groups, have preschoolers share about *their* best friends and what they like to do together.
- After small groups have discussed, have adult or teen helpers share with the whole group what they talked about in their small groups.

Summarize

Open a Bible, and say: **It sounds like you have some pretty good friends! Did you know that Jesus is our friend? He’s the best at being a friend, and he even shows us how to be great friends to others!**

Pray, thanking God for your friend, Jesus.



Supplies

- Bible
- small snacks (1 per child)
- small cups of water (1 per child)

Easy Prep

- Place the snacks and cups of water away from the center of the room so kids will be able to move to them after the “following” game. If you have a table, place the snacks and water there.

Play a “Following” Game

Show a Bible. Say: **Today we’ll find out that Jesus is our friend. We’ll read in the Bible about how Jesus was a good friend, and we’ll find out we can be good friends to others, too. Let’s look at what the Bible says now.**

Read Matthew 9:9. Say: **Jesus wants to be friends with everyone! And when he asked Matthew to be his friend and spend time with him, Matthew got right up and went with Jesus. Let’s play a game to help us think about that.**

Have all the children sit in the center of your room. Have an adult or teen helper stand on one end of the room and approach the group of kids. He or she will say, “Follow me and be my friend. Clap with me!” Have the kids stand up and clap as they walk with the adult or teen helper around the room once.

Have the kids sit, and choose an older child to be the new leader. That child will say, “Follow me and be my friend” and add a new motion for kids to do, such as hop, take big steps, tiptoe, or even crawl. Then everyone will stand up, walk with the leader, and do the motion. Repeat this process, having several kids take turns being the leader. Help kids think of motions, if needed.

Say: **We had lots of fun with our friends. Jesus is our friend, too, and he loves to spend time with us. Whether we’re playing outside, just relaxing on the couch, or eating a meal—Jesus loves to be with us.**

Act It Out

Say: **The Bible says after he got up and went with Jesus, Matthew invited Jesus to his home for dinner.** Invite the children to join you where you placed the snacks and drinks. If you have a table, have kids gather around it.

Allow kids to enjoy their snack as you say: **Matthew invited some of his other friends to have dinner with them, too. Matthew’s friends were called “sinners” because they’d made a lot of bad choices, and some of them hadn’t been very nice to other people. Jesus doesn’t want anyone to make bad choices or hurt others, but he knew he could help Matthew and his friends learn to be kind, loving friends. Let’s talk about guests we’ve had in our homes.**

Share about some guests you’ve had in your home.

Ask: • **Tell about a guest you’ve had to your home.**

Say: **It’s nice to have friends and family over, whether we’re playing together or eating a good meal together. Jesus is our friend, and he loves to be invited to spend time with us the way Matthew invited him over.**

When Jesus decided to spend time with Matthew and his friends, some people who were called the Pharisees got angry that Jesus spent time with sinners. Have kids show their angriest faces. **They didn’t think Jesus should spend time with people who had made bad choices or hurt people. Jesus didn’t like that the people made bad choices, but he knew he could help them change and be good friends.**

Pose

Say: **Jesus said this to the angry Pharisees:** Read Matthew 9:12. **Jesus wasn’t really talking about sick people and doctors; he was saying that people who never do anything wrong don’t need his help.**

Jesus meant that Matthew and his friends knew they'd made a lot of bad choices and could use Jesus' help and forgiveness. But the Pharisees thought they were great at making good choices, so they didn't want Jesus' help or forgiveness.

Jesus really could help the Pharisees, but they didn't want his help. Have kids stand up and pose, making their angriest faces again to pretend to be like the Pharisees.

Say: **If they'd let Jesus be their friend, he'd turn their angry faces to happy faces.** Hug each child, and when you do, encourage him or her to make a happy face. Have adult and teen helpers hug kids, too, to make the process move quickly.

Say: **Matthew and his friends knew they'd made bad choices, and we know we make bad choices sometimes, too. But Jesus still wants to be our friend, and he wants to help us do what's best for us. Jesus is our friend, and he can help us be good friends. Let's make some more poses that show how **Jesus can change us into good friends.**** Have kids make the following poses, and then give the kids a "hug from Jesus" as you did before. When you do, have them change their poses as indicated:

- Cross arms (change to arms out, ready for a hug)
- Turn away from others (turn toward others)
- Stand in pairs and make a fist (hold hands with a partner)
- Show a sad face (change to a happy face)

Say: **Like Jesus helped Matthew and his friends, Jesus can help us be good friends who welcome others to play with us and are kind and loving. Jesus is such a good friend!**



Pose

Say: **Today we found out what a great friend Jesus is! We learned how Jesus is a good friend and shows us how to be good friends, too! Let's thank Jesus for being a good friend now.** Lead kids through the poses they learned in the Core Bible Discovery activity, and thank Jesus for how his friendship changes us. For each pose, say: **Thank you, Jesus, that when we're friends with you, you...**

- **love and care for us instead of letting us be all alone.** Cross arms (change to arms out, ready for a hug).
- **forgive us and help us forgive others.** Turn away from others (turn toward others).
- **bring us a group of good friends.** Stand in pairs and make a fist (hold hands with a partner).
- **turn our frowns upside-down.** Show a sad face (change to a happy face).

Pray

Say: **Jesus is our friend—and he's the best friend ever! Let's ask him to help us be good friends to others, too.** Lead kids in a prayer, asking Jesus to help kids love and care for their friends, include their friends, forgive their friends, and enjoy their friends.

Thank kids for joining you in church today, and remind them that they can come back anytime to spend more time with their friends at church.



Pick Me Up

Supplies

- chenille wires (at least 1 per child)
- magnetic wands (1 for every 5 kids)

Easy Prep

- Form a chenille wire into 2 stick people by cutting the wire in half. Then cut each half into 1 large and 2 smaller pieces. Create a loop at the end of a larger piece to make a head, and then twist 2 smaller pieces around the wire to make arms and legs. Make at least 2 stick people per child.

Tip

- Magnets can be harmful if swallowed. Ensure that children don't put the magnets in their mouths.

Pass Wand and Pick Up People

Say: **In our Bible story, Jesus invited Matthew to be his friend. Jesus said, "Follow me." And that's what Matthew did! Matthew even invited some of his friends over to meet Jesus, too!** Hold up a stick person. **Let's see how many of these little people will follow a magnet.**

- Form groups of five, and have each group sit in a close circle on the floor. Assign an adult or teen helper to each group.
- Spread out the stick people (at least two per child) in the middle of each circle.
- Have the adult or teen helper begin by holding a magnet wand over a stick person to pick it up.
- The helper will then pass the wand to a neighbor to pick up another "friend."
- Continue passing the wand around the circle until each child has picked up a friend. Count to see how many stick people are drawn to the magnet.
- Place the stick people back in the middle of the circle and repeat the activity as time allows.

Talk About It

Say: **The little people in our circle couldn't help but stick to the magnet. They followed it the whole way around the circle! More and more friends wanted to follow the magnet. In our Bible story, Matthew followed Jesus. Matthew was a good friend because he helped other people meet Jesus, too!**

Tell about a new friend you've made.

Ask: • **Tell about a new friend you've made.**

Say: **Jesus is our friend. We're good friends when we tell other people about Jesus so they can be friends with him, too!**



HIGH-ENERGY GAME

[10 min]

Move to Matthew's House

Supplies

- balloons (2 or 3 per child)
- paper plates (1 per child)
- painter's tape
- upbeat music (optional)
- music player (optional)

Easy Prep

- Inflate the balloons.
- At one end of the room, tape a rectangle on the floor large enough for all the balloons to fit inside, and place the balloons in the rectangle.
- At the other end of the room, tape another rectangle of roughly the same size as the first.

Tips

- If you used the Music Video block, consider repeating the songs from today's lesson during the game. You can find the downloadable album [here](#).
- To avoid choking hazards, be sure to pick up pieces of any broken balloons promptly.

Fan Plates to Move Balloons

Say: **Today we read about Jesus' friend Matthew and how Jesus was a good friend to him. Jesus spent time with Matthew and his friends at Matthew's house. Let's play a game where we'll pretend to move Matthew and all his friends to his house for dinner!**

- Give each child a paper plate, and have kids gather at one side of the rectangle with the balloons in it.
- To move the balloons (Matthew and his friends) to Matthew's house (the empty rectangle), kids will fan the paper plates at the balloons. They can't use hands or feet to move the balloons; they can only fan the plates.
- The goal is to get all the balloons inside the second rectangle as quickly as possible.
- If you'd like, play upbeat music while kids play as many rounds as time allows.

Talk About It

Say: **It was so fun keeping all the balloons together! It's great to laugh and play and be with good friends. One of my favorite things to do with friends is** (share a preschool-friendly example of something you like to do with friends, such as watch a movie or go get ice cream together).

Ask: • **What do you like to do with your good friends?**

Say: **It was important to Jesus to spend time with his friends, the way he spent time with Matthew. Jesus is our friend, too, and he loves to spend time with us! We can invite him to be with us anytime!**



Supplies

- Theophilus the FaithRetriever™ Puppet (order [here](#))
- roll of crepe paper
- bag of uninflated balloons
- painter's tape
- music player
- music

Easy Prep

- Attach the roll of crepe paper to one of Theo's paws and the bag of balloons to the other paw.

Tips

- Before printing, turn on page numbering in Word to keep the pages in order (or simply hand-number each page after printing). You may also find it helpful to highlight your part and set the script on a music stand nearby during the skit.
- To avoid choking hazards, be sure to pick up pieces of any broken balloons promptly.
- If you used the Music Video block, consider repeating the songs from today's lesson during the skit. You can find the downloadable album [here](#).

Leader: **It's time for our puppy friend, Theo, to come for a visit. Let's call him to our class with a "woof, woof." Ready?** *(Leads kids to bark until Theo is brought into view.)*

Theo: **It's good to see you!** *(Pants.) I really, really want a good scratch. Friends, will you scratch my back?* *(Circulates among kids so each child can pet him.)*

Leader: **Thanks for giving a friendly welcome to Theo, kids!**

Theo: *(Looks to kids.) I'm thankful for you, friends! And I can't wait for the PARTY!* *(Tosses roll of crepe paper in the air.)*

Leader: **Party?**

Theo: *(Shakes bag of balloons in the air.) Yes! I heard you're having a party with Jesus today.*

Leader: *(Looks confused.) Um...we're not... (Pauses.) Oh! Today we're talking about a party Jesus went to in the Bible.*

Theo: *(Looks sad.) So you're not having a party? I brought these decorations to get your room ready for the party.*

Leader: **We weren't planning on it, but we can have a fun little party while you're here, Theo.**

Theo: **Yipppeee! I love parties with my friends!** *(Looks to kids.) Do you want to have a party?* *(Reacts to kids' responses and then pauses abruptly.) Wait—can we still decorate for our party?*

Leader: **You sure can.**

Theo: **Great! We'll call it our friendship party!**

Leader: **That's kind of like the party Jesus had in the Bible. He made friends with a man named Matthew, and then he went over to Matthew's house and they invited all kinds of people.**

Theo: **Really? Can we invite Jesus, too?**

Leader: **I think that's a great idea.**

Theo: *(Looks confused.)* **But...how will we do that?**

Leader: **How about we pray right now and invite Jesus to join our party. Jesus is always with us, so we know he can make it. But we'll pray just to let him know we're glad he's here and we welcome him!**

Theo: **Sounds good to me!**

Leader: *(Leads kids in a brief prayer, welcoming Jesus to join their party.)*

Theo: **Now that we know who's coming, let's decorate!** *(Proceeds to give each child a crepe-paper streamer, and then looks to the leader.)* **Can we hang these around the room?**

Leader: **Sure. I'll give you some tape.** *(Gives each child a piece of tape and then encourages kids to find places to hang their streamers on the walls or toy structures along with Theo.)*

Theo: *(Encourages kids by commenting on where they hang their streamers. After all the streamers are hung, encourages kids to join him in a circle again.)* **The room looks great! I'm so glad I have great friends who know how to decorate for a party!**

Leader: **You are all good friends to one another! That's like Jesus, who is our friend, too!**

Theo: *(Attempts to blow up a balloon from his bag of balloons, but fails. Hands one of the adult or teen helpers the balloon.)* **Would you be a good friend and help me blow up this balloon?**

Leader: *(Comments on how the adult or teen helper is a good friend, too.)*

Theo: *(Takes the inflated balloon from the adult or teen helper.)* **Thank you, friend! Would you be able to blow up a few more?** *(Hands a few balloons to the adult or teen helper.)* **Thank you!** *(Pauses, as if thinking.)* **Did you say something about Jesus being a good friend?**

Leader: **I sure did! Jesus is the best friend we could ever have!**

Theo: **I believe that!**

Leader: **And he shows us how to be good friends, too.**

Theo: **I'm glad we invited Jesus to our party.** *(Looks happy.)* **I'm thankful Jesus is a good friend and that we can be good friends, too.**

Leader: **Friends are the best, aren't they?**

Theo: **They sure are!** *(Looks to kids.)* **Friends, are all of you ready to have a party with me now?** *(Turns on music and encourages kids to have fun dancing, singing, and playing with the balloons, as time allows.)*

Leader: **Thanks for giving us the idea to have a party today, Theo. It was lots of fun!**

Theo: **I'm just glad I got to spend time with my good friends!**

Leader: **We're glad we got to spend time with you, too, Theo.** *(Encourages kids to thank Theo for coming.)*

Theo: **I think I'll head home and take a nap. I'm tired after all that partying!** *(Yawns.)*

Leader: **We'll say bye, then. Give Theo a big "woof, woof," goodbye," friends!** *(Leads kids to say "woof, woof, goodbye," and then places Theo out of sight.)*



LOW-ENERGY GAME

Buddy Bumpers

[10 min]

Supplies

- plastic beverage bottles or pool noodles cut to 6-inch lengths (6 for every 6 kids)
- rubber playground balls (1 for every 6 kids)
- upbeat music (optional)
- music player (optional)

Easy Prep

- For each team of 6 kids, set up 6 bottles or pool noodle pieces in a bowling pin formation.
- Place a rubber ball about 5 feet away from each set of “bowling pins.”

Tips

- If you used the Music Video block, consider repeating the songs from today’s lesson during the game. You can find the downloadable album [here](#).
- This game requires at least 3 kids.

Help Friends in a Fun Bowling Game

Say: **Today we heard about one of Jesus’ friends, Matthew. Jesus was a really good friend to Matthew and showed us how we can be good friends, too. Let’s play a game where you’ll all get to be good, helpful friends!**

- Form teams of six. (If you have fewer than six kids, form only one team.)
- Give each team a ball and show teams their bowling pins.
- Each team member will roll the ball once to try to hit the pins and knock them down, resetting any pins between tries.
- Then everyone will try again, but this time team members will stand along the path to the bowling pins to act as helpful bumpers to guide the ball to the pins.
- Encourage team members to cheer each other on as they act as bumpers.
- If you’d like, play upbeat music while kids play.

Talk About It

Ask: • **Why was it better to have your friends’ help when you bowled?**

Say: **You were good friends to each other in the game. You helped each other and cheered for your friends. There are lots of ways we can be good friends.**

Tell about something *you’ve* done in the past week to be a good friend, such as buying coffee for a friend or co-worker.

Ask: • **What’s something *you’ve* done to be a good friend?**

Say: **It’s great to have friends, and Jesus is our friend, too. When we treat our friends the way Jesus treats his friends, we’ll be good friends to others!**



Supplies

- fabric-covered plastic headbands (1 per child) (find 6-packs at a dollar store)
- masking tape
- 12-inch lengths of wide ribbon (1 per child)
- 2x2-inch foam squares (1 per child)
- foam heart stickers (1 per child)
- other foam shape stickers
- stapler
- dolls and stuffed animals

Easy Prep

- Cover the ends of each headband with masking tape to make sure the ends won't poke preschoolers' ears.
- For each child, loop one end of a length of ribbon around the center of a headband and staple it in place.
- Make a sample craft to show kids.



Tip

- If you have access to a real stethoscope, bring it in so preschoolers can listen to their own heartbeats.

Make Stethoscopes

Say: **In our Bible story, we heard how Jesus told the Pharisees, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do.” Just like people who are sick need a doctor to help them get better, we need Jesus’ help to take away the wrong things we do. We all do wrong things sometimes, but Jesus always forgives us when we ask. It’s like Jesus heals our broken hearts!** Show preschoolers the sample craft.

Say: **A *stethoscope* is something doctors use to listen to our hearts. Let’s make this stethoscope craft to remember that Jesus is like a loving doctor who helps us and heals our hearts when we’re sad or do wrong.**

- Give each preschooler a square piece of foam and a foam heart sticker.
- Have each preschooler stick the heart onto the center of the foam square.
- Give each preschooler a headband with a piece of ribbon attached.
- Let preschoolers decorate their ribbons by adding foam shapes.
- While preschoolers work, staple their foam squares to the end of their lengths of ribbon.

Play With Stethoscopes

Show preschoolers how to put the ends of the headband up to their ears and place the foam square against a doll's or stuffed animal's "heart" to listen to its heartbeat. Show preschoolers how to be extra gentle with their headbands and not pull them open too wide so that the plastic inside doesn't break.

Allow preschoolers to play for several minutes with their stethoscope crafts and dolls or stuffed animals.

Say: **Jesus is our kind and loving friend. That's why Jesus heals our hearts by forgiving us when we do wrong and always being with us to help us.**

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