FOLLOWING JESUS VBS · TEACHER GUIDE · GRADES 7-8

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

- Study Luke 5:1-11; Matthew 4:18-22; John 1:43-51 in context.
- Explain what Jesus’ call to follow Him costs (Luke 9:23) and examine their own reasons for following.
- Memorize Matthew 4:19.
- Write a specific, personal application.

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: Paper fish shapes; A piece of netting or a fishnet hung on the wall; Pens; Index cards

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
0:00-0:05	Opener	Discussion starter (below).
0:05-0:20	Bible study	Read the passages together and teach the lesson (script below).
0:20-0:30	Discussion	Small groups of 3 to 4 work through the discussion questions.
0:30-0:33	Memory verse	Write it from memory; discuss key words.
0:33-0:38	Study sheet	Begin the study sheet in pairs; finish the journal page at home.
0:38-0:40	Application and prayer	Each student names one action step. Prayer.

Discussion starter

What would it take for you to walk away from your plans, your phone, or your job today? What is worth leaving everything for?

Bible study

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.

Following Jesus begins with a call. In John 1:43 Jesus found Philip and said two words: "Follow Me." In the Gospels, the word follow is more than walking behind someone. A disciple followed a teacher to learn his words and copy his life. Jesus was inviting ordinary working men into a whole new way of living.

Luke 5:1-11 shows how that call worked in real life. Peter, Andrew, James, and John were professional fishermen on the Lake of Gennesaret. After a long night with empty nets, a carpenter from Nazareth told Peter how to fish. Peter's answer is the heart of discipleship: "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net" (Luke 5:5). Peter did not understand, but he obeyed.

The result was overwhelming: breaking nets and sinking boats. Peter's response is worth noticing. He did not ask for a business partnership. He fell on his knees and said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" (Luke 5:8). Seeing who Jesus is always shows us who we are. Yet Jesus answered with grace and purpose: "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men" (Luke 5:10).

The cost was real. They “forsook all and followed Him” (Luke 5:11). Peter and Andrew left their nets. James and John left their boat and their father (Matthew 4:20-22). Jesus later said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Luke 9:23).

Why do people follow Jesus? Some follow a crowd. Some follow out of habit or because their family always has (compare 2 Timothy 1:5, where Timothy’s faith had to become his own). Some followed Jesus only for the loaves and fish (John 6:26). The fishermen followed because they saw who He was. The real question for every teen is personal: Why do you follow Jesus, and will you follow Him when it costs you something?

Discussion questions

1. Peter said, “nevertheless at Your word.” Where do you find it hardest to obey Jesus when it does not make sense to you?
2. Why does seeing Jesus clearly make us aware of our own sin (Luke 5:8)?
3. What are the “nets” people your age hold onto instead of following Jesus?
4. Read Luke 9:23. What does it cost to follow Jesus daily?

Review

- What is the big idea of today’s lesson? (Jesus calls me by name to follow Him, and I can say yes and trust Him.)
- Quote Matthew 4:19.
- 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).

Memory verse activity

Have students write the verse from memory, then discuss its key words and how it connects to today’s text.

Craft (Craft Time): Leave Your Nets

Materials: Paper fish shapes; A piece of netting or a fishnet hung on the wall; Pens; Index cards

1. On a paper fish, each student writes one “net” (habit, distraction, or fear) that keeps people their age from following Jesus. (Keep it anonymous.)
2. Clip the fish to the net and read a few aloud for discussion.
3. On an index card, write Luke 9:23 and one specific step you will take this week.
4. Keep the card in your Bible as a reminder.

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.

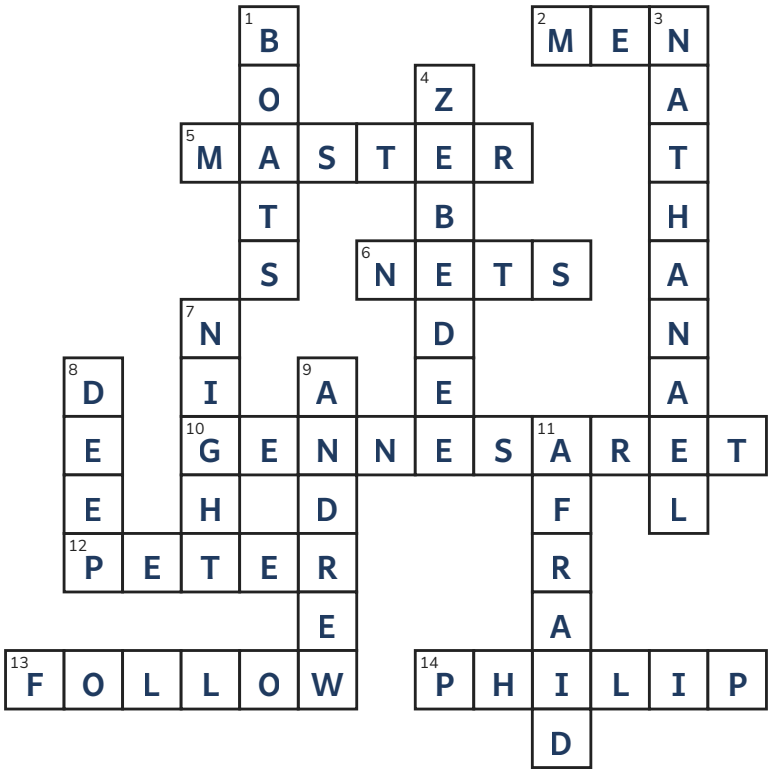
Snack: Fish-shaped crackers in a small paper boat or cup (“nets full of fish”) with water. Always check allergy information on registration cards before serving food.

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

Crossword



Across: 2 MEN; 5 MASTER; 6 NETS; 10 GENNESARET; 12 PETER; 13 FOLLOW; 14 PHILIP

Down: 1 BOATS; 3 NATHANAEL; 4 ZEBEDEE; 7 NIGHT; 8 DEEP; 9 ANDREW; 11 AFRAID

Word search



Study sheet

Answers come straight from the passages listed. Let students read the text aloud and answer in their own words; guide them back to the verse when needed.

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).