

# Jesus calls disciples

## Mark 1:16-20

### Story summary

As Jesus walks along the Sea of Galilee, he sees fishermen at work. He calls two brothers, Simon and Andrew, to follow him and “fish for people.” They immediately leave their nets and follow Jesus. Jesus then sees another set of brothers, James and John, and their father, Zebedee. Jesus calls James and John and they immediately leave their fishing nets and their father to follow Jesus.

### Faith focus

Jesus calls us to fish for people.

## Opening prayer for the teacher

*God, thank you for calling me by name to follow you. Help me to model your ways so the children in my care will hear your call and follow you. Amen.*

## Tips for this week

This is a simple story and may be familiar, especially to older children. Focus on how amazing it was that the people Jesus called left their jobs immediately to follow him. Younger children may simply enjoy the idea of fishing for people.

By William Abshire

## The distinctive and the commonplace

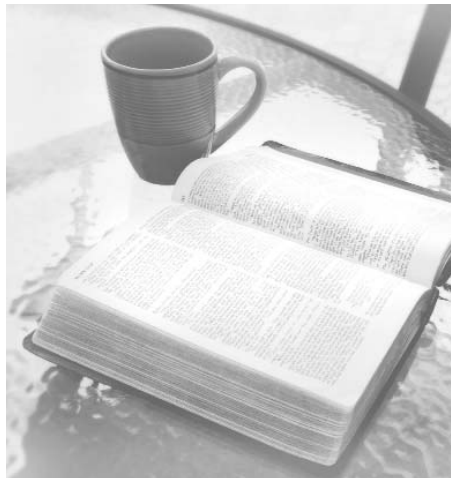
John the baptizer is distinctive in dress, in diet, and in performing baptisms. Jesus, even before his strikingly unusual baptism, was distinctive in hailing from Nazareth (about 70 miles north of Jerusalem) and yet going to John for baptism along with people from Judea and Jerusalem.

However, the setting in which Jesus calls his first disciples is not distinctive at all. It is quite commonplace. Yet it is remarkable just how direct and brief Jesus is in calling disciples, and how quickly two pairs of brothers respond to this call.

## Gone fishing

Mark introduces the scene offhandedly, saying this happened “as Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee” (verse 16). While passing by, Jesus merely sees fishermen doing what fishermen do. Mark gives no reason for thinking that these Galilean fishermen have been influenced by John the baptizer or that they have had any prior contact with Jesus or his message. Yet all four respond immediately to Jesus’ call.

Why would they do this? Simon, Andrew, James, and John no doubt were rough and ready types, but they are quite typical of their time and place. It would not be correct to assume they are needy or are lacking in social status compared to the majority of people. They do not leave their jobs out of desperation. In fact, James and John may have been economically privileged. Mark describes them as in “their” boat and leaving their “hired men.” This likely indicates that they owned their means of fishing, and that



they were successful enough to need and hire employees.

## Fishing for people

Jesus calls Simon and Andrew by telling these fishermen that he will make them fish for people. Mark does not describe what Simon or Andrew thought of this intriguing expression. They say nothing. Mark reports only that they respond immediately. Jesus’ call to James and John is even more brief and to the point: “Immediately he called them; and they left” (verse 20).

In both cases, Jesus’ call is an interruption. Yet the new disciples leave and follow him immediately. The abrupt calls and responses leave the reader astonished and intrigued as to why these fishermen would follow Jesus. Mark is perhaps implying that astonishment is part of what these fishermen experience as well. They too may have been intrigued and motivated by the question of what sort of person this is. Who is this who directly calls them to follow? In Mark, Jesus eventually will put just that question to his disciples: “Who do you say that I am?” Already, Mark may be trying to get the reader to wonder about this too.

## Following and leaving

Jesus’ call to Simon and Andrew is not simply to something that he promises to them as individuals, nor is it simply into a relationship with him. Rather, Jesus calls them to a task that is directed outward. The kingdom is not merely good news that one hears. It is also something in which one participates. Following Jesus means that disciples will direct their activity toward other people.

These two pairs of brothers do not leave behind all their ties to other people. Their relationship as brothers continues. As we will see in next week’s reading, Simon and Andrew continue to have a house and Simon has a mother-in-law. Yet the reader feels the tension. When Jesus calls James and John, Mark states simply that “they left their father Zebedee in the boat” (verse 20). It feels heartrending.

The reader is left to imagine what this event’s effect was on James and John’s relationship with their father. Mark never mentions Zebedee again as a character. Perhaps Mark is illustrating that following the call to discipleship, like repentance, means to move in the new and positive direction of the kingdom, but it also comes at the cost of shifting the main concerns of life.

# Gathering

# Gathering

## Early arrivals

Invite early arrivals to check out the Journeys with Jesus poster and find the entries that talk about fishing. Ask:

**What's a fun fact you could share with the group later?**

**1.** Greet children by name. Take an interest in their lives by asking questions such as: What friends and relatives did you see over the Christmas holidays? How did you feel about going back to a normal schedule after Christmas vacation?

**2.** Sing "In the Highways."

Say:

**Act out a chore or activity you might do in a normal week.**

Make up a new verse related to that action. For example, "I'll be somewhere reading" or "I'll be somewhere helping."

**3.** The Bible memory verses come from last week's story about the beginning of Jesus' ministry. In today's session, Jesus calls disciples. But these verses remind us that Jesus, too, was called. Read the verses today in parts. Divide the group into two and practice the lines. Point to the groups when it is time for them to say their lines. Everyone should say the memory verses together in between the group parts. Refer to the Bible memory poster (from resource pack) for the words.

**Group 1:** Listen for God's call.

**All:** In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

**Group 2:** Jesus followed God's call.

**All:** And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.

**Group 2:** Jesus followed God's call.

**All:** And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

**Group 1:** Listen for God's call.

## Supplies

- CD
- CD player
- Bible memory poster



## Faith focus

Jesus calls us to fish for people.

# Sharing the Bible story

## Supplies

- Candle,
- matches
- Story picture
- Storytelling props:
- nets
- masking tape
- chairs
- nametags for story characters
- Bible
- Journeys with Jesus poster
- Grow magazines
- Pencils

## To do

- Find something to represent fish nets, such as mesh laundry bags, tulle, nylon netting or towels.
- Create a shoreline with masking tape.
- Make nametags for the people in the story: Jesus, Simon, Andrew, James, John, and Zebedee. If you have more than six children in the group, add some other nametags: Fisher, Village child, Fish seller, and Boat-maker. If you have fewer than six children, some can play more than one part.
- Prepare a bulletin board with the "Views of the globe" card from the resource pack in the middle.

**1.** Light the candle on your worship table. Show the story picture for today.

Pray:

**God, help us to be listening for you in the middle of whatever we are doing. Amen.**

**2.** Turn to Mark 1 to show children where today's story is found. Display the story picture (from resource pack) to set the scene. Say:

**The sea in the drawing is the Sea of Galilee.**

**Can someone locate the Sea of Galilee on the large map on the "Journeys with Jesus" poster?**

**3.** Read the entries for "Sea of Galilee," "Fishing," and "Fish." All of these give background information for today's story.

**4.** *Bible Story.* Invite the children to choose a nametag and find a place to sit or stand along the shore. Simon and Andrew should be together on the shore. James, John, and Zebedee should also be together. Jesus stands a distance away. Ask everyone else to pretend to mend nets, sell fish, build boats, or play along the shore. Children may use chairs for boats on the shore.

### Jesus calls disciples

Mark 1:16-10

It was a normal morning along the Sea of Galilee. Builders were building boats. Fisher folk were busy cleaning boats and mending nets. Children ran along the shore. Fish sellers loaded fish to carry throughout the village.



But for some of these people, it would be anything but a normal day. On that particular day, Jesus came walking along the shore.

Jesus saw the brothers Simon and Andrew casting their nets into the sea. Jesus walked toward them and called, "Come, follow me and I will make you fish for people." (*Pause for Jesus to repeat the words.*) Simon and Andrew immediately dropped their nets and followed Jesus. (*Pause for them to put down their nets and follow.*)

As they walked along, Jesus saw the brothers James and John and their father Zebedee. They were fixing their torn nets. (*Pause to let James, John, and Zebedee mend their nets.*) Jesus called to them, too. "Come, follow me." (*Pause for Jesus to repeat these words.*) James and John left their father Zebedee and the other helpers in the boat. They, too, followed Jesus.

Act out what you hear in the story.

**5.** Call everyone to be seated. Say:

**Come, leave your nets and your work to join us here.**

After the children get settled, reflect quietly on these ideas before hearing each other's ideas. Say:

- I wonder why Andrew, Simon, James, and John all dropped what they were doing to follow Jesus.
- I wonder why Jesus said, "I will make you fish for people."
- I wonder what Zebedee thought when his sons got up and left the family's work.
- I wonder how Jesus is calling me today.

**6.** Invite children to return to some place along the "seashore" and imagine themselves doing something they do almost every day. Call each of them by name to join you at a table. As they come, they can name the everyday activity they thought about. Say:

**Jesus calls us, too.**

**7.** Read "Pastor Henry" on page 24 of *Grow*. The story of Pastor Henry shows some ways to fish for people. Say:

**Jesus called Simon, Andrew, James, and John to fish for people. They joined Jesus to tell others about the world of God's love. They told others about God's way and shared Jesus' message of forgiveness and peace.**

Complete "Fishing for people" on page 25 of *Grow*.

## Faith focus

Jesus calls us to fish for people.

**Grow 24**



**Grow 25**

## Ask Anna

**Dear Anna:**

I have a question about the Bible insight section of the teacher's guide. I read it for my own interest as a devotional, but it does not give me ideas for teaching my Middler class. Why is it included in the teacher's guide?

*Signed: Looking for Insight*

## Dear Looking for Insight:

The Bible insight essays are primarily meant to provide context and inspiration to teachers and adult participants in the Gather 'Round curriculum. As a teacher, you are invited to delve deeper into the biblical text as you prepare to lead your group. Treat each essay as a personal mini-Bible study. Or use it as part of the "Opening to God" time of preparing your heart to receive God's teaching on the text. However you use it, each essay can nurture your spiritual life as a Christian and as a teacher.

# Responding

## Follow me

Jesus said, “Follow me.” Simon and the others followed and learned about God’s ways. Write these or similar things Jesus did on slips of paper: healed a blind man, told stories about seeds, blessed the children, stilled a storm, prayed, ate with people, talked about God, called people to follow, and walked to many villages. Children will take turns choosing a paper, reading the statement out loud, and acting it out. The rest of the group will follow that child’s actions until everyone is doing the same action. (*Bodily-Kinesthetic; Interpersonal*)

### Supplies

- Slips of paper naming Jesus’ actions
- Basket

## Each one finds two

Children will do an activity to see how Jesus’ message can spread. Have them start with one paper clip and hook two paper clips onto that one to show they have become Jesus’ followers. They will then attach two paper clips to each of the end paper clips. Have them continue the activity until all the paper clips have been used up. They should count how many paper clips they used in all. If several children choose this activity, have them take turns attaching the clips. Talk about how Jesus’ message can spread in the world. What would help people want to become followers of Jesus? (*Logical-Mathematical*)

### Supplies

- Large quantity of paper clips

## Fish message

Children will use a code to complete the puzzle on page xx in *Grow*. They will then use colored pencils to write their own answer in code. (*Logical-Mathematical; Verbal-Linguistic*)



**Grow** xx

### Supplies

- Page xx in *Grow*
- Colored pencils

## Sharing the message banner

Cut paper into triangular banners. Invite children to think of their own typical activities. On the one side of the banner, have them write several activities. For example, “Play softball,” “Collect stuffed animals,” “Play piano.”

On other side of the banner, they will write the words, “Share God’s love” and decorate it. Have them think about ways they can share the message of God’s love in the midst of their activities and daily life. For example, helping someone who fell playing softball, giving a stuffed animal to a sick child, or playing piano for an older friend. Wrap the end of each banner around a dowel or stick and tape it in place. Encourage children to display their banners at home. (*Verbal-Linguistic; Visual-Spatial*)

### Supplies

- Light-colored construction paper cut into triangular shapes
- Sticks or dowels
- Tape
- Crayons, markers, colored pencils

## Other ideas

- Act out the story again with the props.
- Read books in the book nook
- Draw and cut out fish for your bulletin board.

# Sending

# Sending

**1.** Give the groups a three-minute notice to finish up their activities. As they finish, play “Amigos de Cristo” (Friends of Christ) on the Gather 'Round CD (track 15).



**2.** Sing “Amigos de Cristo” (Friends of Christ) with the Gather 'Round CD. The words are on page xx in *Grow*. Say:

**This song is in Spanish and English. Jesus calls people all over the world.**

**3.** Give children today’s sending psalm (copied from page 89). Read the psalm together and have children put their psalms into the pocket on page 1 of *Grow*. Say:

**Happy are the people whose God is the Lord (Psalm 144:15b).**

**Grow** xx



**Grow** xx

## Supplies

- “Views of the globe” card 3 (resource pack)

## To do

- For each child, cut out the psalm for today’s session from a copy of page 89 (see Ending and sending).

## Closing prayer for the teacher

Today you and the children pondered what it means to fish for people. What ways have you found effective for sharing God’s love with the children in your group? Thank God for each child and the opportunity to nurture their faith.

*Thank you, God, for calling me to follow you. Help me to be a faithful messenger. Amen.*

## Looking ahead

In the next weeks, you will be display the “Friends around the world” cards (from resource pack). Place them on a bulletin board around the “Views of the globe” card (from resource pack). If you do not have bulletin board space, create a movable bulletin board with a large sheet of corrugated cardboard and prop it on an easel each week.

## Faith focus

Jesus calls us to fish for people.

## Sending Psalm

Copy and give to each child

Happy are the people  
whose God is the Lord

(Psalm 144:15b).

Happy are the people  
whose God is the Lord

(Psalm 144:15b).

Happy are the people  
whose God is the Lord

(Psalm 144:15b).

## **Word counts**

The numbers below include headings and subheads but do not include sidebar information such as: Faith focus, Supplies, and To do.

Ask Anna is included in the word count on the Sharing pages—a feature which space dependent.

Introduction: 400 estimated maximum  
147 actual in this sample

Bible insight: 750 estimated  
656 actual

Gathering: 450 estimated  
287 actual

Sharing: 900 estimated  
725 actual

Responding: 480 estimated  
427 actual

Sending: 450 estimated  
232 actual