Lesson 3: Jesus Calls His Disciples

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN: That there are many similarities in the way Jesus called His first disciples and how He is calling us to be disciples today.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED: Interact with the cost of following Jesus and determine how they will answer His call to "Follow Me."

SCRIPTURE FOCUS: Matthew 4:18-22; 9:9-13; 1 Samuel 16:1-7; John 10:10; Luke 5:5,11, 21-22, 29; 14:25-27.

KEY TAKEAWAY: Jesus calls His disciples to leave behind the things that formerly defined them (such as jobs, families, and social status) so that they can follow Him.

OVERVIEW:

The disciples' call occurred after Jesus' time in the desert. This time in the desert had not only been a time of resisting Satan's temptations, but also a focused time of fasting and prayer. Immediately afterward, He called His first disciples. This lesson will focus on the passages from Matthew's account that record the call of two pairs of brothers, fishermen, and a tax collector. In these examples, we learn that Jesus' call to "Follow Me" is extended to people regardless of who they are. During His ministry, He called fishermen (who were accepted by society) and tax collectors (who were despised by society). Jesus continues to call individuals from every nation, tribe, language, and people to become His disciples.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO:

Each *This Is Jesus* lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These short videos are designed to help you grasp the lesson's main point as you prepare to teach.



BIBLE BACKGROUND

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. *The Details* give you background info for each book. *The Setting* informs you of what's happening in and around the passage. *The Main Point* gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "CONTEXT"?** In every YM360 Bible Study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context," we mean, at the very least, helping students know *who* wrote the book, *when* it was written, and *why* it was written.
- **WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

Matthew

- *Author*: Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the stories he relates in his gospel.
- *Time frame:* Most people hold to Matthew's gospel being written in the late 50's and 60's A.D., though there are some who think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D.
- *Purpose:* Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to convince them that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. But he was probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his gospel makes the case that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

THE SETTING

Following His 40 days of praying, fasting, and resisting Satan's temptations in the desert, Jesus returned to the region of Galilee , where he had grown up and began His public ministry. As Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He encountered Simon and Andrew, who were fishermen, and called them to follow Him and become fishers of men. They immediately left their nets to follow Him. Shortly thereafter, He made the same call to James and John. They, too, followed Jesus. On another occasion, Jesus saw Matthew, a tax collector, and called him to follow, and he did. Matthew later held a party and introduced Jesus to many of his friends.

THE MAIN POINT

The call to follow Jesus means being willing to allow Him to use you to assist Him in His work. Jesus' call is not only to salvation but also to discipleship. Discipleship means choosing to be students of Jesus' teachings and to follow His direction for our lives. Just as the first twelve disciples abandoned all and followed Jesus by faith, the same is true today for those who enter into a relationship with Jesus by faith.

LESSON PLAN

The Lesson Plan contains three elements: an introductory activity called *The Lead In;* the Bible Study section called *The Main Event;* and an application-focused segment called *The Last Word.*

THE LEAD IN

- *Goal:* To introduce the idea of leaving behind an old life and embracing the unknown of a new one.
- *Set-Up:* You will need a large, flat world map. The more detailed, the better. Or, you may wish to set up a display for your phone or computer, and access a Random Country Generator, such as the one listed in the lesson below. Or for a no tech option, take a stack of 10-20 blank note cards and write the name of a random country onto each card.

FIRST, make sure that you have found a place for your map. Ideally, it would rest on a table in the middle of the room, and there would be enough space around for everyone to see. (If you have a way to display your phone screen or a laptop, you can also simulate this activity with the following website: https://www.gigacalculator.com/randomizers/random-country-generator.php)

THEN, once your map is on display, ask a volunteer to close their eyes and place their finger on the map in a random location. If you have chosen the random country generator, then allow your volunteer to dramatically click the generate button. If using the note card option, fan the cards out (not showing the writing) and have the student "pick a card, any card." Explain to students that this 'random country' is now going to be the site of their new home! Surprise! **Ask students:**

- **We only have 24 hours before we leave to go to (the country). Let's combine our knowledge to plan what to pack. Can anyone tell me anything about this country? What language do they speak? What food do they eat?**
    - *Answers will vary.*

NEXT, **ask:**

- **What would it be like if you actually moved to another country on a moment's notice? Is there anything special you would want to do before you leave?**
    - *Answers will vary.*

- **What would be the most difficult part of leaving your old life? What would be the biggest challenge of your new life?**
    - *Answers will vary.*

FINALLY, **say something like:**

- **Moving to this new country could be a major adjustment, regardless of how much you already know about it. Today, we will be reading about a group of young men who experienced a similar call to the unknown. In the early days of Jesus' ministry, He called a group of disciples to follow Him. They didn't have much time to prepare either, but as we will read, they did not let this fear of the unknown keep them from walking with Jesus.**

Make sure there are no questions, and then transition to The Main Event.

THE MAIN EVENT

- *Goal:* To examine Jesus' call to several of the twelve disciples and what that teaches us about His call to all disciples.
- *Set-Up:* Make sure students have a Bible or Bible App.

FIRST, give a brief explanation of the word disciple. **Say something like:**

- **Today, we are talking about the first disciples. The word disciple is not strictly a Christian word; it just means a follower or student. You and I would be considered disciples of Jesus as well, because we follow His teachings and try to live as He did. However, during Jesus' ministry, He called twelve specific disciples, who are sometimes called the twelve apostles. Apostle essentially means 'chief' disciple. These twelve young men would have special discipleship duties during Jesus' ministry, and they were an important part of establishing the Church after Jesus ascended into Heaven.**

NEXT, explain to students that these disciples did not come from the places we might expect Jesus to draw "chief disciples" from. Jesus did not search the Temple or find religious leaders to serve in these honored roles. Instead, He began in the docks.

Read or have a student read Matthew 4:18-22. **Say something like:**

- **Along the shores of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus called two men to be His disciples. Both Simon (also called Peter) and his brother, Andrew, were fishermen. This was a common occupation that required patience, persistence, and strength. In Luke's account of this moment, it seems that the men had previous knowledge of Jesus and likely believed Him to be the Messiah (Luke 5:5). However, they could have never guessed that, as they encountered Jesus at the seashore, He would issue both a call that was destined to change their lives.**

THEN, explain that in Jesus' time, people had very little movement between life stations. A slave would always be a slave, and his children would also always be slaves. A fisherman would always be a fisherman, and his children would always be fishermen. Luke's account notes that these men "left everything" (Luke 5:11). Matthew's account didn't record any conversation between the fishermen and Jesus after His call to them, but he does note their response; the men followed immediately. Then in verses 21-22, Jesus saw two more brothers who were also fishermen (James and John, the sons of Zebedee) who were mending their nets. Jesus also called these brothers to follow Him, and, just like Andrew and Peter, they followed without hesitation and left everything behind. **Ask students:**

- **Why do you think these fishermen were willing to take such a huge risk when Jesus called them to be His followers? What would they be leaving behind?**
    - *Answers will vary.*

Be sure to point out that although being a fisherman was a rough and difficult job, it was still secure work for the most part. Jesus' call to "follow me" was a summons to become attached to Him (like an apprentice to a master) to accept His authority, and to imitate His actions. He wanted to give these men a new purpose and identity. Jesus was not calling them to a more secure job, but a job that required exponentially more faith. Not only that, we read in Matthew 4:22 that the men left a father behind. They would be leaving the security of family as well.

NEXT, explain that, unlike the Jewish culture of the day, in which a young man would choose a rabbi (teacher) from whom to learn, Jesus determined that He would be the One who did the choosing. He initiated the call to these fishermen. He differed from the rabbis in that He did not teach the Jewish tradition that had been handed down to Him by another teacher; rather, He taught direct revelation from God and had high standards for anyone who would follow Him as a disciple (Luke 14:25-27). **Say something like:**

- **Knowing that Jesus did things a little differently than what was expected, His calling of fishermen was very on brand. Jesus looked into the heart of those He called, and He deemed that to be more important than anything else about their life. Their past, their jobs, the money they did or didn't have… Jesus didn't pick these young men based on any of those factors. In fact, He called them to leave all of that behind!**

THEN, transition to the next passage. Read or have a student read Matthew 9:9-13. **Say something like:**

- **Have you ever heard the adults in your life complain about taxes? It's actually kind of humorous that thousands of years separate us from this passage, but some things never change! Taxes have always been a burden and annoyance, and in Jesus' day, a tax collector could charge you for far more than you owed so that they could pocket the difference.**

Briefly explain to students that our passage mentions Jesus' travel. At this time, Jesus was in Capernaum. Because of Capernaum's location, it was an important customs town with booths set up to receive taxes and impose tolls on merchants and traders who worked in or traveled through the area. The collectors who worked at these booths could charge exorbitant rates and could generally make life miserable for those engaged in commerce. **Say something like:**

- **Under Caesar's tax laws, the Jewish people were charged more than the Roman citizens. Not only were they charged to buy and sell, but they were even charged a poll, or census, tax, which means they had to pay to simply be alive in the Roman Empire. Jewish people who helped enforce these taxes were viewed as traitors and sell-outs. And it is in that context that Jesus looks at Matthew's booth and says, "Follow Me."**

Though Scripture doesn't indicate it, Matthew was likely to have been familiar with Jesus. Though he may never have met the Lord personally, it's probable that Matthew had heard of Jesus and the things He had done. (Jesus would have traveled through and by these toll booths more than once, since it was a central hub.) Responding in the same way as the fishermen Jesus had called earlier, Matthew immediately left his lucrative occupation and followed Jesus.

NEXT, **ask students:**

- **Matthew proceeds to throw a sort of party after Jesus calls him to be a disciple (Luke 5:29). Which is a little strange, but since Jesus didn't seem to mind, we won't concern ourselves too much. The most interesting part of this party is that Matthew invited the other people he knew, who, of course, were also tax collectors. Likely, he hoped they would come to know Jesus the way he had. But, how do the religious leaders, or Pharisees, respond to this?**
    - *Answer:* They cast judgment on Jesus and the people that He was spending time with.

- **How does Jesus respond to their critique?**
    - *Answer:* Jesus says that healthy people don't need a doctor's visit. With that in mind, sinners are exactly who He came to heal. (He also hits them where it really hurts, and by quoting Hosea 6:6, essentially tells them to try reading Scripture. For a group of people that dedicated their lives to the words of Scripture, this would have been a pretty big insult.)

Say something like:

- **Jesus knew well before He called Matthew that the Pharisees would see this as something that tainted His ministry. But Jesus' call of the disciples echoed a characteristic of God that the Pharisees had clearly skipped over when they were reading Scripture.**

Read or have a student read 1 Samuel 16:1-7. **Say something like:**

- **In this passage, Samuel was tasked by God to find a new king that He had chosen for Israel. He was sent to Jesse's house, who had a whole lineup of suitable sons. And yet, God did not choose the most obvious choice. His calling was based on the hearts of the young men. Which we see happening again in Jesus' call of the twelve disciples. The call of God goes out to unlikely people; He transforms them and uses them for His purposes. His redemptive work in their lives brings Him glory.**

FINALLY, explain to students that the disciples Jesus calls in the early days of His ministry will appear in many of the passages they will examine in future lessons. It's important to note that Jesus called people to follow Him regardless of

their backgrounds. He called fishermen (who were generally accepted by society), tax collectors (who were despised by society), and would go on to call even more who would leave the onlookers confused or even outraged. Most of the time, one thing is obvious: These followers had very little idea what they were doing. And yet, Jesus showed great patience with them and carried them through the challenges that they faced. Jesus' call was not only to salvation but also to discipleship (following Him). As they followed and focused on Jesus, these men and women were transformed to become more like Him, and they began to powerfully share His Good News with others. Help students understand that this can be an encouragement to us, so many years later. No one is beyond Jesus' call.

Allow for questions, and then transition into The Last Word.

THE LAST WORD

- *Goal:* To help students reflect on their own call to follow Jesus.
- *Set-Up:* Make sure students have a Bible or Bible App.

FIRST, explain to students that you will end your time by examining the costs of following Jesus. **Say something like:**

- **Put yourself in the place of the first disciples. The call to follow Jesus is a serious call. For the disciples to say yes to Jesus was to say yes to obediently following Him. Choosing to follow Jesus also meant choosing His lifestyle over their own preferences, His standard for living, His standard for morality, and His standard for godliness. They had to leave behind their careers, families, and friends. They chose to live lives of uncertainty. They didn't know where Jesus would go, what He would ask them to do, or whom they would meet.**

THEN, **ask:**

- **What hesitations, if any, do you think the disciples had?**
    - *Answers will vary.*

- **What might have seemed exciting about following Jesus into the unknown?**
    - *Answers will vary.*

- **Have you experienced any of these thoughts or feelings regarding your own walk with Jesus? What sacrifices would be different for a follower today versus the first followers of Jesus? What would be the same?**
    - *Answers will vary.*

THEN, **say something like:**

- **It is logical to wonder those things. The call to follow Jesus means being willing to allow Him to use you to assist Him in His work of fishing for people. Jesus doesn't expect everyone He calls to leave their occupation and surrender to full-time Christian service. He uses teachers, plumbers, doctors, accountants, salespersons, homemakers, managers, athletes, and many others in His Kingdom. Yet Jesus expects our wholehearted devotion to following Him; there cannot be part-time discipleship for a follower of Jesus. Yes, sometimes, it seems that following Jesus is about giving things up and walking in uncertainty. But Jesus promised us a full life if we would follow Him.**

FINALLY, read John 10:10. **Ask:**

- **What have you gained by following Jesus?**
    - *Answers will vary.* Take a moment to share your own answer to this question.

Allow Time For Any Closing Thoughts Or Questions From Your Students. Before Leaving, Close With A Prayer.

- Don't forget to remind students about their devotions this week. If you're posting them on Social Media or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.