

THE THREAD

DISCOVERING THE THREAD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGH THE BIG-PICTURE STORY OF THE BIBLE

PART 3: THE GOSPEL COME TO LIFE

LESSON 4 || THE CALLING OF THE DISCIPLES

SESSION SNAPSHOT

NARRATIVE PASSAGE: Matthew 4:18-22

GOSPEL FOCUS: Matthew 9:35-38

STUDENT TAKEAWAYS:

- Understand that Jesus called ordinary men and entrusted them with being the messengers of the Gospel.
- Understand Jesus' love for and desire to reach those who are lost.
- Evaluate where they are in their task of "being fishers of men" and consider what it will take to be more effective messengers of the Gospel in their worlds.

OVERVIEW:

If you wanted to launch a global movement, you would most likely come up with a multi-tiered strategy with many moving parts. And you'd hire only the best people to help you, but that's not quite how Jesus went about it. Granted, He is the Son of God, so, He kind of has a leg up there. But still, when Jesus went about building the team that would help lay the foundation for spreading the Gospel, He chose the most average, un-impressive (at least by the world's standards) group of rag-tag men you could find. Yet, they trusted Him. And He used them to dynamically grow the Kingdom. In this lesson, your students will be challenged to see themselves as people who, like the disciples, have enormous potential for changing the world in Jesus' name.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO:

Each *Thread* 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 the basic context for the passages you'll be studying.

- **WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "CONTEXT"?** In every YM360 Bible study lesson, we encourage teachers to help students know *who* wrote a particular book, *when* it was written, and *why* it was written.
- **WHY TEACH CONTEXT?** Grasping the big-picture view of God's story of redemption is difficult for teenagers without understanding the context of the books and passages they're studying.

MATTHEW

- *Author*: : Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the events he details in his gospel
- *Time frame*: Most people hold to Matthew's gospel being written in the late 50s or 60s AD, though some think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.
- *Purpose*: Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to persuade them that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. He was also probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his gospel declares that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

LESSON PLAN

The Lesson Plan contains four elements:

- **GETTING STARTED**— An introductory activity designed to prepare teenagers to engage with God and the truth of His Word.
- **THE STORY**— A section featuring a narrative from Scripture that helps teenagers know God better through learning the story of the Bible.
- **THE THREAD**— A special emphasis where teenagers discover the Gospel thread coursing throughout the story of the Bible.
- **WRAPPING UP**— An application-focused segment helping teenagers ask the question, “How am I impacted by what I learned today”?

GETTING STARTED

- *Goal:* To get students thinking about the importance of seeking out the lost.
- *Set-Up:* Two buckets or boxes; Scraps of paper with an X on them (2 with a star or sticker); 2 blindfolds; you’ll want some candy or other motivational prizes for each student.

FIRST, tear up a large amount of scrap paper to fill each container. On several pieces of paper, draw an X. On two, place a sticker or star. (These are the two prize papers.) Split the papers equally into the two containers and mix them up. Make sure each box has one prize paper.

THEN, divide your group into two teams. Tell your students that they’re going to go fishing for some valuable items. Explain that the paper with the star (or sticker) is the winning paper. Explain that the two teams will each send one representative to come up to the front and will have 10 seconds to sift through the paper and pull out what they believe is the prize item. Except that they will, of course, be blindfolded. (You’ll go until a student finds the star/sticker sheet.)

NEXT, as each pair of students takes their turn, simply count down backward from 10. If they find what they are looking for, they win. If not, dump everything back in and start with the next pair.

FINALLY, when all the students have had a turn, transition to The Story by **saying something like:**

- **Some of you were able to find what we were fishing for, and some of you were not. In today’s lesson, we are going to see Jesus call some guys to follow Him and become fishers of men. These guys would prove to be very successful at their tasks. But we’re just going to be looking at the beginning of their journeys. Let’s take a look.**

THE STORY

- *Goal:* Students will understand that Jesus was aggressively tempted by Satan to sin.
- *Set-Up:* Students will need a Bible or a Bible app. You may find that a dry-erase board is helpful for jotting down some notes, but it’s not essential.

FIRST, explain that in this lesson, you’ll be looking at the continuing big-picture story of the Bible. If you’d like, use the Connecting The Dots section below to review or fill in the gaps between your last lesson and this one.

CONNECTING THE DOTS

As you teach *The Thread*, there will naturally be some gaps in the story. This is an optional way for you to fill in some of the gaps between the last lesson you taught and this one. Use it to review or connect the dots to the events surrounding the passage.

- John the Baptist has publicly declared Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus' encounter with Satan in the desert has testified to His victory over sin.
- The calling of the disciples will reveal His plan to use people to carry His message to the world.
- Explain that this account of the calling of the disciples is the one in which they are given their mission. In John 1:35-42, we see Jesus initially call some of the disciples. It seems that they followed Him but also maintained their vocations for a time. In today's lesson, we see the call to abandon everything and make the work of Christ their "full-time job."

FIRST, explain to students that in today's lesson, Jesus calls the disciples to a new level of discipleship. He calls them to leave their jobs and walk with Him full-time. Explain that this is a calling that would require sacrifice. Remind students that this is the same relationship God calls us to. **Say something like:**

- **As we move through our look at the big-picture story of the Bible, we're studying the beginnings of Jesus' earthly ministry. He has been affirmed by John the Baptist and has faced off with the devil in the desert. Now, Jesus turns to His friends and tells them it's time to be all-in.**

Instruct students to turn to Matthew 4. While they are doing so, provide some context for the book by summarizing the Bible Background. Then, read or have a student read Matthew 4:18-22. Then, **say to your students:**

- **While today's passage is just a few verses, there's a lot we can learn about Jesus and what it means to be His followers. Jesus wasn't just hanging out around the Sea of Galilee. Jesus was in Galilee for specific reasons. John the Baptist had publicly declared Jesus as the prophesied Messiah and had just been arrested. John 4:12 tells us that Jesus "withdrew to Galilee" and lived in Capernaum for a while. This fulfilled a prophecy in Isaiah 9:1 regarding Jesus as the Messiah. As Matthew authored this Gospel, he made sure to point out the connection between the events of Jesus' life and the Old Testament prophecies. The credibility of Christ as the Old Testament Messiah was an important aspect of Matthew's Gospel.**

THEN, explain that these men had already been introduced to the idea that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. But they had returned to their jobs. Guide your students in a discussion about this **by asking:**

- **What do these men's jobs reveal about them?**
 - *Answer:* They were simple men but hardworking. They had responsibilities and were busy carrying them out.
- **Why do you think it's significant that Jesus called them while they were working?**
 - *Answer:* He is asking them not just to believe in Him but to follow Him completely. This was going to require them to change their vocations. They would leave their day-to-day jobs as fishermen to follow Jesus.
- **What did these men sacrifice? And what does it say about what's involved with following Jesus?**
 - *Answers will vary.* But following Jesus requires sacrifice, and we see that in an authentic way when these men are called away from their jobs.

NEXT, have a little fun with your students. Ask them to describe what they think the disciples were like. **Ask something like:**

- **Picture the disciples in your mind, specifically the group we just read about. How do you picture them?**
 - *Answers will vary.* In Acts 4:13, we see the disciples described as "common, uneducated men." They had no formal religious education. Their credibility as messengers of Christ came directly from Christ Himself. Their business was fishing, which was a critical industry in the sea town of Galilee. Many people depended on this as

their livelihood, and even more consumers depended on them to provide food. Fishing was their career. Being called by Jesus at this point meant jeopardizing their careers and abandoning their livelihood. This life of discipleship came at a great cost to them from the beginning.

- **Why do you think Jesus said, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men?”**
 - *Answer:* Jesus met them where they were and used imagery they could understand to explain what He was asking them to do. They understood fishing; it meant doing whatever it took to get the fish into your possession. In the same way, Jesus was calling them to come and do whatever it took to bring people to Him. Jesus had a knack for using the familiar to explain the profound!
- **Verse 20 says, “Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.” What does this reveal about their relationship with Jesus?**
 - *Answer:* Because they had already accepted Him as the Messiah, they were willing to obey Him completely. There was no question or debate. They left everything else behind to make Him first.

THEN, read or have a student re-read Matthew 4:21-22 and ask:

- **These two passages seem the same except for one key detail. What new sacrifice is Jesus calling these brothers to make?**
 - *Answer:* In this calling, James and John are called to leave their father as well as their career.
- **Do you recognize an added element of sacrifice in these verses?**
 - *Answer:* For James and John, leaving meant putting an extra burden on their father. They had another reason to stay, yet they obeyed just as quickly as Peter and Andrew.

Begin to transition to your discussion of where you see the Gospel in this passage. Explain that you’ve just seen Jesus call four of the original 12 disciples. These are the guys He chose to walk alongside Him from the beginning as He began to reveal to the world why He had come. Explain that they trusted Him enough to abandon everything and follow Him before they even saw the miracles and wonders that were about to begin.

Three of the four men chosen here go on to be known by Bible scholars as Jesus’ “inner circle.” Peter, James, and John were with Jesus to the very end – they were not only His devout followers but His closest friends.

IF STUDENTS DON’T HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, TRANSITION INTO THE THREAD AND SEE WHERE YOU CAN FIND THE CONNECTION OF THE GOSPEL TO THE BIG-PICTURE NARRATIVE OF SCRIPTURE.

THE THREAD

FIRST, explain to your students that Jesus told His disciples from the beginning that they would be “fishers of men.” It is not until later that He begins to show them what that means.

THEN, read or have a student read Matthew 9:35-38. Ask:

- **Jesus had compassion on the crowd because they were “like sheep without a shepherd.” How does this describe the ministry of the disciples?**
 - *Answer:* Jesus was training them to shepherd His flock when He was no longer there. He is their ultimate Shepherd, but He calls some to preach and lead His “flock.” This is what the disciples would do.
- **In verse 37, what is the “harvest,” and who are the “laborers”?**
 - *Answer:* The “harvest” is the people who need to be brought into God’s Kingdom. They are the same as the fish that Jesus described earlier. The laborers are the ones who will share the Gospel with them. In other words, Jesus is telling them that they will have to train more fishermen! (Or rather, fishers-OF-men)

- **How do these images of being “fishers of men” and “laborers of the harvest” apply to us as Christ-followers today?**
 - *Answer:* We have the same command. We are called to share the Gospel.

FINALLY, lead your students to consider the following question. It’s okay not to have them answer it. Allow it to hang in the air as a way of transitioning to the Wrapping Up activity.

- **If you were to look out on the crowds at your school, would you have compassion on the people the way Jesus did? Jesus asked His disciples to sacrifice so much because He knew the “harvest” of lost souls was worth it. Do you feel that way?**

WRAPPING UP

- *Goal:* Students will honestly evaluate where they are in their task of “being fishers of men” and will consider what it will take to be more effective messengers of the Gospel in their worlds.
- *Set-Up:* Five 3x5 cards for each student. A 1-gallon zipper seal bag. Pens. Whiteboard.

FIRST, ask your students:

- **If we’re called to be fishers of men, then we are to be actively seeking people who do not know the Gospel. How are you doing with that?**
 - *Answers will vary.* Try and get students to respond and consider whether this has been a priority. Ask some of the following questions:
- **Have you ever shared the Gospel with anyone? When?**
 - *Answers will vary.*
- **Do you have someone whom you regularly pray for who is unsaved?**
 - *Answers will vary.*
- **Are you intentional about getting to know people who may not know the Gospel?**
 - *Answers will vary.*
- **If you are not doing any of these things, how obedient are you being as a “fisher of men?”**
 - *Answers will vary.*

The point here is not to make students feel ashamed but rather to help them honestly evaluate how they are doing and figure out how to do a better job in the task given to us by Christ.

THEN, explain to students that most people are afraid to share the Gospel. It’s okay to be afraid; it’s just not okay to not act because of your fear! Explain that preparation can help give us the confidence we need to carry out this vital task. Tell your students that you are going to look at a way to make sharing the Gospel easier.

Allow students time to flesh this activity out. Help them to see that the Gospel can be broken down into four categories: God’s design. Our problem. God’s solution. Our response.

NEXT, write these four categories as four separate columns on your board. Then, lead students in a brainstorming session, and write down their responses. **Say something like:**

- **What are the main elements that need to be included in the Gospel?**
 - *Answer:*
 - God’s design – perfect design of all creation, in perfect relationship with Him, without sin
 - Our problem – sinful nature, separated from God

- God's solution – the life, death, and resurrection of Christ as our substitute
- Our response – we each have to choose to respond and either trust or reject Jesus

Once you have several ideas in each category, have students write four sentences, one on each card. **Say:**

- **Looking at these basic components on the board, write out the Gospel in your own words. Try to construct one sentence that sums up each category. Write one sentence per 3x5 card.**
 - *Answers will vary.* An example could be: God designed our world in perfect relationship with Himself, and Adam and Eve were without sin. But when they disobeyed God, every person inherited a sinful nature, separating us from a perfectly holy God. Because of this, God sent His Son to live as both God and man, die on the cross, and be raised from the dead as the ultimate sacrifice for sin. If we choose to turn from sin and trust in who He is and what He did on our behalf, we can be forgiven of our sins and enter into a relationship with God.

FINALLY, make sure that students understand they will not be able to preach a complete Gospel message in four sentences. You are just hitting the highlights to open the door for sharing the core message of the Gospel. This will hopefully lead to a conversation in which you can explain more. Now **ask students:**

- **Who are you sharing this with? Who is the one person you know who needs the Gospel?**

On your last 3x5 card, write the name (or initials) of someone you need to share Christ with. Place all the name cards in the gallon bag and pin the bag up somewhere in your room as a weekly reminder. Encourage students to try to find an opportunity to share their four simple sentences with this one person. Close with a prayer for boldness to share the Gospel.

- If you've purchased the corresponding devotional journal, remind students they'll be working through Week 30 this week. Encourage them to keep up with the daily devotions and to give memorizing this week's verse their best shot.
- If you're utilizing the digital devotions included in the Thread curriculum, remind students how you'll be making them available, i.e., Instagram, Facebook, etc.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well that you want to share?
- Something that didn't work that you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns at feedback@youthministry360.com.