



# Follow Me

**Goal: To identify ways God has called us to follow.**

## RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

### . . . In Luke 5:1-11, 27-28; 8:1-3

Jesus' calling of his disciples astonishes us in its simplicity. Jesus comes by and, in the case of Levi (or Matthew), says simply: "Follow me." And Levi "got up, left everything behind, and followed him" (vv. 27-28, CEB). To Simon Peter and his fishermen brothers, Jesus simply assured them: "Don't be afraid. From now on, you will be fishing for people" (v. 10, CEB).

Luke 8:1-3 is the only Gospel passage that mentions women disciples. Jesus talking to and including women in his teaching were actions unheard of for teachers of the time. Religious authorities would not have approved of women taking such an active part in Jesus' ministry.

Jesus called ordinary people to be disciples, to follow him, to learn from him, and to serve others in ways that Jesus demonstrated in his own life. The call was an act of grace. Folks did not earn or even desire that invitation! They were invited to be Jesus' disciples, and they responded. They left everything and followed him.

We, too, respond to Jesus' call to us. We do our best to follow Jesus, trusting that as we follow and serve as Jesus' disciples, the Spirit will be with us. Through it all, we live in deep gratitude.

### . . . In Your Children's Experiences

Children who grow up participating in the life of a faith community appreciate being called by name. The story of Jesus inviting people by name to follow him reminds us of the importance of naming, calling, and inviting.

In your time with the children, help them name the ways God is calling them to serve in the church and in their neighborhoods and schools. Remind them that God calls each one of them to serve, and those ways may not always look the same.

Children appreciate the chance to be contributors and leaders within the church. Look for ways the children are already doing God's work in your congregation and lift those up.

### . . . In Your Relationships with the Children

The children will enjoy thinking and talking about people they know who do God's work. Avoid discussing only people in full-time ministry. Think of others who do God's work.

Some children will immediately be able to tell you something they can do in leadership or in helping someone. Others are quieter, more contemplative, perhaps less confident: they need time to think. It will be important to help children find their own gifts for ministry.

Being in community supports all the children, and we need community just as Jesus needed his disciples. Invite the children to take turns telling one another, "Jesus calls you to . . ." As they leave, bless each one's gift, calling her or him by name, as Jesus would do.

*O Holy Spirit, guide my steps as I seek to follow Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Supplies

### Music & Melodies

[bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies](http://bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies)

### Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 11, 22, 23, 24

basic supplies  
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)  
(see p. vii)

internet-connected  
device

green cloth

candle

invited guest(s)

## Responding

### Claiming

ink pad, disposable wet  
wipes, magnifying glass

### Praying

three colors of string or  
ribbon

### Extra

copies of **Grace Notes**  
(GN) 1

## GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule,” to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example,  ) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

Before the session, invite one or two parents or caregivers of the children to come and share why he or she follows Jesus.

“Claiming God’s Grace” requires more prep.

### Welcoming and Preparing

Greet the children by name and with the words “Grace be with you, beloved child of God.” Prompt them to say the same words to you.

Comment that today’s story takes place in and near a fishing boat on the water.

Invite the children to set the scene by drawing or using available materials to suggest a boat, a fishing net, and several fish. Ask them to make the boat large enough for everyone to sit inside. Include a Bible, green cloth, and a candle.

Write the following names on separate index cards: Jesus, Simon Peter, Bartholomew, Thomas, Judas, Levi, Philip, James, John, Andrew, Joanna, Susanna, and Mary Magdalene. Make duplicates if there are more than fourteen children.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities and suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

Welcome your guest(s) and tell the children that after the story, your guest(s) will share their own story. Include your guest(s) in the activities as they feel comfortable.

### Singing

Invite the children to gather on the fishing boat. Admire their efforts to create it.

Listen to and sing “We Are Dancing in the Love of God (Danzaremos en amor de Dios)—**SCM 24**—to celebrate that we belong to Jesus. Invite the children to dance as they praise and celebrate God’s love. This is a bilingual song (English; Zulu/Xhosa). Help the children learn the song by singing the words one phrase at a time and asking them to repeat.

### Praying

Invite the children to join an echo prayer and invite a child to lead the prayer.

Dear God, /  
you have called us to follow. /

Fill us with your Spirit. /  
Fill us with your light, /  
Jesus Christ, our Lord. /  
Amen. /

**LG** *Communication is key to leadership and relationships. By nurturing communication skills, children are given the ability to build relationships and inspire others.*

### Preparing to Hear the Story **LG**

Play “Follow the Leader.” Invite several children to take turns being the leader. At the end of the game, ask the children how it felt to be a leader and a follower. Ask what they liked about each role.

Explain that the word *disciple* means “follower.” Remind the children that Jesus was a leader who had many followers.

Tape one of the index cards on each child and read the names aloud. Give children more than one card or use duplicates as necessary. Invite the children to stand and say which disciple(s) they are. Invite them to listen to the story about the people Jesus called to follow him.

### Hearing the Story **M L**

Invite a child to find Luke 5 in the Bible and place the open Bible on the worship table. Read **SCM 11** or use the story audio. Conclude by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt the children to say, “Thanks be to God.”

Ask the child who is wearing the Jesus card to stand up. Invite the rest of the children to sit where they can see the child playing Jesus. Suggest that they listen for the names of their characters as you read the story again. When their characters are mentioned, they stand up and join Jesus.

### Reflecting on God’s Grace

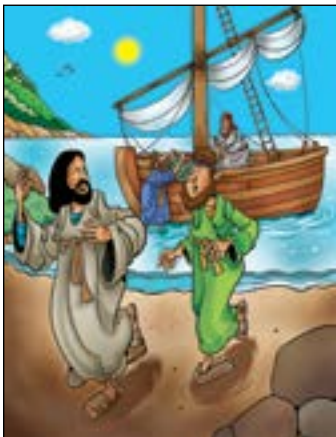
Invite everyone to be seated. Help the children name where they see God’s grace in the story of Jesus calling the disciples.

Comment that Jesus’ disciples traveled with him and helped him feed people who were hungry, heal those who were sick, and teach about God’s love. They prayed together and worshiped God together. The disciples learned many things from Jesus.

Jesus calls us to follow him in showing God’s love and grace. Remember: God’s grace is a love bigger than we can imagine. Suggest that we are all disciples of Jesus, because we all want to learn about him and to help bring about a world of peace and justice.

Invite your guest(s) to share why they follow Jesus. Allow the children to ask questions if they have any. Thank your guest(s).

Seeing where the story is found in the Bible reinforces the importance of this book for the church.



Today’s story as told in Matthew’s gospel can be found in *Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), [www.pcusastore.com](http://www.pcusastore.com).

### Singing

Sing “Jesus Taught Us How to Love” to celebrate how we are Jesus’ followers. As you sing, point out the words on **SCM 23** so the children can follow along. Use repetition.

Turn off the candle.

- C** *For some children, listening and speaking may take longer. Make time for these children to participate in the session. Be patient and encourage other children to do the same.*

## RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.



### Claiming God’s Grace

**TD C**

Ask the children to name as many of the disciples as they can. Write their responses on newsprint. Point out that women were among the first followers of Jesus. Invite the children to name other people who follow Jesus. Help them think of people in their own community, church, and family. List those people on the newsprint.

Invite each child to place a finger on an ink pad and then make a fingerprint on the newsprint along with their name. Clean fingers with disposable wet wipes. Encourage the children to look at the fingerprints through a magnifying glass, noting how each one is different.

Suggest that just as fingerprints have similar patterns, no two fingerprints are actually alike. They are all unique and special.

Ask the children to share something that is unique or special about each of them. Brainstorm how they can use what is special about them to be a follower of Jesus.

### Celebrating God’s Grace

**M MS A**

Play a game to help the children identify ways they can follow Jesus. The children will follow your actions at first. Encourage them to add other ways they can follow Jesus. Begin by standing in a circle and having the children rhythmically stomp their feet and clap their hands (stomp, stomp, clap; stomp, stomp, clap). Invite them to echo the simple chant, then the action and motions. Repeat the stomp, stomp, clap twice after each action, allowing time for them to think of additional actions. Some examples are provided, but encourage creativity from the children.

We can follow Jesus . . . /  
by taking dishes from the table. / (*Pantomime taking dishes from a table.*)



We can follow Jesus . . . /  
by picking up our toys. / (*Pantomime putting toys in a box.*)  
We can follow Jesus . . . /  
by greeting people at church. / (*Wave hello and pretend to shake a hand.*)  
We can follow Jesus . . . /  
by praying for a sick friend. / (*Hold hands like praying.*)

Challenge the children to follow Jesus in the ways they have identified during the coming week.

**M** *Children requiring more movement than others can benefit from dynamic activities. Set clear expectations about boundaries for appropriate movement to position these children for success.*

### Praying God's Grace

**A MS M**

Invite the children to participate in a prayer litany. Give each child a length of brightly colored ribbon using the colors referenced in the litany. Invite the children to listen and move with their ribbons as they respond with: "Thank you for calling us, Jesus."

Leader: Jesus, we hear you calling us to follow you.  
(*Children with blue ribbons skip and twirl.*)

**All children: Thank you for calling us, Jesus.**

Leader: Jesus, we hear you calling us to follow you.  
(*Children with red ribbons dance and swing.*)

**All children: Thank you for calling us, Jesus.**

Leader: Jesus, we hear you calling us to follow you.  
(*Children with green ribbons sway and rock.*)

**All children: Thank you for calling us, Jesus.**

Leader: Jesus, we hear you calling us to follow you.  
(*Children who love to sing skip and twirl.*)

**All children: Thank you for calling us, Jesus.**

Leader: Jesus, we hear you calling us to follow you.  
(*Children who help others jump up high.*)

**All children: Thank you for calling us, Jesus.**

Leader: Jesus, we hear you calling us to follow you.  
(*Children who show kindness lift hands high.*)

**All children: Thank you for calling us, Jesus.**

Leader: Jesus, we hear you calling us to follow you. (*Children who like to make people smile, stomp your feet and swish your ribbons.*)

**All children: Thank you for calling us, Jesus.**

Leader: And all God's children say, "Amen."

### Extra Activity



Tell the children that just like the disciples in the story, we are called to follow Jesus. Ask the children if they can think of ways to be a disciple.

Hand out copies of **GN 1** and colored pencils. Read or invite a volunteer to read aloud the verse at the bottom of the page.

Review the ways the children named to be a disciple and see if they match the suggestions on the page. Invite the children to write or draw ways they can do each suggestion in the five sections of the foot as a plan for how they can be a disciple.

Pray together:

Lord, help me be a disciple. Amen.

Encourage the children to take the foot home and hang it in their room as a reminder to follow Jesus.

## LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Sing "I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me"—**SCM 22**—as a way to affirm that we are all called to follow Jesus.

Invite children to think about something that each of them does to follow Jesus. Explain that this can be as simple as saying something kind to someone else.

Invite each child to complete the sentence, "I follow Jesus by . . ." If children have difficulty completing the sentence, help them by adding qualities you have identified in them.

End this time of affirmation by saying: "We are all disciples of Jesus. Go in grace and serve God."



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to [www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads](http://www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads), where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).

# Ways I can be a disciple:

Pray for someone.

PRAY

Help someone.

HELP

Tell someone about God.

TELL

Read a Bible story.

READ

Worship God.

WORSHIP

Jesus said, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people."  
—Luke 5:10b

