

The Fishers Of Men

Luke 5:1-11; 6:12-16

MEMORY VERSE

MATTHEW 4:19, 20

“And He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ Then they immediately left their nets and followed Him.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A large paper bag with as many paper clipped fish-shaped papers as the number of children in your class (each fish should have the memory verse printed on it), one man-shaped cutout with a paper clip on it, a pole with an attached string and magnet, and enough “fish shaped” stickers or small prizes as the number of children in your class.

A large blanket or sheet.

Bible story skit props (optional).

ATTENTION GRABBER!

The "Fishers of Men" Game

Prepare a large paper bag with assorted paper fish that have the morning memory verse printed on them. Attach a paper clip to the mouth of each fish. In addition to the fish, place one man-shaped paper in the bag, also with a paper clip.

Use a stick with a string tied to it and magnet taped to the end of the string for a fishing pole. Have the children take turns "fishing" in the paper bag for the assorted shapes.

Reward all of the children with “fish shaped” stickers or small prizes. Introduce today’s lesson and talk about how Jesus used something very familiar to his disciples (fishing) to help them understand what He was calling them to do (fish for men). **We should follow Jesus and live for Him.**

LESSON TIME!

If Jesus were to ask you right now to follow Him, and be His disciple, would you go? Could you give up and walk away from all that you have, to follow and do whatever Jesus would want you to do? When you stop to think about it, it is a very serious decision.

We need to make a choice to either love the things that we have and live for them or give our lives to Jesus and live for Him. We are going to learn about some men who were asked to put everything aside and follow Jesus. These men made a choice to follow Jesus. **We should follow Jesus and live for Him.**

LUKE 5:1

Now so it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret...

A great crowd of people pressed in on Jesus to hear Him teach the Word of God. His popularity was spreading throughout the land, as He demonstrated His power by performing miracles and teaching the Word of God with authority. The people had a deep need in their lives that only Jesus could fill. With compassion, Jesus taught them to "repent" and turn to God; “for the Kingdom of Heaven is near” (Matthew 4:17).

The message is the same today. We need to repent, to turn away from our sins, our self-centeredness, and selfishness, and turn our lives over to the direction and control of Jesus. Repenting is turning away from sin and selfishness and turning toward the Lord. **We should follow Jesus and live for Him.**

LUKE 5:2-3

and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets.

Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat.

Jesus noticed Simon Peter, his brother Andrew, James, and John, fishing at some distance (Matthew 4:18-22), but He waited until they came to shore and washed their nets before He approached them. Fishermen used bell shaped nets with lead weights around the edges. They would throw the net flat on the water, letting it sink and cover the fish. Then, the fisherman would pull a cord drawing the net around the fish.

The fishermen were washing their nets to keep them in good condition. Jesus chose to use Simon Peter's boat as a pulpit so the great crowd could hear His voice as he taught them about the kingdom of God.

The "Blanket Toss" Fishing Game

Have the children kneel near the middle of the class and crawl around slowly on all fours.

Take a blanket or sheet and throw it open over the crawling children. If the blanket touches them, they must stop in place. When the blanket has fallen completely, count your catch.

Allow some of the other children to "catch" some fish too.

LUKE 5:4-5

When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."

But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net."

When Jesus had finished His sermon, He told Peter to get back to work assuring him that this time he would catch a lot of fish. Peter had listened to Jesus' teaching and was about to accompany him on his fishing trip. Peter was probably ready for a nice long nap after fishing all night, but he and his companions went back to work.

Sometimes it is not easy to do what the Lord asks, but we need to be obedient and faithful in all things the Lord asks us to do. He will give us the strength and the desire to obey Him, if we ask for His help to follow Him. **We should follow Jesus and live for Him.**

What You Sow, You Also Shall Reap

Share with the class a personal experience of obedience and a personal experience of disobedience (stories from your childhood are usually very interesting to children and most identifiable). Be sure to keep them age appropriate and light. Be careful not to go into anything from a past that might be of a sensitive nature.

Illustrate from these stories the benefits that came from obedience and the consequences that came from disobedience.

Ask for some volunteers to share some of their experiences. Be prepared to guide this discussion, as tangents are very possible.

LUKE 5:6-7

And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking.

So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

Nighttime was the best time to fish because the fish came closer to the surface. In the daytime, fish go down to the cooler waters of the deep. Though this was the worst time to fish, the nets became so full of fish they began to break. The catch was so large that both the nets and the boats were overwhelmed with fish.

This miracle was evident to all as they watched both boats, probably 5 or 6 tons each, begin to sink. It was also evident that Jesus had power and authority over nature, demonstrating complete control over the fish. God's blessings are overly abundant when we respond in obedience, just as Peter and his companions did.

LUKE 5:8

When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

Peter was awestruck at this miracle, and his first response was to feel his own insignificance in comparison to the greatness of Jesus. In contrast with Jesus, whose deity (the fact that He was God) was

shown by this miracle, Peter realized that he was sinful and felt unworthy to have Jesus with him.

Jesus is not only interested in saving us but also in helping us in our day-to-day living. When we, like Peter, realize our own sinfulness, we too will come before Jesus with a humble heart, confessing our sins, so we may be close to Him. This is the first step we must take if we are to follow Jesus. **We should follow Jesus and live for Him.**

LUKE 5:9-10

For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken;

and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men."

What a miracle! Peter and his companions knew Jesus healed the sick and cast out demons, but they were amazed that He cared about their everyday needs too. Peter, James, and John were already followers of Jesus, but they had continued to work at their fishing business. Now, Jesus called them to a special service, to make them His apostles and use them to carry the good news of the gospel to a lost and dying world. Instead of catching fish, Jesus would make them fishers of men.

"Fisher's of Men" Sing-along

Lead the children in a chorus of the song "Fishers of Men." Use the hand motions as you sing and encourage them to do so as well. See if any of the children want to sing it alone for the class or sing it in groups.

When you are all done singing, ask the children to explain what Jesus meant when he told them they were to be "fishers of men."

LUKE 5:11

So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.

This was not the first time these men had been with Jesus (John 1:40-42; 2:1-2). Their acquaintance with Jesus developed into a closely-knit relationship with Him. Jesus had met them on their level and established His authority in their lives. Instead of going to seek a market for their fish, which could have brought them a lot of money, they forsook all. They remained with Jesus from that point on.

We need to make a choice too. We have to leave our past behind, confess our sins, and devote our futures to Jesus. We need to decide in our hearts that nothing will be more important than doing what God wants us to do. Today you can make a decision to follow Jesus. **We should follow Jesus and live for Him.**

"Fisher's of Men" Skit

Have the children act out the "Fisher's of Men" Story. Choose one or two groups of children to play the parts of Jesus, Simon Peter, James, and John.

Have the groups perform their reenactments for the class. Make sure the class responds to each group with enthusiastic applause.

LUKE 6:12

Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

Every time Jesus had an important event in His life, He took time to go off by Himself and pray. This time, He was preparing to choose His inner circle, the twelve disciples. Jesus always made time to spend with His Heavenly Father by Himself, without any disturbance or interruption.

We need to make sure that we seek the Lord in prayer when making any important decision. We need to petition God for guidance and help in our daily lives. Jesus knew that the men He chose would have to carry on His ministry, bringing the gospel to save men from judgment and hell.

LUKE 6:13-16

And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles:

Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew;

Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot;

Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor.

Jesus had many disciples who followed Him and listened to his teachings, but He chose only twelve men who would be His Apostles, commissioned to deliver a message. Jesus selected ordinary men who had different backgrounds and personalities. They were ordinary people like you and me, but they had been chosen as Apostles.

The Apostles were Jesus' inner circle, men especially trained to serve His people. He sent them out in His authority to build His church. Today, God is calling ordinary people to serve Him just like you and me. Each one of us must make a choice to put aside the things of this world and follow Jesus. **We should follow Jesus and live for Him.** You can be a fisher of men, too!

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to follow Jesus and live for Him. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.