FOLLOWING JESUS VBS · TEACHER GUIDE · GRADES 4-6

Day 1: Jesus Calls Me

Follow Me! | Jesus Calls the Fishermen

Bible story	Jesus Calls the Fishermen (Luke 5:1-11; Matthew 4:18-22; John 1:43-51)
Memory verse (NKJV)	Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” (Matthew 4:19)
Takeaway	Jesus calls me by name to follow Him, and I can say yes and trust Him.
Daily call	Leader: “Jesus said” Kids: “Follow Me!”

Objectives

- Find and read the key passages (Luke 5:1-11; Matthew 4:18-22; John 1:43-51).
- Explain the big idea: Jesus calls me by name to follow Him, and I can say yes and trust Him.
- Say Matthew 4:19 from memory.
- Choose one specific way to follow Jesus this week.

Materials

- Bible (NKJV) for the teacher and for each student
- Prop for the attention getter: a fishing net (or mesh laundry bag) and a few paper fish
- Copies of today’s student lesson and activity sheets (one per child)
- Crayons, pencils, and name tags
- Craft supplies: Cardstock fish (8 per child) with a paper clip on each; Dowel or pencil, string, and a small magnet; Markers

Teacher preparation

- Read Luke 5:1-11; Matthew 4:18-22; John 1:43-51 in your own Bible at least twice this week.
- Read the matching “31 Days with Jesus” devotionals at The Preacher’s Pen: Day 11: Calling the Disciples (Answering the Call); Day 16: The Great Catch (Trusting Jesus with Your Future).
- Make copies, prepare craft pieces, and set out the prop before children arrive.

Background for the teacher

- The Sea of Galilee is a freshwater lake about 13 miles long and 8 miles wide. Luke calls it the Lake of Gennesaret (Luke 5:1).
- Fishing was usually done at night with large nets. In the morning the nets were washed and mended (Luke 5:2; Matthew 4:21).
- Peter and Andrew were brothers. James and John were brothers, the sons of Zebedee, and partners with Peter (Luke 5:10).
- John 1:35-51 shows that some of these men had already met Jesus earlier. Luke 5 is the day they left their work to follow Him full time.
- Jesus calls ordinary people, like fishermen, to follow Him (Matthew 4:18-22).
- Following Jesus means trusting Him even when we do not understand (Luke 5:5).
- Jesus knows each of us by name (John 1:47-48; John 10:27).
- Following Jesus means leaving behind anything that keeps us from Him (Luke 5:11).

Lesson plan (40 minutes)

Time	Segment	What to do
0:00-0:04	Welcome and review	Attendance; quick review of earlier days.
0:04-0:08	Opener	Show a fishing net (or mesh laundry bag) and a few paper fish. Ask the opening question.
0:08-0:20	Bible study	Have students find the passages and read aloud as you teach (script below).
0:20-0:26	Discussion	Ask the discussion questions; let students answer from the text.
0:26-0:30	Memory verse	Verse card race: put word cards in order, then say it from memory.
0:30-0:38	Activity sheets	Bible lookups first, then crossword, word search, scramble, and code.
0:38-0:40	Wrap-up and prayer	One-sentence takeaway from each student. Prayer.

Attention getter

Show a fishing net (or mesh laundry bag) and a few paper fish. Ask: Have you ever been fishing? What would it feel like to fish all night and catch nothing?

Bible story

Teach from an open Bible so students see that the story comes from God's word. Use this script as a guide; tell it in your own words.

The Sea of Galilee (also called the Lake of Gennesaret) was full of fishing boats. Fishermen worked at night, threw large nets into the water, and in the morning washed and mended their nets. It was hard, ordinary work.

One morning a crowd pressed around Jesus to hear the word of God (Luke 5:1). Jesus stepped into Simon Peter's boat, asked him to push out a little, and taught from the boat like it was a pulpit on the water.

Then Jesus gave Peter a strange command: "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch" (Luke 5:4). Peter was the expert fisherman. He had worked all night and caught nothing. Still he answered, "nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net" (Luke 5:5). That is faith: doing what Jesus says because He said it.

The catch was so large that the nets began to break and two boats nearly sank. Peter suddenly saw who Jesus really was. He fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" (Luke 5:8). Jesus did not send him away. He said, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men" (Luke 5:10).

Matthew tells us Jesus said, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). Peter and Andrew left their nets immediately. James and John left the boat and their father Zebedee (Matthew 4:20-22). Luke says they "forsook all and followed Him" (Luke 5:11).

Jesus did not pick the most famous or impressive men. He called ordinary people who were willing to trust Him. He also called Philip, who brought Nathanael with the words "Come and see" (John 1:43-46), and Matthew the tax collector (Luke 5:27-28). Jesus knows your name, and He is calling you to follow Him too.

Discussion questions

1. Peter was the expert fisherman. Why do you think he obeyed Jesus anyway?
2. Why did Peter say, "Depart from me"? What did he realize about Jesus?
3. What did the fishermen leave behind? What might Jesus ask you to leave behind?
4. Philip told Nathanael, "Come and see." Who could you invite to come and see Jesus?

Review

- Where did Jesus tell Peter to launch out? (Luke 5:4) Answer: into the deep
- How long had Peter worked without catching anything? (Luke 5:5) Answer: all night
- What did Peter call himself? (Luke 5:8) Answer: a sinful man
- What did they forsake to follow Jesus? (Luke 5:11) Answer: all
- Who was in the boat with James and John? (Matthew 4:21) Answer: Zebedee their father
- What did Philip say to Nathanael? (John 1:46) Answer: Come and see

Memory verse activity

Verse card race: write each phrase on a card, mix them up, and let teams race to put the verse in order. Then say it from memory.

Craft (Craft Time): Verse Fishing Game

Materials: Cardstock fish (8 per child) with a paper clip on each; Dowel or pencil, string, and a small magnet; Markers

1. Write a reference from today's lesson on each fish (Luke 5:4, 5:5, 5:8, 5:10, 5:11, Matthew 4:19, John 1:43, John 1:46).
2. Build a fishing pole from the dowel, string, and magnet.
3. In pairs, catch a fish, look up the verse, and tell your partner what it says.
4. Keep the set to play at home with family.

Recreation and snack

Game: Fishers of Men Tag: one child is "Peter". Tagged children join hands and become part of the "net" until everyone is caught. For little ones, play Follow the Leader.

Snack: Fish-shaped crackers in a small paper boat or cup ("nets full of fish") with water. Always check allergy information on registration cards before serving food.

Songs (a cappella)

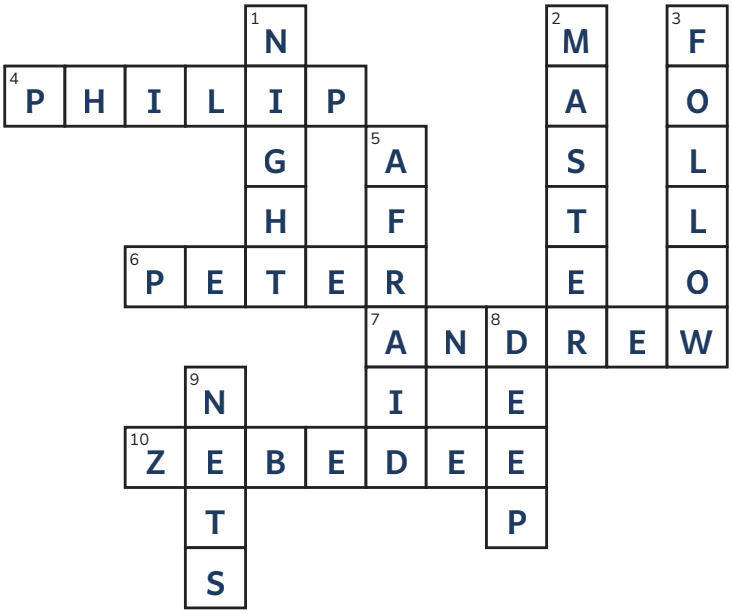
Sing without instruments. Suggested titles: I Have Decided to Follow Jesus; I Will Make You Fishers of Men; Footprints of Jesus; Jesus Loves Me; Where He Leads Me.

Answer keys

Bible lookups

Reference	Answer
Luke 5:4	into the deep
Luke 5:5	all night
Luke 5:8	a sinful man
Luke 5:11	all
Matthew 4:21	Zebedee their father
John 1:46	Come and see

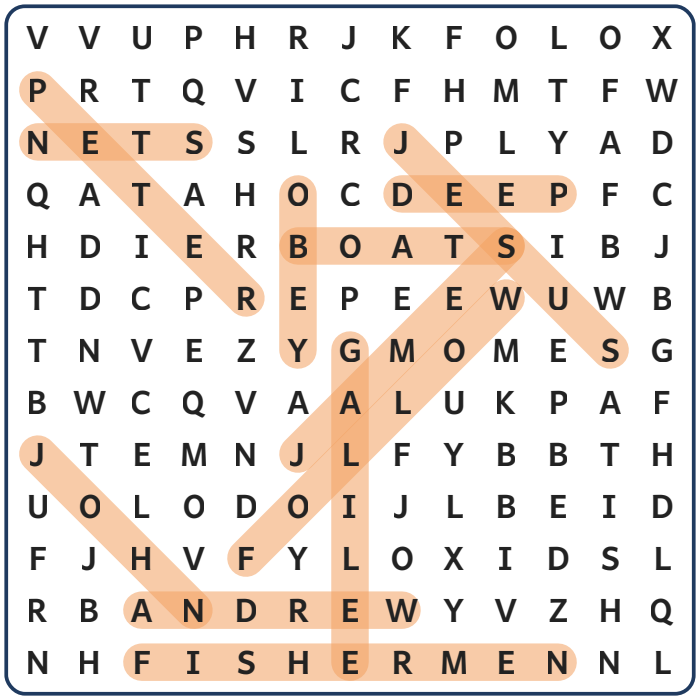
Crossword



Across: 4 PHILIP; 6 PETER; 7 ANDREW; 10 ZEBEDEE

Down: 1 NIGHT; 2 MASTER; 3 FOLLOW; 5 AFRAID; 8 DEEP; 9 NETS

Word search



Word scramble

1. FOLLOW, 2. PETER, 3. FISHERMEN, 4. NETS, 5. BOATS, 6. ANDREW, 7. GALILEE, 8. DEEP

Secret code

Answer: FOLLOW ME

Sources for this lesson

- “31 Days with Jesus” by Christopher Gallagher, The Preacher’s Pen: Day 11: Calling the Disciples (Answering the Call); Day 16: The Great Catch (Trusting Jesus with Your Future) (preacherspen.org/courses/31-days-with-jesus/)
- Preaching Library lessons and outlines: Why Do You Follow Jesus? (Matthew 7:28-29); Who Is Jesus? (John 20:30-31)
- Scripture: Luke 5:1-11; Matthew 4:18-22; John 1:43-51. All quotations from the New King James Version (NKJV).