

Jonah 3:1–5, 10

Ps. 62:5–12

1 Cor. 7:29–31

Mark 1:14–20

Following Jesus

**Goal for
the Session**

After hearing about the call of Jesus' first disciples, children will discover some ways they can follow Jesus.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Mark 1:14–20

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Leslie J. Hoppe

Jesus and the four disciples are active agents in leading people to experience the presence of the kingdom of God. The disciples, in particular, are not passive recipients of God's favor. Jesus called them in order that they might join him in proclaiming the coming of God's reign on earth. Like Jesus, the disciples will experience opposition that will eventually claim their lives (see 13:3–13). But the end of Mark's Gospel shows that death's victory over Jesus—and therefore over the disciples—is only temporary. God raised Jesus from the dead and God will raise the disciples as well.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Lee Barrett

John Calvin helped popularize this passage as a paradigm of the calling of all Christians. We the readers, in whatever culture or century, are they. According to Calvin, God called “rough mechanics” like Simon, Andrew, James, and John in order to show that none of us are called by virtue of his or her own talents or excellences. Like those disciples who misunderstood and failed Jesus at every turn, we too are sinners in need of forgiveness for our multiple betrayals. Like them, we sinners, despite our failings, are slowly being transmuted into followers of Christ. Like them we are called not to the enjoyment of a private salvation but to a public vocation. Just as it did for the disciples, the command “Follow me” points to the way of the cross for us. Just as it did for the disciples, the ominous reference to the arrest of John the Baptist warns that we too are called to a life of risk, insecurity, and self-abnegation.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Elton W. Brown

Along those lines, we have here another case of instant decisions for Christ: Simon, Andrew, James, and John drop everything and become disciples, just like that, “immediately.” But, again, this is not the end of the story. This is just the beginning of “the beginning” (v. 1). Ahead, for them and for us, there is much to learn, much stumbling, misunderstanding, and backsliding. Becoming a faithful Christian disciple takes both a moment and a lifetime.

NOW WHAT is God's word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Ted A. Smith

And he calls people to respond. Because the time is fulfilled, Jesus calls us to “repent, and believe in the good news” (v. 15). And because the kingdom of God has drawn near, Jesus calls disciples to follow him and be made into fishers for people (v. 17). These are not all-purpose ethical imperatives, always in season, but responses to the fullness of time made present in Jesus Christ. Repenting, believing, following, fishing—these are actions that keep time with this great tempo change in the music of redemption.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Mark 1:14–20

Focus on Your Teaching

The desire to be in groups with their peers grows as children become more independent of the adults in their lives. Some children take to leadership roles among peers easily, while others stand on the sidelines until someone invites them to join the team or activity. Older children, particularly, know that being in a group requires something from them, whether it is attendance or commitment to the group's goals. Their experiences of being faithful members of groups will connect them to the story of Jesus calling disciples.

Trusting God, be with me as I think about the commitments I have and those that are most important to me. In Jesus' name. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- poster board
- marker
- green cloth
- Christ candle
- matches
- offering basket
- Bible
- Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021; CD player
- Resource Sheet 1
- Color Pack 15, 30
- costumes and props (optional)
- copies of Resource Sheet 2
- pencils

For Responding

- option 1: crafts sticks, hot glue gun, 3" sticky notes, pencils
- option 3: Color Pack 16, rectangular baking dish filled with clean sand, card stock, pencils, white glue
- option 4: construction paper, pencils, scissors, markers, tape

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, place a bookmark at the Gospel of Mark in the worship table Bible. Print the gathering litany on poster board, if that has not been done.

As the children arrive, ask them to set up the worship table, with the green cloth, Christ candle, offering basket, and Bible. When everything is ready, play “Jesus Bids Us Shine” (track 14 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021). After the song, light the Christ candle and lead the children in this litany:

Leader: God of light, we gather in your presence.

All: We want to walk in your light.

Leader: We gather to learn how to follow Jesus.

All: We will learn and follow. Amen.

Receive the offering. Point to the green cloth and explain that the church is now in the season after Epiphany. This season continues until Lent.

Extinguish the candle.

Ask:

- ✠ When your parents want your attention, what do they do?
- ✠ What do your teachers do?

Some teachers clap a multiple-part rhythm for the class to echo to quiet a group, such as three quick claps (*pause for the children to echo*) followed by two claps (*pause for the children to echo*). If no one names this method, experiment with it. Conclude that Jesus will get the attention of some people in today's Bible story.

EXPLORING

Invite a child to retrieve the Bible from the worship table, open it to the bookmark, and read the name of the book. Recall that two weeks ago the Bible story from the Gospel of Mark was about Jesus' baptism. Ask:

✿ What do you remember about Jesus' baptism?

Headbands and props help children get into the story. Turn chairs on their sides to form a boat.

Explain that today's Bible story from Mark is the next event in chapter 1. Tell the story on Resource Sheet 1 (Come with Me). Show Color Pack 15 so the children get the idea of the large fishing net. After reading the story, have the children act it out as you tell the story. Select children to play the parts of Jesus, Simon, Andrew, James, John, and Zebedee. Other children can be the workers in the boat with Zebedee. If your group is small, a leader can play the part of Jesus and you can omit the parts of Zebedee and the workers.

Encourage the children to wonder about the story by asking these questions:

- ✿ I wonder if Simon, Andrew, James, and John had heard Jesus teach or seen him heal someone. What do you think?
- ✿ I wonder what the families of these men said. What do you think?
- ✿ I wonder what will happen next. What do you think?

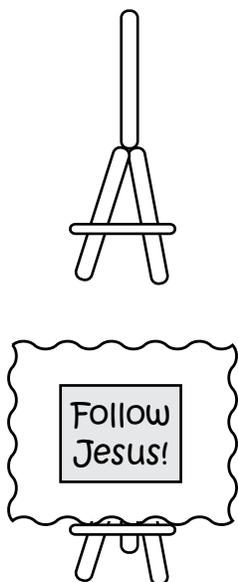
To make the transition from Exploring to Responding, distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Follow Jesus Scramble) and pencils. Form pairs, matching prereaders with proficient readers, to unscramble the words on the resource sheet. Have each pair select one of the ideas to act out for the group. These ideas will be helpful in Responding.

Alternative: If you have adequate space, print the scrambled sentences on adult-sized footprints made from construction paper and lay them in a path on the floor. Form pairs to solve the footprints and act them out.

RESPONDING

If possible, provide two options so children have a choice. Select one that is more challenging for children who are able to work on their own.

1. **Good News Easel** This easel will provide good news messages for children, a reminder of Jesus in their lives. Give each child five craft sticks. Help the children arrange the sticks in the shape shown in the margin, with three forming the letter A and one standing at the top of the A. Have an adult attach the crossbar of the A and the stick at the top with a glue gun. As the glue cools and dries, give each child several sheets from a 3" pad of sticky notes. On the top page, have the children print the words "Follow Jesus." On the remaining sheets, they can draw or write ways to follow Jesus. When the glue has cooled, invite them to stand the easel and place the sticky notes on the crossbar tray. Explain that the learners will have a reminder of ways they can follow Jesus.




 EASY
 PREP

2. **Clap and Word Rhythm** Rhythm helps children take in the call of Jesus in a deeper way. Begin with the clapping rhythm used in Gathering. Invite the children to create messages to insert in place of the echo clapping, matching the syllables of the words to the claps. For example, if the first rhythm is two claps, the word response could be “fol-low.” If the second rhythm is four claps, the word response could be “Je-sus to-day.” The children will catch on quickly. Create other clapping and word responses together. Use them in future sessions to begin or end the time together.
3. **Secret Symbol** A way the first followers of Jesus identified themselves to one another was to draw a fish in the sand. Show Color Pack 16. With a finger, draw the fish symbol in the baking dish of sand. Smooth the sand and invite each child to do the same, smoothing the sand after each one. Explain that the early followers of Jesus did this when it was not safe for them to let others know that they followed Jesus. Give each child a half-sheet of card stock and a pencil to draw the fish shape lightly on the card stock. Invite the children to cover the pencil lines with a thick line of glue and hold the card stock over the dish of sand, covering the glue lines with sand. After a bit, shake off the excess sand into the dish. They can print on their papers: Follow Jesus.
4. **Disciple Footprints** The children will think more deeply about how they can follow Jesus. Begin the conversation with the ideas from the end of Exploring. Ask for additional ways they can follow Jesus. Provide construction paper, pencils, and scissors. Have each child place a shoe on the paper and trace around it. After cutting out the footprints, they can draw or write ways they can follow Jesus on the footprints. Create a path of the footprints where the congregation will see it. Add the title: Disciple Footprints. Place additional footprints and markers nearby for others to add their ideas on footprints.

CLOSING

Play “Behold, I Am with You” (Color Pack 30; track 2 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021) as the children gather at the worship table. Light the Christ candle.

Sing “Behold, I Am with You” several times to prepare for the closing prayer.

Pray:

God, we have looked for ways to follow Jesus today. Keep us ready to follow him each day. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Thank the children for coming, and encourage them to return next week. To each child, say, “(Name), look for ways to be a follower of Jesus this week.”

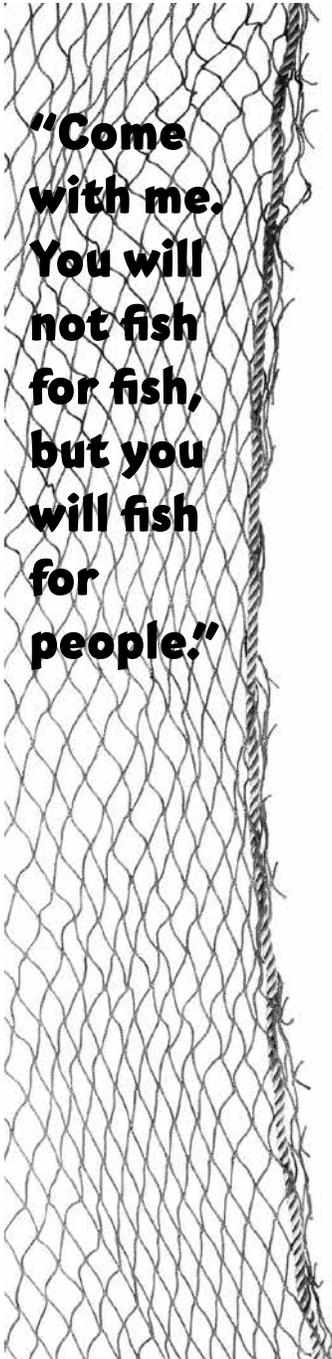
Behold, I Am with You
 Behold, I am with you,
 (*Behold, I am with you*)
 And will keep you wherever
 you go, (*And will keep you
 wherever you go*)
 And will keep you wherever
 you go. (*And will keep you
 wherever you go*)

Behold, I am with you,
 (*Behold, I am with you*)
 And will keep you wherever
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 wherever you go*)
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January 24, 2021
Following Jesus

Multi-Age
Resource Sheet 1

Come with Me
based on Mark 1:14-20



When Jesus was ready to do what God had planned for him, he realized he needed to teach other people to help him. As he walked on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he looked for people to invite to come with him.

Up ahead was a boat. He watched as Andrew and his brother Simon threw their large fishing net into the sea. As it sank, fish swam into the net so when the brothers pulled it into the boat they caught the fish. They were pretty good fishermen.

When he got near them, Jesus said, “Come with me. You will not fish for fish, but you will fish for people.”

Immediately, the brothers left their net and their boat and went with Jesus.

As the three men walked, they saw two more brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee. They were sitting in their boat, repairing their nets. Sometimes a net caught on a rock at the bottom of the water and ripped a hole in the net. The brothers were doing a good job. Jesus invited them to join him, too.

They left their father Zebedee and the other workers in the boat and went with Jesus.

These men—Simon, Andrew, James, and John—were the first disciples, or followers, of Jesus.

Follow Jesus Scramble

Directions: How will you follow Jesus and spread the good news of God's love? Unscramble the words under each footprint to make words to complete the sentence.



_____ for someone.
rpy

Jesus a message: _____
oM saloN sped
neds voles lvo



_____ about _____.
suseJ

Draw a _____ of Jesus'.
ticperu pilessidC

_____ Bible _____.
rosiest.
ader

Invite a _____ to _____.
denrif rowspih

