



UNIT 23 | SESSION 2

JESUS CHOSE DISCIPLES

MARK 2-3; LUKE 6

KEY PASSAGE: Matthew 5:16

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom. He taught that all Scripture is about Him.

CHRIST CONNECTION: Jesus chose the disciples and still calls people to follow Him today. He invites all people to turn from their sins and trust in Him as Lord and Savior.

STORY POINT: Jesus invited twelve men to follow Him as disciples.



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

In the early chapters of Mark's and Luke's Gospels, we discover Jesus inviting His first disciples to join Him in ministry. Jesus initiated relationships with each of these men, taking the first step to bring them into His inner circle. The type of people Jesus called as disciples may have seemed like odd choices to some; the Pharisees, after all, disapproved at the company Christ kept.

Jesus' disciples included two pairs of brothers who worked as fishermen, some who joined forces with the Romans, others who abhorred the Romans, a tax collector whose profession was known for dishonest gain, and one who would eventually betray Him in exchange for 30 pieces of silver. It was a ragtag bunch.

Jesus' critics likely thought He should have picked disciples they deemed more qualified with cleaner reputations. But Jesus has a heart for the lost, sick, and searching, saying, "I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17).

One detail we often overlook is that Jesus spent an entire night in prayer before selecting these men to join His inner circle. He invited them into a close relationship with Himself, knowing the optics of the situation, just as He still brings sinners into His fold. Even today, it's a wonder why He would call any of us to follow Him. That's the beauty of His grace.

Jesus was a friend of sinners, while the scribes and Pharisees believed themselves too holy for the likes of such company. When Jesus sensed this disapproval in the hearts of the religious elite, He addressed aloud their cynical concerns by sharing that only the sick need a doctor (Luke 5:31). In other words, only those who recognize their sin and need for the Savior will be able to receive new life in Him.

Just as He spent a night in prayer before calling the disciples to follow Him, Jesus still intercedes for His followers today (Romans 8:34). Pray that the children in your class who are hearing Christ's gospel invitation will see themselves through the lens of the disciples. Ask the Lord to reveal His love for the lost, along with His desire to restore their relationship with their Father in heaven.



Scan the QR code to listen to The Gospel Project for Kids Weekly Leader Training Podcast.



PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



WELCOME

10-15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



LEARN

25-30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



LOVE

15-20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



LIVE

15-20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



WELCOME

Activity Page

- ☐ "Code Crackers" activity page



LOVE

Review & Bible Skills

- ☐ Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)



LEARN

Introduce the Session

- ☐ countdown video
- ☐ Story Point Poster

Big Picture Question

- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster

Review the Timeline

- ☐ Giant Timeline

Tell the Bible Story

- ☐ "Jesus Chose Disciples" video
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster

Questions from Kids

- ☐ "Unit 23, Session 2" Questions from Kids video

Missions Moment

- ☐ "Erik and Ida Nelson Photo" printable

Key Passage Activity

- ☐ Key Passage Poster
- ☐ ball
- ☐ "Shine (Matthew 5:16)" song
- ☐ worship song of your choice (optional)



LIVE

Activity Choice (Option 2)

- ☐ blindfolds

Reflection and Prayer

- ☐ Bible story coloring page



WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

SAY “Tell me about your best friends. What do you have in common? What do you like to do together?”

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the “Code Crackers” activity page.

SAY “Awesome work using the key to unscramble the names of Jesus’ disciples! Today, we will discover how Jesus called twelve men to follow Him closely throughout His ministry.”

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: CHALLENGING CHOICES

Write out different actions and challenges on several slips of paper—two slips per child. Some examples include run around the room three times, give someone a high five, swap seats with a friend, compliment a friend, etc. Instruct the kids to sit in a circle. Give each kid two slips of paper. Go around the circle and have each kid read off their options. Invite him or her to choose one of the options to complete. Once finished, ask the kid to explain why he or she chose the action they did. Continue until each kid has taken a turn.

SAY “We are all faced with choices every day! In today’s story, Jesus asked some men to make a very important decision. Together we will learn that **JESUS INVITED TWELVE MEN TO FOLLOW HIM AS DISCIPLES.**”

☐ OPTION 2: DISCIPLE DASH



Divide the kids into two teams. Guide each team to form a single-file line on one side of the room. Explain that the first person in line must listen as you give him or her commands. The commands could include actions such as jump, spin, stop, walk forward, etc. Once the first kid makes it across the room, the next kid in line must copy the actions of his or her teammate from memory. If any action is missed, the kid must go back and start over. Continue down the line with each kid repeating the pattern. The first team to make it to the other side of the room wins.

SAY “You had to watch carefully to follow your teammates’ actions! Did you know that Jesus called people to follow Him? Today we will learn that **JESUS INVITED TWELVE MEN TO FOLLOW HIM AS DISCIPLES.**”

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





INTRODUCE the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

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

SAY “Hi, everyone! I’m so glad you are here! My name is [your name]. Today we will be jumping back into the Gospels of Mark and Luke. Can anyone tell me which Testament the Gospels are found in? [Allow responses.] Let’s get out our Bibles and turn together to the New Testament. [Distribute a Bible to any kid who needs one.] Last week, we learned that Jesus came to forgive our sins. Today we will read more about this as we see that **JESUS INVITED TWELVE MEN TO BE HIS DISCIPLES**. Let’s pray together before we open God’s Word. ‘God, thank You for revealing more about Yourself to us through Your Word. As we read, help us understand what it means to follow You. Amen.’ ”

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

SAY “Last week we started learning a new big picture question together! Who can remember what our big picture question is? [Allow responses.] Let’s say our big picture question and answer aloud together: **What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom. He taught that all Scripture is about Him.** As Jesus continued to teach, He showed the Pharisees and leaders what kind of people God sent Him to minister to. Today’s story will remind us that we are all sinners in need of a Savior. Through calling His disciples, Jesus revealed that God invites sinners to repent and follow Him. ”

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the Giant Timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

SAY “Jesus continued to show God’s love for people as He traveled around healing people. He showed mercy to people who were outcasts and compassion to people who were broken in spirit. Jesus taught with power and authority, sharing that God’s kingdom was for anyone who would repent and believe in Him. By forgiving the lame man, Jesus revealed that He didn’t just come to heal our physical needs. Jesus is God, and He came to forgive sins. Today we will learn that Jesus called twelve men to follow Him. ”



LEARN the Bible Story

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Mark 2–3; Luke 6. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Jesus Chose Disciples.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

JESUS CHOSE DISCIPLES

“Jesus was teaching a crowd of people by the sea. He **passed by a man named Levi, who was a tax collector. Jesus said, “Follow Me.” Levi got up and followed Jesus.**

Later, **Jesus went to Levi’s house**, and many tax collectors and sinners were eating with Jesus and His disciples. **The religious leaders came to Jesus’ disciples and said, “Why does Jesus eat with tax collectors and sinners?”**

Jesus heard their question and **said, “People who are healthy don’t need a doctor, but sick people do. I didn’t come to call righteous people; I came to call sinners.”**

Jesus left with His disciples and went to the sea. **A large crowd from all over came to Him** because they heard about all He was doing. **Jesus asked His disciples to get a boat ready for Him so that the crowd would not crush Him.** The people knew Jesus was able to heal, and so everyone who was sick was pressing forward to try to touch Him.

Then **Jesus went up on a mountain. He spent all night in prayer to God. The next morning, Jesus called His twelve disciples to Him.** He would send these men out to preach and would give them the authority to drive out demons. **The Twelve Jesus chose as His disciples were: Simon Peter, James and his brother John, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot—who would betray Jesus.**

Christ Connection: Jesus chose the disciples and still calls people to follow Him today. He invites all people to turn from their sins and trust in Him as Lord and Savior. ”

STORYTELLING TIPS

Move locations: As Jesus moves locations in this story, move locations within the classroom.

Assign names: Choose some kids to represent Jesus’ twelve disciples. Instruct them to shout out “Here I am!” when they hear their disciple’s name called in the story.

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “Jesus called Levi, who was also known as Matthew, to follow Him. Tax collectors were seen as bad by the standards of the Jewish people because they worked for the Roman government. Sometimes tax collectors would even take a portion of the money they collected and keep it for themselves! Most people stayed away from tax collectors, but Jesus came near to Levi.

What did Jesus do after He invited Levi to follow Him? [Allow responses.] Just like you might be invited for dinner at a friend’s house, the Jews saw eating with



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

someone as a friendly gesture. How did the religious leaders respond to Jesus? **[Allow responses.]** The religious leaders understood that both tax collectors and sinners had broken God's law. But Jesus reminded them that we are all sick from sin and in need of saving.

What was the job of the twelve disciples who Jesus called? **[Allow responses.]** Jesus gave these men a specific mission to go preach and cast out unclean spirits in His name. Through these men, Jesus was building His kingdom. And like the disciples, believers have also been called to share the good news of Jesus with others.

Jesus chose the disciples and still calls people to follow Him today. He invites people to turn from their sins and trust in Him as Lord and Savior. ”

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

SAY “ Jesus taught that we are all sinners. But He came to call people out of sin to follow Him. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus offers forgiveness to everyone who will repent of their sin and follow Him as Lord. To learn more about what it means to trust your life to Jesus, you can talk to one of your parents or a church leader. ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 23, Session 2” Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. Why did Jesus only choose 12 disciples? Why didn't Jesus make everyone follow Him?
2. How can you follow Jesus this week?



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

SAY “One day in the jungle by the Amazon River, a missionary was telling children about Jesus using pictures on a board. While she talked to the kids, an older man came closer and listened to her talk. When she finished, the man asked the woman if the story was true. She said, ‘Yes, it is God’s Word!’ But the old man did not believe it. He said, ‘This can’t be true, or someone would have come before now to tell it. My parents lived their lives and died without hearing the message. It cannot be true or someone would have come sooner.’ Then he walked back into the jungle, still not believing what he heard. It made the missionary realize how important it is for Christians to prioritize sharing the gospel with people all around the world.”

Show the “Erik and Ida Nelson Photo” printable.

Erik and Ida Nelson knew the Amazon Rainforest would be a hard place to live, full of jungles and long rivers, but Erik knew the people needed to hear the good news about Jesus. Erik and Ida lived in a city called Manaus, and they traveled by motorboat to villages all along the Amazon River and its many branches. A church in America gave Erik a boat to help him get to villages that no one else could reach.

Missionaries like the Nelsons know there are many people who have never heard about Jesus. We can help missionaries by praying, giving, going on short-term missions trips, and maybe even one day serving as missionaries.

Pray for missionaries serving all over the world.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Matthew 5:16 together.

SAY “Jesus died and rose again so that anyone who repents and believes in Him is forgiven of their sins. Through good works, Christians shine the light of the gospel, pointing others to Jesus.”

Instruct the kids to sit down with you in a circle. Begin by saying the first word of the verse and then bounce the ball to one of the kids. Encourage him or her to say the next word of the verse and bounce the ball to someone else. If he or she is unable to complete the word, they can bounce the ball back to you. Play until the key passage has been said in full.

Lead kids to sing “Shine (Matthew 5:16).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

SAY “Thank You, God, for sending Your Son, Jesus to call believers out of sin and into new life with You. Let our actions and words shine the good news of the gospel to those around us. Amen.”

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the New Testament Israel Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Mark 3. Explain that Levi was a tax collector who also went by the name Matthew. Share that he was a disciple of Jesus who went on to write His account of Jesus' life in the Gospel of Matthew.

Consider pointing out the location of Sea of Galilee [D6] on the New Testament Israel Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Mark 3:13-15 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verses aloud.

SAY “ Think about someone famous that you like. Consider why you like this person. We may like someone because they star in our favorite show or because they write cool music. People heard the stories of Jesus’ miracles and teaching, so they gathered in large crowds to follow Him. Like the crowds, we are all sinners and need Jesus to forgive us. Jesus invited twelve men to be His disciples. They would go out to preach and heal with His authority. When we turn from sin and trust in Him, Jesus also invites us to share the good news of the gospel with those around us. ”

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

SAY “ Can Jesus use sinful people? ”

Remind kids that everyone is a sinner. But when we trust in Him, He forgives our sin and calls us to follow Jesus. Share how Jesus, through His grace toward believers, brings others to know Him. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 Timothy 1:15-16.)

SAY “ What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus? ”

Point out that following Jesus comes at a great cost. Explain that to be a disciple of Jesus, we must deny ourselves and our old way of living in sin. Share that followers of Jesus become more like Him by living according to His Word. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Luke 9:23.)

SAY “ How can we make disciples? ”

Discuss how Jesus calls His followers to go out and share the good news of the gospel with others. When we share the gospel with someone and they trust in Jesus, they also become a disciple. Invite the kids to consider who they can share the gospel with in their lives. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Mark 16:15.)

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: PLACES



Read the Bible story to the kids again and challenge them to pay close attention to how many places Jesus goes in the story. Afterward, review with kids the four places that Jesus went: the sea, Levi's house, the sea again, and the mountain to be with God. Give kids a piece of paper and show them how to fold it into quadrants. In three of the quadrants, encourage kids to draw or write places they can go to be with other people to either talk or learn about God. In the fourth quadrant, encourage them to draw or write a place they can go to be alone with God, representing when Jesus went on the mountain to pray.

SAY “ In today’s story, we saw that **JESUS INVITED TWELVE MEN TO FOLLOW HIM AS DISCIPLES**. These men followed and learned from Jesus. But Jesus also took time alone to spend with His Father. It is also important for us to have both time to spend with others talking and learning about God and time alone with God. ”

☐ OPTION 2: BLIND DIRECTIONS

Write each word of the story point on a separate sheet of paper. Invite the kids to pick a partner and find a seat at the table. Give each pair a sheet of paper and a blindfold. One partner must put on the blindfold and pick up the marker. Direct the other kid to guide his or her partner to trace the word by giving detailed instructions. Remind the kids that they cannot trace it themselves. He or she must use only their words to help their partner. Once complete, ask the kids to remove their blindfolds and work together to put the story point in order.

SAY “ Following your partner’s instructions was not easy, but it was worth it! Following Jesus is not easy. Like the disciples, He calls us to turn from our life of sin. But Jesus promises abundant life for those who trust in Him. ”

2 REFLECTION AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

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

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

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids. If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.