



LESSON 1

JESUS CALLS THE DISCIPLES

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Calls Us

SCRIPTURE: [Luke 5](#)

GOD'S BIG STORY: Jesus teaches the crowd from a boat, helps Simon Peter and his brother catch fish, and calls some of His first disciples to follow Him.

WORD OF WONDER: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. —[John 3:16–17 \(NIV\)](#)

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

Jesus is called a *rabbi* or *teacher* throughout the Gospels. This was an honored position in first- century Judaism—rabbis knew the Torah (the first five books of our Old Testament) by heart. Clearly, Jesus is no ordinary rabbi—He's the greatest teacher ever!

WHAT?

Rabbis had disciples who were learning to be just like them. Disciples followed their rabbis and listened to their teachings, specifically their interpretations of Jewish law. When Jesus called Peter, James, and John, they would have known they were becoming His disciples.

WHERE?

The Sea of Galilee is a large lake located in northern Israel. Jesus did a large part of His ministry in Capernaum and the surrounding small towns located near the Sea of Galilee.

WHEN?

Jesus began His official ministry around age 30 ([Luke 3:23](#)), and at this time began choosing disciples to follow Him. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, seemed to have already been following Jesus.

CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY

The nation of Israel consisted of 12 tribes. Jesus chose 12 disciples to show that He was representing Israel perfectly. He showed that He is the one, true Rabbi whose teachings should always be followed because He is God in the flesh.

Curiosity

Spark curiosity and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

Welcome Question

Gather the kids together and greet everyone with enthusiasm! Call on several kids to share their answers to the Welcome Question: **If you could follow any person around for a day, who would it be? What would you do together?**

You chose some wonderful and interesting people to follow for the day! Today we're going to hear how Jesus called some of His first disciples to follow Him. But first, it's time to be curious!

Curiosity Questions

I'm curious ...

- Who is someone you follow? Who follows you?
- What do you think it means to follow God?

Elementary Interactive Game: Creature Code Names

Gather the kids. **Today we're going to practice our super-secret decoding skills with a game called Creature Code Names. In this game, we'll each have a secret creature code name!**

There is an animal assigned to every letter in the alphabet. Your secret code name is the combination of animal actions and sounds that spell your name.

Show kids how the creature code works by acting out your own name using the code. For example, if your name is Erica, you will make the actions/sounds of these animals in order: elephant, rabbit, iguana, cat, alligator. Next invite all the kids to stand up at one time and act out their own creature code names. If your time is limited and the prepared slips contain kids' initials, model the code using your first and last initials and invite the kids to do the same.

Some of the animals in the creature code are harder to act out than others. Share these ideas for some of the less common animals: iguana—crawl slowly and flick your tongue out in quick bursts; jaguar—sneak, prowl, and roar softly; narwhal—make a single unicorn-like tusk with a finger and make splashing noises; quail—scurry around quickly and bob head; umbrella bird—puff out chest, make a low hooting sound; vulture—circle slowly, squawk, flap arms like large wings; x-ray fish—swim with hands; yak—stomp, grunt, shake head/hair.

Leader Tip: *For Younger Kids.* Read all 26 letters and their corresponding animals out loud for kids who are pre-readers. Also be available to help them read the names or initials on the slips they pull from the basket.

Make It Inclusive: If any kids in your group have limited mobility, invite all the kids to do their animal actions while sitting.

Now that everyone has practiced their creature code names, let's begin! Who would like to get us started?

Invite one kid to the front to be the first Creature Coder. Hold up the basket or container and explain that in it are slips with each person's first name (or initials) on it. The Creature Coder will pull a slip, read the name silently, and act out that name (or initials) using the creature code. Everyone else will watch carefully and remain seated until the Creature Coder has acted out all the letters. If they think the Creature Coder spelled their name, they will jump up and run to the front. And if they're correct, they will be the next Creature Coder. Play several rounds as time allows.

Sometimes it was challenging to tell if the Creature Coder was spelling your name, but you all did an excellent job recognizing your creature code names! In God's big story today, we'll hear about Jesus calling some of His first disciples, or dedicated followers. Jesus didn't use a secret code, and He didn't make elephant or lion sounds when He called them to follow Him. But Jesus did do something amazing His disciples never forgot! Jesus continues to call people to follow Him, including you and me!



Today's Wonder Truth is **GOD CALLS US**.

Declaring God's Wonder

Thank You, God, that You are good! (Kids repeat.)

You made me on purpose, for a purpose. (Kids repeat.)

And when I follow Jesus, I am Your kid! (Kids repeat.)

You know me, love me, and lead me. (Kids repeat.)

You sent Jesus to save us, (Kids repeat.)

And He calls us to follow Him! (Kids repeat.)

My life can tell of Your wonder! (Kids repeat.)

Faith

Help kids see the wonder of God's story and how it connects to their own story.

Word of Wonder Activity

WORD OF WONDER

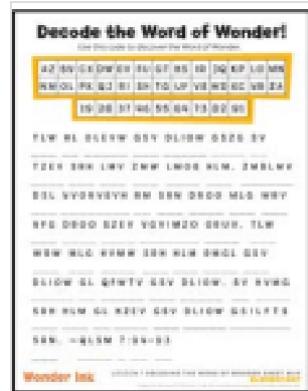
For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

—John 3:16–17 (NIV)

God loves us so much that He sent His Son Jesus to live, die, and rise again! Through Jesus, our sins—the wrong things we say and do that separate us from God—can be forgiven, and we can be God's kids! Because of God's love for us, we can hang out with Jesus forever! Our Word of Wonder for the Hanging Out with Jesus series reminds us of these amazing truths! Let's say the verses together.

Open your Bible to [John 3:16–17](#). If possible, display the Word of Wonder Slide. Introduce kids to [John 3:16–17](#) by reading it several times together.



Leader Tip: To make the Decoding the Word of Wonder activity more challenging, have kids complete it before you introduce the verse!

Now let's practice our Word of Wonder by decoding it!

Give each kid a copy of the Decoding the Wonder Truth Sheet and a pencil. Invite kids to form groups of 2–3 and to work together to decipher the Word of Wonder using the code on their sheets. If your time is limited, challenge them to decode the verse reference at the bottom of the page ([John 3:16–17](#)) and to take their sheets home to finish. If your group is mostly younger kids, consider decoding the verse together. Finish by saying the Word of Wonder a couple more times together.

Elementary Questions

- **Where was Jesus when He taught the crowd of people in today's part of God's big story? (He was by the Sea of Galilee. Then He got into Simon's boat and taught from the boat out on the water.)**
- **What happened when Jesus told Simon and his friends to lower their nets into the water? (So many fish filled their nets that they started to break!)**
- **What did Simon and his friends do when Jesus called them to follow Him? (They left everything and followed Jesus!)**
- **Why do you think Simon and his friends wanted to follow Jesus?**
- **God knows you, loves you, and calls you to follow Him too! What are some reasons you might want to follow Jesus?**
- **What does it mean to follow Jesus?**

We know God calls us and wants us to follow Jesus just like Simon and his friends followed Jesus. What an amazing truth that God loves us so much He wants to spend time with us! Let's spend time with God in prayer and ask Him to help us to always follow Him.

Leader Tip: For some kids in your group, this might be the first time they hear about following Jesus. Give kids space to reflect and for the Holy Spirit to work by allowing several seconds of silence after each question. If any kids want to know more about becoming a Jesus-follower, invite your ministry leader and, if possible, the child's parent or guardian into the conversation.

Preteen Questions

- **Where was Jesus when He taught the crowd of people in today's part of God's big story? (He was by the Sea of Galilee. Then He got into Simon's boat and taught from the boat out on the water.)**
- **What miracle did Jesus do in this story? What does this miracle show us about Jesus? (He told Simon and his friends to lower their nets, and the nets filled with so many fish they started to break, even though the men had been fishing all night without catching anything.)**
- **Jesus told Simon, "From now on you will fish for people" (Luke 5:10). What do you think this means?**
- **Simon and his friends left everything and immediately started following Jesus. Why do you think they did this? What do you think you would have done in that situation?**
- **God calls us too. What do you think it means to follow Jesus?**
- **What makes it hard sometimes to follow Jesus? What do you think are the best parts about following Jesus?**

God knows us, loves us, and calls us to follow Him, but we need His help to do it! God gives us His Holy Spirit, who is God, to help us follow Him and walk in His ways. Let's ask the Holy Spirit to help us follow Jesus every day.

Small Group Prayer Time

Invite kids to share one area in their lives where they need God's help to follow Him or other prayer requests they have. Give kids an opportunity to pray for another person in the group. (Some kids will want to pray aloud and some won't—both are OK!) Close the prayer time by thanking God for calling and loving each person in the group.

Identity

Create space for God to remind kids they are known, loved, led, and their lives can tell of God's wonder.

Elementary Responding in Worship: Prayer Stations

Gather the kids. **Today in God's big story, Jesus called Simon and his friends to follow Him. They became some of Jesus' first disciples. Another word for a disciple is an *apprentice*. Does anyone know what an *apprentice* is?** Allow kids to answer. **Good thoughts! An *apprentice* is someone who follows an expert and learns from them. For example, an apprentice to a plumber follows the expert plumber from place to place and learns how to do what he does. After following the expert and practicing his ways, the apprentice plumber eventually learns to fix broken pipes and water leaks, just like his teacher. As followers of Jesus, we are His apprentices. We follow Him and learn to do what He does. God also gives us His Holy Spirit to help us become like Jesus and do the things He does.**

- **What is Jesus like?** (*Kids might describe attributes such as kind, loving, and forgiving. They might list things Jesus does, like healing, doing miracles, and caring for all people.*)

Leader Tip: God has both communicable attributes, those we can also develop such as the fruit of the Spirit (see [Galatians 5:22–23](#)), and incommunicable attributes, those reserved for God alone, such as His omnipotence (being all-powerful) and sovereignty. Some kids may need help understanding that as we follow Jesus, we become more like Him as we develop His communicable attributes.

Just as Jesus called Simon and his friends in today's story, God calls each of us to follow Him. And as we follow Jesus, the Holy Spirit helps us act more like Jesus everywhere we go! Let's spend some time talking with God in prayer and asking Him to show us ways we can follow Jesus in different parts of our lives.

Show kids the four prayer stations: School, Community, Family, and Neighborhood. Invite them to visit each station and to ask God what it would look like to follow Jesus in that place or part of their life this week. For example, while at school, they could follow Jesus by inviting a new student to sit with them at lunch. Or in their community, they could let their teammates go first in line at soccer practice. Then they can write or draw one way they plan on following Jesus in that place and stick it near the prayer station sign.

Make It Inclusive: If writing and drawing is difficult for some kids, provide other supplies they can create with, such as play dough, pipe cleaners, or wax sticks.

You can have kids rotate through the stations at their own pace and in whatever order they choose, or you can divide the group into four, assign each a starting station, and indicate when to rotate. Play “I Will Follow” from the [Hanging Out with Jesus Elementary Spotify playlist](#) as kids pray and respond at the stations.

After kids have had a chance to visit all four prayer stations, invite several kids to share one or two ways they plan on following Jesus this week with the Holy Spirit's help.

Preteen Responding in Worship: Silent Skits

Gather the kids. Today in God's big story, Jesus called Simon and his friends to follow Him. They became some of Jesus' first disciples. Another word for a disciple is an *apprentice*. Does anyone know what an *apprentice* is? Allow kids to answer. Yes! An *apprentice* is someone who follows an expert and learns from them. For example, an apprentice to a plumber follows the expert plumber from place to place and learns how to do what he does. After following the expert and practicing his ways, the apprentice plumber eventually learns to fix broken pipes and water leaks, just like his teacher. As followers of Jesus, we are His apprentices. We follow Him and learn to do what He does. God also gives us His Holy Spirit to help us become like Jesus and do the things He does.

Leader Tip: God has both communicable attributes, those we can also develop such as the fruit of the Spirit (see [Galatians 5:22–23](#)), and incommunicable attributes, those reserved for God alone, such as His omnipotence (being all-powerful) and sovereignty. Some kids may need help understanding that as we follow Jesus, we become more like Him as we develop His communicable attributes.

Just as Jesus called Simon and his friends in today's story, God calls each of us to follow Him. As we follow Jesus, the Holy Spirit helps us act more like Jesus in every situation. Let's create silent skits to practice doing the things that Jesus does!

Help kids form four groups. Have each group pull a Silent Skit Slip from the basket.

On each of your slips is something about Jesus that we can become more like as we follow Him. Your group's job is to create a silent skit that shows someone responding like Jesus to a real-life situation. For example, if your slip says, "Jesus is filled with peace," you might show one person who is nervous about taking a test and another person comforting them like Jesus would so they could experience peace. After each skit, everyone else will guess what characteristic of Jesus the skit demonstrated, and we will talk more about it.

Give groups 2–3 minutes to plan their silent skits and remind them there is no talking or sound effects in silent skits. Invite each group to stand and perform their silent skits. After each skit, take time to discuss these questions altogether. (Adjust the questions each time to fit the specific characteristic of Jesus demonstrated in that skit.)

- **What characteristic of Jesus do you think this skit showed us?**
- **When do we see Jesus showing love/forgiveness/care/patience and kindness in the Bible?**
- **When have you experienced Jesus' love/forgiveness/care/patience and kindness?**
- **What is one specific way you could show love/forgiveness/care/patience and kindness to someone this week?**

Once all four groups have performed their silent skits and you've discussed each one, invite the kids into time of worship. Give each kid a sticky note and writing utensil and invite them to talk with God about one thing they can do this week with the Holy Spirit's help to be and act like Jesus. Play "I Will Follow" from the [Hanging Out with Jesus Spotify playlist](#) as kids pray and respond. Encourage kids to take their sticky notes home as a reminder that God calls them to follow Him. As they follow Jesus as His apprentices, they will become more like Him and do the things He does!

Make It Inclusive: If some kids are very shy or scared to perform in front of others, assure them that is OK! They can remain in the audience and help guess what characteristic of Jesus each skit demonstrates.

Blessing Your Kids

Blessing: God knows you, loves you, and calls you to follow Him as His disciple, apprentice, and friend! May you hear the call of God in your heart and respond. And may His love surround you all the days of your life!

GAME 1: COME TO ME!

In this game, kids will move toward the leader each time she calls out a prompt that describes them.

Let's play a game called Come to Me. You'll all start on the other side of the room from me. I'm going to say, "Come to me if ..." and then I'll say something that may or may not describe you. For example, I might say, "Come to me if you like to play video games." If you like to play video games, you'll take one step toward me. Let's see how many of you end up making it all the way to me.

Line the kids up side by side on one end of the room or space. Stand across from the kids. Begin reading the "Come to me if ..." list below. The game ends when most (or all) of the kids have come to you.

Leader Tip: To add a more physical challenge to the game, have kids balance on one foot and then hop toward you.

Make It Inclusive: To include kids with limited mobility, invite them to think of "Come to Me" categories and to call out their ideas.

Come to me if ... (you can also personalize the statements to fit your group)

- you like broccoli.
- you like strawberries.
- you like swimming.
- you like snow.
- you like soccer.
- you like to read.
- you wear glasses.
- you have a pet.
- you have a sister or brother.

- **you do not have a sister or brother.**
- **you have blonde hair.**
- **you have brown hair.**
- **you have red hair.**
- **you have black hair.**
- **you like salad.**
- **you have a birthday this month.**
- **you've been to the ocean.**
- **you play baseball.**
- **you like chocolate cake.**
- **you love winter.**
- **you love summer.**
- **you lost a tooth recently.**
- **you dislike bugs.**
- **there is an “S” in your name.**
- **there is an “M” in your name.**
- **you've ever broken a bone.**
- **you've ever been fishing.**

Wow! Many of you like a lot of things and have done a lot of things! In God's big story, we're going to hear about when Jesus called His disciples to follow Him, but not just special, super smart, or fancy people were called. The people He called were regular fishermen. We'll learn that we can follow Jesus too!