

Jesus Calls His Disciples

(Matthew 4:18-22)

Introduction

[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, good listener, shares, plays fair, 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 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

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*". Disciples of Jesus listen to Him and try to follow His instructions. So, a disciple is anyone

who believes in Jesus, listens to Him, trusts Him, and obeys Him. That makes you and I disciples of Jesus, too!

Let's read about how Jesus met His first two disciples:

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. ¹⁹Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" ²⁰And they left their nets at once and followed him.*

Simon Peter and Andrew were brothers and worked as fishermen on the Sea of Galilee. [Teacher, point this out on the map.]

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. ²²They immediately followed him, leaving the boat and their father behind.*

Like Peter and Andrew, James and John were fisherman, too. Fishing was their job. Every day they caught fish, cleaned them, and sold them. That's how they took care of their families.

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.*

Before Jesus called Matthew to be one of his followers, many people hated him because he was a tax collector. People hated tax collectors in Bible times because they were often dishonest. They charged people more than the Roman government required and kept the difference. Many of them got very rich that way and people felt like they were being robbed by the tax collectors. But, as soon as Matthew met Jesus, he changed his ways. He stopped being dishonest and followed Jesus.

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. ⁴⁵Philip 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.”*

As soon as Jesus called Philip, he went and found his friend, Nathaniel. He wanted him to meet Jesus, too!

And so it was, the twelve men that we now call Jesus’ disciples left everything behind to follow Jesus. They left their livelihood, their way of making a living, their homes, everything because they knew that following Jesus would change their lives forever.

Why do you think these men were willing to drop everything and follow Jesus immediately? When they realized that Jesus was the Messiah, everything changed. They were hungry for the truth of God. They trusted Him and wanted to do what He said. So, they stayed with Jesus as disciples from that time on, learning from Him and helping Him teach people about God.

What was it about these men that attracted Jesus to them? Why did Jesus ask them to be His disciples? What character qualities did these men have? (Jesus did not choose his disciples because they were more intelligent than others. Jesus chose them because they had hearts that were ready and willing to serve. They cared about others, they weren’t selfish, and they wanted to share the good news about what Jesus came to earth to do.)

Luke 6:12-16

*One day soon afterward Jesus went up on a mountain to pray, and he prayed to God all night. ¹³At daybreak he called together all of his disciples and chose twelve of them to be **apostles**. Here are their names: ¹⁴Simon (whom he named Peter), Andrew (Peter’s brother), James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, ¹⁵Matthew, Thomas, James (son of Alphaeus), Simon (who was called the zealot), ¹⁶Judas (son of James), Judas Iscariot (who later betrayed him).*

Now Jesus had many followers; that is, He had many disciples, but these 12 he called “*apostles*.” The word *apostle* means “*messenger*”. These were special disciples that Jesus prepared to send out into the world to tell others the truth about God and the kingdom of heaven. He took the time to train them so that they could go out and teach others the Good News—that Jesus had come to save sinners from the punishment for their sins.

Jesus called these men to a life of special service and commitment to Him beyond anything they had ever known before! When Jesus called them to follow Him, they didn’t make excuses; they left at once and followed. From this point on these 12 men remained with Jesus until He died.

What do you think a day in the life of Jesus’ disciple was like? Every day they walked long distances with Him, they ate meals together, they watched Him do miracles, they listened to Him teach, they learned from Jesus, and they wanted to follow His example.

What did Jesus and the disciples do together that caused them to grow to be such close friends? They spent time together, talked with each other, they all served each other and cared about each other.

He is calling you and I to follow Him, as well. Following Jesus means that we must listen to Him, learn from Him, and be careful to do things His way!

For us, following Jesus means more than just saying that we are a Christian. If you want to be one of Jesus’ disciples, it may mean that you need to leave something behind so that you can live in a way that is pleasing to Him. He might be calling you to leave your bad temper behind, or bad language, or a bad attitude! 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. What are some ways you can make Jesus your best friend? (By spending time with Him, listening to Him, and sharing your heart with Him.)

What are some ways you can be a good friend to others at home, at school, and with friends? [Let the children respond.]

Have you ever asked God to help you choose your friends? Prayer is so important when choosing a new friend. God knows the kind of friends we need better than we do! Ask God to give you good friends that will help you walk more closely with Him.

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

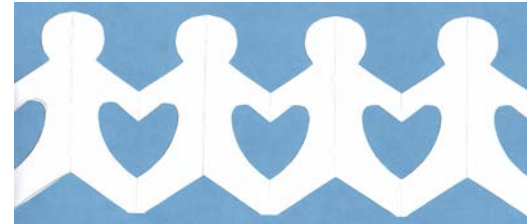
Craft Corner

Paper Chain Friends

1. Take an 8.5" x 11" piece of paper and cut in half horizontally so you have two pieces that are 4.25" x 11".
1. Fold each piece in half three times. You'll have 8 panels. Note: It's important to have the folds exactly right.
2. Unfold the paper and then using the same fold marks, refold it according style.
3. This this template, draw a figure of a person on the top layer. being careful to put the straight edge on the fold. Be sure that the arms extend beyond the edge of the folded sheet.



4. Cut the figure out.
2. Unfold the paper and you will have 4 friends, hand-in-hand. **Look what's holding them together!**



5. They can color the dolls (one would be themselves; the others are their friends). Help them write their name on one doll and the names of their friends on the others.
6. As the children are working, you can ask them about their friends. Why is she your friend? What is it about him that you like? How can you be a good friend to your friend? and so forth....

Game Center

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. What did the first 4 disciples do for living? (They were fishermen.)
4. How many apostles did Jesus choose to be with Him. (Jesus chose 12 men - His closest friends.)
5. 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.)

6. 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.)
7. How can you help your friendship with Jesus grow? (By spending time with Him, listening to Him, and sharing my heart with Him.)
8. What do friends do together that helps them grow to be better friends? (Play, pray, eat, share, work)
9. 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.)
10. Have you ever asked God to help you choose your friends?
11. Why is prayer an important part of making decisions about friends? (God knows the kind of friends we need better than we do!)

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