Calling of the Disciples
Matthew 4:18-22

The Story

The Lessons

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Calling of the Disciples

One day, not too long after Jesus had started to travel around and teach, he was walking by the Sea of Galilee when he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew. They were fishers and they were casting their net into the lake to catch some fish. Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people”. Simon Peter and Andrew immediately left their nets and followed him!

As they were walking away, Jesus saw two other brothers, James and John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee mending their nets. He called to James and John. They immediately got out of the boat and left their father to followed Jesus, too!

(Matthew 4:18-22)
They Did What!?  
(Calling of the Disciples Lesson 1)

The story of Jesus call to the first disciples is an excellent example of how stingy the Gospel writers could be with description. Learning how to fill in the scenes is an important skill because it makes the people and their world whole. Only when you picture the Sea of Galilee as a workplace, full of co-workers and family members, can you really grasp the magnitude of what those first disciples did and realize that you may well be called to do the same.

This lesson uses two contextualizing strategies. Students are asked to both imagine the inner lives of the characters and to translate the setting into something more familiar. Perhaps that is too much in one lesson? Let me know what you think.

Open with prayer.

Introduce the Story

Have you ever been to the ocean or to a really big lake where people are working? I don’t mean to a beach – I mean to a place where people are fishing or loading and unloading boats.

(If yes) What was it like?
(If no) Can you imagine what it might be like?

Help the students get an idea of the busyness and the focus on the physically difficult work at hand.

Jesus lived in a place where boats and fishing were important. The Bible tells us lots of stories about Jesus being around water, boats, and fishers. It can be easier to picture what those stories are describing if we know similar kinds of places but, even if we are from someplace far from any water, we can still use our imaginations.

Our story today takes place near the beginning of Jesus’ ministry and is set on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, which is actually a very big lake.

Read the Story (see page 1)

Discussion

The story is very short. Let’s just summarize the events it tells us about.

What did Jesus tell the two sets of brothers to do?
What were they going before Jesus called them?
What did they do afterwards?
How do you think they felt?
How do you think Zebedee felt?

The story doesn’t describe much about the setting, though. Maybe the person who
wrote it thought everyone who read it would know about things like fishing by the sea. Of course, it was also a long time ago and fishing has changed a lot! Let’s use our imaginations to try to fill in some of the details. I’m going to read it again and, this time, I want you to imagine what was going on around Jesus. Was it busy? Was it hot or cool? What sounds were there? Smells? What were people doing?

**Read the Story Again (see page 1 again)**

**Discussion (II)**

What did you see? (elicit descriptions from students)

It sounds like the sea was a very busy place, full of people doing important work. I wonder where Jesus would go if he was born in (your town/region) today. Where would he find lots of busy people? (in the mall, in the office buildings, at the power plant, on the farms, in the factory, etc.)

**Introduce the Activity**

It can be easy to think that we are very different from the people in the Bible because their lives seem so different from ours but in lots of ways we are very similar. People today still work hard and need to earn money to take care of themselves and their families. They still get nervous as well as excited when unusual things happen. They still feel sad when they say leave their families.

We are going to act out this story but not the way it is written in the Bible. We are going to put it in our world and we are going to add words. For example, what did the fishers say to each other? What did James and John say to Zebedee and what did he say to them?

**Enact the Story**

Divide the students into groups if you have more than 8 or so. Direct the group(s) to pick a setting and to assign roles (you could easily choose to only have Jesus, James, John, and Zebedee in your plays). Provide only as much help as necessary for the group(s) to come up with pantomime for the work setting chosen and some rough dialogue. After some prep time, present the plays to each other/you.

**Regrouping**

Congratulate everyone on their performances. Ask ‘why’ questions if any seem appropriate based on the plays.

**Closing Prayer**

Dear God, give us the courage of Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John so that we will follow Jesus when he calls. Amen.
Fishers of People
(Calling of the Disciples Lesson 2)

This lesson deals with the idea of discipleship. It also teaches that a Bible story is not simply a story about other people but that it is also about us. Jesus calls the fishers to follow him in the story and, through the story, Jesus calls us as well.

Things to know about this lesson:
- It includes making origami boats. They are very easy (although little children may need quite a lot of help) but you will want to make one yourself before the class. It’s easier to follow the directions than to visualize them (for me, at least). You could do it right now, for that matter. Just grab a regular sheet of paper and keep reading...

Materials
- sheets of white paper (e.g. photocopy paper)
- markers/crayons/pencil crayons
- pipe cleaners (one/student)
- triangles (one/student) cut out of construction paper (you will have time to cut these out while the students are doing the activity)

Open with prayer.

Introduce the Story
Today’s story is about how Jesus found his first disciples. Can anyone tell me what a disciple is?

A disciple is a special student who follows the teacher very carefully and tries to learn how to be like the teacher. Christians should all be disciples of Jesus and one way we learn how to do that is by reading about him and about his disciples in the Bible.

Read the Story (see page 1)

Discussion
What were the brothers doing when Jesus called them to become his disciples?

Have you ever been fishing? What was it like? Were you in a boat? How did you catch the fish?

What did Jesus say he would do if the fishers followed him?

What do you think that means? (They would ‘catch’ people instead of fish.)

Why would Jesus want them to ‘catch’ people? What does that mean? (Jesus wants his disciples to tell people with words and show people with actions the good news about God’s love and forgiveness and the promise for a better world in the future. Then people can know Jesus and follow his way – they can become disciples, too!)

When we read this story, we are not only reading about Jesus calling Simon Peter,
Andrew, James, and John. We are also reading about Jesus calling each of us to be his disciples and become fishers of people. What are some ways that we can show and tell people the good news of Jesus?

(Treat people with love and respect; Help those who need help; Forgive people when they do something wrong; Invite people to church or Sunday School; Talk to people about Jesus; Pray for people; etc.)

**Introduce the Activity**

We are going to make fishing boats to take home and remind us that we are called to be fishers of people. Put your boat somewhere where you will see it often and remember that you are a disciple of Jesus.

**Make Paper Boats**

The directions for these boats were written by Peggy Deland and were found at [http://www.ehow.com/how_4466351_make-paper-boats.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_4466351_make-paper-boats.html).

Distribute white paper and crayons/markers to the students and invite them to decorate both sides of the paper. When they are finished, help them fold their paper into a boat:

1. Fold the paper in half, top to bottom, and make a sharp crease.
2. Fold the paper again, this time left to right. Re-open only this fold. The paper should now be folded in half from top to bottom but with a crease down the centre. The open side should be at the bottom.
3. Using the centre crease as a guide, fold the top corners down, leaving about an inch at the bottom of the paper. The corner folds should meet in the centre.
4. Fold the top layer of the strip at the bottom of the paper up, to cover the bottom of the triangles that were created when you folded the corners down.
5. Turn the paper over and fold up the other bottom strip in the same way.
6. Tuck the edges of the two bottom strips in. Your paper should now look like a large triangle.
7. Fold the upper inch of the triangle’s tip downwards, creasing sharply, then unfold the tip.
8. Turn the paper over, and fold the tip down and back up again. Now you should have a large triangle with a crease marking a smaller triangle at the top of the paper.
9. Turn the paper so that the tip faces downward, and open the wider part of the triangle. It should now look like a triangular bowl with the tip at the bottom.
10. While holding the “bowl” open, push the tip upward from the bottom into the “bowl”. This will form the bottom of the boat.
Regrouping

Admire everyone’s boats. Tell them that they just need one more thing. Pass out pipe cleaners and paper triangle “sails”. Ask students to draw a cross on their sail, tape it onto their pipe cleaner, and then push the pipe cleaner through the bottom of the boat.

(If the boats are unstable with the sails, tell the students that they could put little rocks or dried beans in the bottom to make it stay upright.)

Closing Prayer

Dear God, thank you for the disciples who followed Jesus from the Sea of Galilee that day so long ago. Thank you for the Bible story that calls us to follow Jesus, too. Please make us disciples of Jesus and fishers of people. Amen.
Come Follow Me  
(Calling of the Disciples Lesson 3)

This lesson is also about discipleship and the call that Jesus makes on us through the call he gives his fisher disciples. It offers a get-up-and-going activity for those students (and teachers) who grow weary of arts and crafts.

Things to know about this lesson:
- You will need to scope out an area for the follow the leader game. If you have time, set up a bit of an obstacle course.

Materials
- A long rope or a few scarves tied together.

Open with prayer.

Introduce the Story
What does “follow” mean? What do you follow? Who do you follow? (instructions, directions, roads, teachers, parents, police officers)
Why do you follow these people/things? (for safety, so things will work, because we have to, so we can learn, etc.)
Today’s story is about Jesus calling some people to leave their jobs and their families to follow him. This story calls us to follow Jesus, too.

Read the Story (see page 1)

Discussion
What did the fishers do when Jesus called them?
Did they know who Jesus was? Or what he was going to do?
How do you think they felt? Were they nervous? Excited? Scared?
There must have been something special about Jesus to make those people trust him right away and know that they wanted to follow him. They became disciples – disciples are people who follow someone so that they can learn everything they can about how to live like that person. They knew that following Jesus was more important than following anything or anybody else.

Introduce the Activity
The fishers in the story set us a good example. Jesus calls us to follow him, too, even though it might be difficult and we don’t know exactly what will happen.
We’re going to play a game about following to help us think about following Jesus.
Following the Leader

Direct everyone to stand in a line. Bring out the scarf and have everyone hold on to it with one hand.

Explain that you will lead everyone around and that they should keep their eyes closed, if they can.

Lead the group on as challenging a course as your space and their abilities will allow. If you think it wise, give students a chance to be the leader and take the second place yourself (with your eyes closed, too, if you can!).

Pay attention to different student’s strategies for navigating the course so you can ask about it afterwards.

Regrouping

How did it feel to follow the leader with your eyes closed? Was it scary? Exciting? Fun?

Were you able to keep them closed?

If you needed to open them, when? Why?

Ask any other questions arising from your observations during the activity.

Closing Prayer

Dear God, help us follow the example of the fishers and become Jesus’ disciples. Make us brave and able to follow Jesus so that we can live the way he wants us to. Amen.