

Jesus Calls His Disciples

(Matthew 4:18-22)

Pre-Session Warm Up

[Teacher, discuss the importance of having friends.] If you were looking for a friend, what would you look for in that person? [Help the children discover words that describe good character traits such as someone who is honest, fun, caring, interesting, etc.] Why are these traits important?

What is one characteristic you would want to develop in order to become a better friend? Why do you think prayer is an important part of making decisions about friends? (God knows the kind of friends we need better than we do!)

Today you will be learning about the twelve men Jesus chose to be his closest friends. As we discuss the types of men Jesus chose to be his closest friends, let's think about what we need to do to be a good friend to others.

Opening Prayer

Father, this morning I pray that we might all consider ways to grow strong friendships, not only with other people, Lord, but also with You. I want You to be my best friend! In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. (Proverbs 18:24)

Lesson

[Teacher, as you talk about each Disciple, discuss what character qualities made these men good friends to Jesus.]

After Jesus was tempted by the devil, He was ready to begin His ministry here on earth. He gathered followers who could learn about

the things of God from Him. We call these people, Jesus' "disciples". The word *disciple* means "follower" or "student".

Simon Peter and Andrew

The first two that Jesus called to be His disciples were Andrew and Peter, brothers who were partners in a fishing business.

Matthew 4:18-20

*One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers—**Simon**, also called Peter, and **Andrew**—throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. (19) Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" (20) And they left their nets at once and followed him.*

Simon Peter – Peter was the most outspoken of all 12 disciples. He was always speaking before he thought about what he was going to say.

One thing Peter was well-known for was Jesus called him out of a boat to come to Him walking on the water. Then during Jesus' trial, right before He was crucified, Peter lied and said that he didn't even know Jesus because he was afraid that he would be killed, too. But later, Jesus forgave him.

Andrew – Before Jesus asked Andrew to be one of His disciples, Andrew had been one of John the Baptist's followers. In fact, he was there when John said, "Look! There's the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." Then Andrew went to find his brother Simon Peter to tell him, "We have found the Messiah" and he brought him to Jesus. (John 1:35-42)

One thing Andrew is known for is finding the boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish in his lunch basket that Jesus used to feed over 5,000 people. (John 6:8-9)

James and John

Matthew 4:21-22

*A little farther up the shore he saw two other brothers, **James** and **John**, sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, repairing their nets. And he*

called them to come, too. (22) They immediately followed him, leaving the boat and their father behind.

James – James was John’s brother. They were the sons of Zebedee; and they were also called the “*Sons of Thunder*” (Mark 3:17) because of their passion for righteousness (see Luke 9:54). Like Peter and Andrew, James and John were fisherman by trade.

John – The disciple named John is not the same as *John the Baptist*. This John wrote five New Testament books: the Gospel of John, First, Second, and Third John, as well as Revelation. These letters told about all the wonderful things he had seen and done while he was Jesus’ disciple. All through these books, John never refers to himself by name; he simply calls himself, *the disciple Jesus loved*.

Why do you think these men were willing to drop their nets and follow Jesus immediately? (They trusted Him so they did what He told them to do. They were also hungry for the truth of God.)

Philip and Nathanael

John 1:43-45

*The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found **Philip** and said to him, “Come, follow me.” (44) Philip was from Bethsaida, Andrew and Peter’s hometown. (45) Philip went to look for **Nathanael** and told him, “We have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth.”*

Philip – As soon as Jesus called Philip, he went and found his friend, Nathanael so that he could meet Jesus, too.

One time Jesus tested Philip’s faith.

John 6:5-9

Jesus soon saw a huge crowd of people coming to look for Him. Turning to Philip, He asked, “Where can we buy bread to feed all these people?” (6) He was testing Philip, for He already knew what He was going to do. (7) Philip replied, “Even if we worked for months, we wouldn’t have

enough money to feed them!” (8) Then Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up. (9) “There’s a young boy here with five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that with this huge crowd?”

Notice it was Andrew who found the boy who was willing to share his lunch. Philip, and all the disciples, looked in amazement as Jesus took five loaves of bread and two fish and fed over 5,000 people.

Nathanael – Nathanael was from Cana in Galilee (John 21:2), where Jesus performed His first miracle of turning water into wine. And, he had another name – *Bartholomew*.

When Philip introduced Nathanael to Jesus, Jesus called him “*an Israelite indeed*”.

John 1:46-47

*“Nazareth!” exclaimed Nathanael. “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” “Come and see for yourself,” Philip replied. (47) As they approached, Jesus said, “Now here is a genuine son of Israel—a **man of complete integrity**.”*

Jesus was saying that Nathanael was someone who truly seeks after God. Jesus knew he sincerely desired to find and follow the truth.

John 1:48-49

“How do you know about me?” Nathanael asked. Jesus replied, “I could see you under the fig tree before Philip found you.” (49) Then Nathanael exclaimed, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God—the King of Israel!”

So, Nathanael was the first disciple to confess belief in Jesus as the Son of God and Savior.

Other Disciples

Now here’s an interesting man...

Matthew 9:9

*As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man named **Matthew** sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow me and be my disciple," Jesus said to him. So Matthew got up and followed him.*

Matthew – Matthew is also called *Levi*. Before Jesus called him to be one of his followers, many people hated him because he was a tax collector.

Matthew 9:10-11

Later, Matthew invited Jesus and His disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. (11) But when the Pharisees saw this, they asked His disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with such scum?"

Matthew gave a large dinner party for Jesus and invited many other tax collectors so they could meet Jesus, too. But the Pharisees thought it was terrible that Jesus would eat with tax collectors.

Thomas – We know two interesting things about Thomas.

John 20:24-25

One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came. (25) They told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he replied, "I won't believe it unless I see the nail wounds in His hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in His side."

First of all we know he had a twin brother. Secondly, he had trouble believing that Jesus came back to life after being crucified. That's why many people refer to him as "*Doubting Thomas*".

James – James is also known as *James the Less* or *James the Younger* (Mark 15:40). His father, Alphaeus, and his mother, Mary, were followers of Jesus. So, we know that his whole family were believers in Jesus.

Thaddeus – Thaddeus has three names. He is also known as *Jude* or *Judas the Zealot*. His father was James (Luke 6:16).

Simon – Is also called *Simon the Zealot* (Luke 6:15). When someone is zealous they are passionately enthusiastic about something. There was a group of Jews in Jesus' time that were called the Zealots. The Zealots were members of a political movement who sought to overthrow the occupying Roman government by military force.

Judas Iscariot – Judas was the one in charge of the money bag for Jesus and His 12 disciples (John 13:29). He cared more about money than about serving the Lord. He is the one who, for 30 pieces of silver, turned Jesus in to His enemies so they could arrest Him.

And so it was, the twelve men that we now call Jesus' disciples left everything behind to follow Jesus. When Jesus called them to follow Him, they didn't make excuses; they left at once and followed because they knew that Jesus was the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Why did Jesus ask these particular men to be His disciples? What character qualities did these men have? (They cared about others, they weren't selfish, and they wanted to share the good news about what Jesus came to earth to do. They wanted people to know Jesus so they could have a more worthwhile life.)

Jesus is calling you and I to follow Him, as well. For us, following Jesus means more than just saying that we are a Christian. We must leave our past behind and commit our future to Him.

What are you willing to leave behind to follow after Jesus? He may not be calling you to leave your home, your family and your friends, but God has called you to be one of Jesus' disciples, too, and it may mean that you need to leave something behind. How about a bad temper, or bad language, or a bad attitude? Is there something you need to leave behind to live in a way that is pleasing to God? Maybe God is calling you to leave certain "friends" behind because they are not a good influence on you.

God has called you to be one of Jesus' disciples. In order to be a disciple of Jesus He must become your very best friend. Only then we will become the kind of friend others want or need. What are some ways you can make Jesus your best friend? What are some ways you can be a good friend to others at home, at school, and with friends?

Closing Prayer

Father, help us develop the kinds of character qualities that would make us good, dependable, thoughtful and loving friends. Give each of us a great desire to become better friends both with others and with You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Game Center

Which Disciple?

Divide the class into teams. Using the "Which Disciple?" game cards, have a child choose a card and read each of the numbered "clues" one by one. If the child's team can guess which disciple he or she is describing on the first clue, they get 5,000 points. If they can guess by the second clue they get 1,000 points. If by clue #3, they get 500 points. If they guess by clue #4 they get 100 points. If that team can't guess, they give the other team one try. If the other team guesses, they get 100 points.

Or, use the following review questions in a review game:

1. What do we call followers of Jesus? (Disciples)
2. What does the word disciple mean? (Pupil, student, or learner. A disciple is one who follows the teachings of another.)
3. Who were the first two disciples that followed Jesus? (Peter and Andrew.)
4. How many apostles did Jesus choose to be with Him? (Jesus chose 12 men to serve as apostles - His closest friends.)
5. Can you name at least four of Jesus' disciples? (Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, Thaddeus, Simon, Judas.)
6. What do you think a day in the life of Jesus' disciple was like? (Every day they listened to Jesus teach, they walked long distances with Him, they ate meals together, they watched Him do miracles, they obeyed His commands.)
7. How might Jesus have changed the lives of the disciples?
8. What did Jesus and the Disciples do together that caused them to grow to be such close friends? (Spent time together, talked with each other, learned from Jesus, all served each other and cared about each other for a long time.)
9. How can you help your friendship with Jesus grow? (By spending time with Him, listening to Him, and sharing my heart with Him.)
10. What do friends do together that helps them grow to be better friends? (Play, pray, eat, share, work)
11. The disciples grew to be best friends with Jesus by spending time with Him. What can you do during your time with Jesus to help your friendship grow? (Talk, laugh, work, play, take a walk, study.)
12. Have you ever asked God to help you choose your friends?
13. Why is prayer an important part of making decisions about friends? (God knows the kind of friends we need better than we do!)

