

REACH COMMUNITY CHURCH

Main Lesson, Activity & Discussion | Week 39 | September 27, 2026

Lesson Title	Jesus Calls His Disciples
Primary Scripture	Matthew 4:12-25
Primary Focus	Matthew 4:18-22
Timeline	Early in Jesus' public ministry
Big Idea	Jesus calls ordinary people to follow Him, and He changes His followers so they can help others know Him.

MEMORY VERSE

"Come, follow me." Matthew 4:19

MAIN LESSON NARRATIVE | Read Aloud to the Children

Imagine standing beside a huge lake early in the day.

You can hear water moving against the shore. Boats are nearby, and fishermen are busy with their work. Some are throwing nets into the water. Others are sitting in boats, checking their nets and getting them ready.

This is not a vacation for them.

Fishing is their job.

The place is called the Sea of Galilee. It is really a large freshwater lake, and many people who lived around it depended on fishing for their work.

Now imagine that you are one of those fishermen.

You know these waters. You know your boat. You know how the nets feel in your hands. You have probably done this work again and again.

Then Jesus comes walking along the shore.

We have already learned something very important about Jesus.

Do you remember what happened when Jesus was baptized?

Jesus came up from the water. The Holy Spirit descended upon Him like a dove. Then the Father spoke from heaven:

"This is my Son, whom I love." Matthew 3:17

We learned that God is one God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The One walking beside the Sea of Galilee today is that Son.

Jesus is God the Son.

Before Jesus came to the fishermen, He had also been tempted by Satan in the wilderness. Jesus was tempted, but He never sinned.

Now Jesus has begun preaching.

Matthew 4:17 tells us:

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

Do you remember what repent means?

It means recognizing our sin and turning toward God.

And now, as Jesus walks beside the water, He sees two brothers.

Their names are Simon Peter and Andrew.

Matthew tells us:

"They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen." Matthew 4:18

They are doing what fishermen do.

They are working.

And then Jesus speaks.

Listen carefully, because the first few words will be our memory verse this week.

Jesus says:

"Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people." Matthew 4:19

Let's say the first part together:

"Come, follow me." Matthew 4:19.

Again:

"Come, follow me." Matthew 4:19.

Those are only three words from Jesus.

But they are enormous words.

Come. Follow. Me.

Jesus does not simply say, "Peter, I have some interesting ideas I would like you to hear."

He does not say, "Andrew, here are ten rules that might make you a better person."

Jesus calls them to Himself.

"Come, follow me."

A person who follows Jesus is called a disciple.

That word might sound complicated, but its meaning is not.

A disciple is someone who belongs to Jesus, learns from Jesus, trusts Jesus, and follows Jesus.

Can we say that together?

Belongs to Jesus. Learns from Jesus. Trusts Jesus. Follows Jesus.

That is a disciple.

And Matthew tells us what Peter and Andrew did:

"At once they left their nets and followed him." Matthew 4:20

Jesus keeps walking.

A little farther down the shore, He sees two more brothers.

Their names are James and John.

They are sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, preparing their fishing nets.

Jesus calls them too.

Matthew 4:22 says:

"Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him."

Now maybe you have a question.

Maybe you are thinking, "Wait a minute. Did these men really see a stranger walking down the beach and suddenly leave with Him?"

That is a good question, and it gives us a chance to practice something important when we read the Bible.

We ask, What does the Bible really say?

Matthew tells us that Jesus called these men and that they followed Him.

Another book of the Bible, the Gospel of John, tells us about earlier times when Andrew and Peter had encountered Jesus.

So we should be careful not to make up details that the Bible does not give us. Matthew does not tell us every conversation these men ever had with Jesus.

It gives us this moment because Matthew wants us to see the authority of Jesus' call and the response of these fishermen.

The Bible is not hiding anything from us. Different Gospel writers sometimes tell us different details about the same people and events.

Think about your day at school.

If someone asked you what happened yesterday, you might say, "We had a fire drill."

Your friend might say, "We played soccer at recess."

Could both of you be telling the truth?

Of course.

You chose different true things to tell about the same day.

In the same way, one Gospel writer may tell us a detail another writer does not mention.

We do not need to be afraid of questions about the Bible.

We can look carefully at what Scripture actually says, compare Scripture with Scripture, and be honest when God has not given us every detail.

Now there is something else I want you to notice about these men.

What were they doing when Jesus called them?

Fishing.

They were ordinary working people.

Matthew does not tell us that Peter won a prize for being the greatest religious student in Galilee.

He does not tell us that Andrew was the smartest man in town.

James and John were not sitting on thrones.

They were working with fishing nets.

And if you keep reading about these disciples, you discover that they were not perfect people.

Sometimes they misunderstood Jesus.

Sometimes they argued.

Sometimes they became frightened.

Peter could be especially interesting.

Sometimes Peter seemed ready to do anything for Jesus, and other times he said exactly the wrong thing.

Eventually, Peter would become so frightened that he would deny even knowing Jesus.

Jesus knew what kind of people He was calling.

And He called them anyway.

That does not mean their sin did not matter.

Sin always matters because God is holy and good.

But it means Jesus was not searching the shore for people who had already fixed everything about themselves.

He was calling people who needed Him.

That is good news for us because we need Jesus too.

Sometimes we may imagine that Jesus only wants people who are already really good at being Christians.

Maybe you think, "I do not know enough Bible verses."

Or, "I still get scared."

Or, "I got angry this week."

Or maybe you did something you know was wrong and now you feel guilty about it.

We should never pretend our sin does not matter.

When we sin, we should tell God the truth and repent.

But we should also remember why Jesus came.

Jesus did not come because the world was already full of people who had made themselves perfect.

Jesus came to save sinners.

Romans 5:8 says:

"While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

That is one of the most wonderful truths in the Bible.

Jesus knows the truth about us.

And still He came to rescue sinners like us.

Now listen again to what Jesus said to Peter and Andrew:

"Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people." Matthew 4:19

Jesus uses words fishermen could understand.

They knew how to fish for fish.

Jesus tells them that He is going to give their lives a much bigger purpose. He will prepare them to help other people hear the good news about Him.

But there is a little part of that verse we could easily miss.

Jesus says:

"I will."

Jesus is going to do something in them.

He does not say, "Follow Me, and then figure out how to turn yourselves into perfect disciples."

He says:

"I will send you out to fish for people."

Jesus is going to teach them.

Jesus is going to change them.

Jesus is going to prepare them.

And they have a lot of changing ahead of them.

That is true for everyone who belongs to Jesus.

When you trust Jesus, He does not say, "Now fix yourself and come back when you are perfect."

He begins changing you.

The Holy Spirit works in people who belong to Christ, helping us grow to become more like Jesus.

Remember what we learned last week?

God is one God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Father sent the Son.

Jesus the Son came to save us.

And the Holy Spirit works in those who belong to Jesus.

That does not mean Christians suddenly become perfect.

Ask Peter.

He had a lot left to learn.

But Jesus did not give up on him.

Now you might wonder what following Jesus looks like for you.

After all, you probably do not own a fishing boat.

And I do not think your parents would be very happy if you came home today and said, "Jesus called fishermen away from their boats, so I am leaving home now."

That is not what this passage is telling you to do.

God has given children parents and caregivers to care for them, and Scripture tells children to honor and obey their parents.

Following Jesus as a child happens right in the middle of your real life.

It happens at home.

At school.

At practice.

On the playground.

With your friends.

With your brothers and sisters.

Suppose you break something at home and nobody sees you do it.

You could hide it.

You could blame somebody else.

Or you could remember:

I belong to Jesus. I want to follow Him, so I will tell the truth.

Suppose someone at school is sitting alone and your friends think that person is strange.

Following Jesus might mean showing kindness when everyone else walks past.

Suppose you become angry and say something cruel.

Following Jesus does not mean pretending it never happened.

It may mean admitting, "What I said was wrong. Will you forgive me?"

Suppose you are frightened at night.
Following Jesus does not mean pretending you are not afraid.
It means bringing that fear to Him.
You can pray, "Jesus, I am scared. Help me trust You."
Following Jesus does not mean we never struggle.
It means Jesus is the One we keep turning toward.
Let's say our memory verse again:
"Come, follow me." Matthew 4:19.
There is another part of following Jesus that we should notice.
Jesus said He would make these fishermen into people who would help others know Him.
That means the good news about Jesus is not something we need to hide.
Maybe you have a friend who asks why you go to church.
You do not need a giant speech.
You might simply say, "I go because I am learning about Jesus."
Maybe someone asks why Jesus matters so much.
You can tell them the best news in the world.
God made us and loves what is good, but all of us have sinned against Him.
We cannot save ourselves by trying to pile enough good deeds on top of our sin.
So God the Son came to us.
Jesus lived without sin.
Jesus died on the cross for our sins.
Jesus rose from the dead.
And everyone who turns from sin and trusts Jesus can be forgiven and receive new life.
That is the message these fishermen would eventually carry into the world.
But they did not understand all of that beside the lake yet.
They had a lot to learn.
They would watch Jesus teach.
They would see Him heal hurting people.
They would watch Him welcome people others ignored.
They would see His power.
They would hear His words.
They would also see things that confused them.
Then one terrible day, they would see Jesus arrested.
They would see Him crucified.
For a little while, it would look as if everything they had hoped for was gone.
But the cross would not be the end.
Jesus would rise.

The One who said, "Come, follow me," would walk out of the grave alive.

And later, the risen Jesus would send His followers into the world.

He would tell them in Matthew 28:19:

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations."

Do you see what Jesus was beginning beside the Sea of Galilee?

A few fishermen follow Jesus.

Jesus teaches them.

Jesus saves them.

Jesus changes them.

Then Jesus sends them to tell others.

Those people tell others.

And others tell others.

The good news begins moving outward.

Across towns.

Across countries.

Across languages.

Across generations.

Until one day, someone told people who told people who told people, and eventually someone told you about Jesus.

Isn't that remarkable?

We are talking about Jesus today because His good news did not stay beside the Sea of Galilee.

And Jesus still wants people to know Him.

Maybe one day God will send some of you to another country to tell people about Jesus.

Maybe you will serve Him in the town where you grew up.

Maybe you will become a teacher, a builder, a doctor, a mechanic, a parent, a pastor, an artist, a nurse, or something you have not even thought about yet.

You do not have to know all of that today.

What matters today is knowing the One who calls us.

Jesus.

And there is something important we need to understand before we finish.

Peter is not the hero of this account.

Andrew is not the hero.

James is not the hero.

John is not the hero.

Jesus is.

Peter could not save Peter.

Jesus could.

The disciples could not die for the sins of the world.

Jesus could.
The disciples did not conquer death.
Jesus did.
These fishermen would eventually do courageous things, but their hope was never their own courage.
Their hope was Jesus.
And that is our hope too.
Maybe you have failed this week.
Jesus is still the Savior sinners need.
Maybe you feel small.
Jesus has always worked through ordinary people.
Maybe you do not know enough.
You can learn from Jesus.
Maybe you are afraid.
You can ask the Holy Spirit for courage.
Maybe you have sinned.
You can turn from that sin and come honestly to Jesus.
Maybe you wonder whether Jesus could really want someone like you.
Remember Peter.
Jesus knew Peter completely when He called him.
And Jesus would eventually go to the cross for him.
Jesus knows us completely too.
We do not clean ourselves up enough to earn His rescue.
We come to Him because we need a Savior.
Then Jesus begins changing His people from the inside out.
So when you picture the Sea of Galilee this week, picture the boats.
Picture the nets.
Picture ordinary fishermen in the middle of an ordinary workday.
Then picture Jesus walking along the shore.
The most important Person there is not the strongest fisherman or the bravest disciple.
It is Jesus.
And listen once more to His words:
"Come, follow me." Matthew 4:19.
Jesus is worth following because Jesus is the Savior.
He died for our sins.
He rose again.
He is alive today.
He will never stop being King.

And one day He will return.

Until then, His followers have wonderful news to share.

Jesus saves sinners.

Jesus changes His people.

Jesus is alive.

And Jesus is worth following.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS WITH SUGGESTED ANSWERS

1. Where was Jesus when He called Peter and Andrew?

He was walking beside the Sea of Galilee. Matthew 4:18.

2. What were Peter and Andrew doing?

They were casting a fishing net into the lake because they were fishermen.

3. What did Jesus say to them?

"Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people." Matthew 4:19.

4. What is a disciple?

A disciple is someone who belongs to Jesus, learns from Jesus, trusts Jesus, and follows Jesus.

5. What did Jesus mean when He said He would send them out to "fish for people"?

Jesus would prepare His disciples to help other people hear the good news about Him and become His followers.

6. Were the disciples perfect people when Jesus called them?

No. As we continue through the Gospels, we see them misunderstand, become frightened, argue, and sin. They needed Jesus just as we do.

7. Who changes the people who follow Jesus?

God does. Jesus teaches and changes His followers, and the Holy Spirit works in believers to help us grow to become more like Christ.

8. Does following Jesus mean a child should leave home like the fishermen left their boats?

No. Scripture tells children to obey and honor their parents. Following Jesus as a child includes obeying God within the family and responsibilities He has given you.

9. What might following Jesus look like at school or at home?

It can include telling the truth, admitting when we are wrong, showing kindness, forgiving others, praying when we are afraid, obeying our parents, and choosing what Jesus says is right.

10. What should we do if someone asks a Bible question we cannot answer?

We can be honest and say, "I do not know. Let's see what the Bible says." We do not need to invent answers.

11. Why is Jesus the Hero rather than Peter or the other disciples?

Jesus is God the Son. He lived without sin, died for our sins, rose again, forgives sinners, and changes His followers. The disciples themselves needed Him to save them.

12. What is the good news we can tell other people?

God is holy and good, and we have sinned. We cannot save ourselves. Jesus is God the Son. He lived without sin, died for our sins, and rose again. Everyone who turns from sin and trusts Jesus can be forgiven and receive new life.

13. What is our memory verse?

"Come, follow me." Matthew 4:19.

14. What is the big truth we want to remember?

Jesus calls ordinary people to follow Him, and He changes His followers so they can help others know Him.

HANDS ON ACTIVITY | Follow the Leader: What Does Following Jesus Look Like?

Purpose: Help children understand that following Jesus is not merely copying physical movements. A disciple trusts Jesus, learns from Him, and increasingly lives according to His Word.

Supplies: Bible; several sheets of paper; marker or pen; optional tape.

Before class, write one simple situation on each sheet of paper:

Someone at school is sitting alone.

You broke something and nobody saw you.

Your brother or sister makes you angry.

A friend wants you to join in making fun of someone.

You are frightened about something.

Someone asks you why you believe in Jesus.

You have done something wrong and feel guilty.

Place the papers around the room.

Begin with a very short traditional game of Follow the Leader. Have the children copy a few simple, safe movements such as walking around a chair, raising a hand, turning around, or clapping.

After a minute or two, stop and ask: **"Is following Jesus just copying the way He walked?"**

Allow the children to answer.

Explain: **"No. We follow Jesus by trusting Him, learning what He teaches in the Bible, and obeying Him. The Holy Spirit helps those who belong to Jesus grow more like Him."**

Then move as a group to each situation paper.

Read the situation aloud and ask: **"If I belong to Jesus, what might following Him look like here?"**

Let the children suggest answers.

Help guide them toward biblical responses.

For the child sitting alone: **Show kindness and include them.**

For the broken object: **Tell the truth and accept responsibility.**

For anger: **Do not use anger as an excuse to hurt someone. Ask God for help and apologize when you sin.**

For making fun of someone: **Refuse to join cruelty and treat that person with kindness.**

For fear: **Tell God honestly that you are afraid and ask Him to help you trust Him.**

For a question about Jesus: **Tell what you know truthfully and kindly. It is also okay to say, "I don't know, but we can look at the Bible."**

For guilt after sin: **Do not hide or pretend. Confess your sin, turn toward God, and remember that Jesus came to save sinners.**

After all the situations, gather the children together and say: **"We do not do these things to make Jesus save us. We follow Jesus because He is our Savior. He loved us first, died for our sins, rose again, and changes those who belong to Him."**

Then ask: **"Who is the Hero?"**

Children answer: **"Jesus!"**

Ask: **"Who helps us grow?"**

Children answer: **"God!"**

Ask: **"What did Jesus say?"**

Children answer: **"Come, follow me!"**

Finish by reciting the memory verse together: **"Come, follow me." Matthew 4:19.**

TEACHER CLOSING

Children, those fishermen beside the Sea of Galilee did not know everything that was ahead of them.

They did not yet know all the places they would go.

They did not know all the things Jesus would teach them.

They did not know how often they would need His patience.

They did not yet understand the cross or the empty tomb.

But Jesus knew.

Jesus knew Peter would sometimes be brave and sometimes be afraid.

Jesus knew His disciples would sometimes understand and sometimes get things terribly wrong.

Jesus knew they were sinners who needed saving.

And He called them to Himself.

That is why our hope today is not, **"I am going to become the greatest disciple ever."**

Our hope is Jesus.

We can come to Him honestly.

We can trust Him.

We can learn His Word.

When we sin, we can repent and remember that Jesus died for sinners.

When we are afraid, we can ask the Holy Spirit to help us.

When we have questions, we can search God's Word.

And when someone else needs hope, we can point them toward the same Savior who rescued us.

Jesus did not remain dead.

He rose again.

He is alive.

He is King.

And He is still worth following.

Takeaway Truth: Jesus calls ordinary people to follow Him, and He changes His followers so they can help others know Him.

Memory Verse: "Come, follow me." Matthew 4:19.