



Fishers of People

Goal: To follow Jesus' call to discipleship.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Matthew 4:18–22

The devil has tempted Jesus in the wilderness (vv. 1–17). His responses show his complete dedication to the will and purpose of God. Now he withdraws from “Nazareth” (v. 13) to “Capernaum.” Matthew shows Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies: he quotes Isaiah (vv. 15–16) to show that Jesus is the Messiah. (In Isaiah, the “sea” is the Mediterranean; here it is the Sea of Galilee.) “From that time” (v. 17) marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry.

In verses 18–22, Jesus calls the first four disciples. Fishermen of that day were often thought of as crude and rough in speech and in their dealings with others. “I will make you fishers for people” (v. 19) emphasizes that the task of becoming disciples is not one that we accomplish; Jesus makes disciples. Jesus, the teacher, invites four fishers to follow him—“Hey, come on! Let's go!”—speaking in their terms (“fish for people,” v. 19). They give up their trade, the source of their livelihood, and “immediately” (v. 20) follow him.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

When do children experience “calls”? They're called to supper, called on the phone, called by name. Early in life, they learn about the calls of animals. They may also hear the word in church, such as the call to worship or the call to confession. Ministers are called to serve a congregation. In all of these examples, children learn that call is related to relationships. They learn to trust the voices of those who call them. Conversely, they come to distrust the voices of those who lie and betray. Children learn that those who call their names with love and respect in their voices are their people.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Help the children connect their experience of calling or being called to the story of Jesus calling the first disciples. What did Jesus' voice sound like? Was it happy, sad, or angry? What does your mother's voice sound like? If another calls, does the voice sound familiar? Also, remind the children that when we're called, it often means that someone is asking us to do something, such as come to the dinner table or take out the garbage. It's the same thing with Jesus calling his disciples; he would make them fishers of people. If appropriate, tell the children a personal call story.

*God, you call each of us to discipleship.
May I help others hear Jesus' call to follow him. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 8, 8a, 21, 22

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

candle

green cloth

fishing net

Responding

Celebrating

SCM 8b, 8c; blue cloth
or tablecloth

Praying

world map or globe,
1-inch squares of
colored tissue paper

Offering

googly eyes (optional)

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, **LG** **T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

“Celebrating God’s Grace” and “Praying God’s Grace” require more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

LG **LD**

Welcome each child with, “Grace and peace be with you, (Name).” Prompt children to respond, “And also with you.”

Invite children to help prepare the worship space. Provide a Bible, a green cloth, and a candle. Invite the children to create a mural for the backdrop of today’s story with mural paper, blue tissue paper, brown construction paper, fishing net, glue sticks, and markers. Encourage them to make the water with the blue tissue paper and a large boat with the brown construction paper. They could add waves, a sunny sky, a net over the boat, people in the boat, fish in the water and the net, and so forth.

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

As they prepare the space, discuss what fishing is like now—with a rod and reel—and what fishing was like in Jesus’ day—casting a net. Consider the advantages and disadvantages. Ask which one requires a group of people and which can be done alone.

Singing

L **SD**

Play, listen to, clap, and dance to “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus in the Morning”—**SCM 21**.

Praying

L

Gather in a circle and turn on the candle as a reminder of the light of Jesus in the world. Ask children to consider ways that they follow Jesus. Invite the children to pray the following echo prayer with you:

God, help us to follow Jesus. /
Help us to obey your call. /
Grant us grace to love your children as we serve you. /
Amen. /

T Consider setting up a quiet space as a great way to limit auditory, visual, and other input. It can be as simple as a pillow or comfortable chair off to one side of the room. Children can use the space to regroup and calm down.



Preparing to Hear the Story

L C

Display **SCM 8a**. Read the definitions aloud. Invite the children to share examples of obeying or being a student or follower of someone.

Add the poster to the worship space. Tell the children that today's story is about Jesus' first followers.



Today's story 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.

Hearing the Story

L LD B C

Have a child find Matthew 4 in the Bible. Place the open Bible on the worship table. Read **SCM 8** or use the story audio. Conclude by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Invite the children to act out the story as you read it again. Pause and let the children fill in the scenes. Encourage the children to add actions and dialogue as they imagine the scene.

Reflecting on God's Grace

L C

Engage the children in conversation about the story by using the following questions:

- ▼ What do you think made Peter and Andrew, and James and John, leave their nets and follow Jesus?
- ▼ What did Jesus mean when he said he would make them "fish for people"?
- ▼ What do you think Jesus and Peter, Andrew, James, and John talked about as they walked away from the fishing nets?
- ▼ What was your favorite part of the story?
- ▼ What does this story tell us about Jesus?
- ▼ What are some ways you can be a disciple of Jesus?

C *For some children, listening and speaking may take longer. Allow time for these children to feel truly a part of the session. Be patient and encourage other children to do the same.*

Singing

Remind the children that Jesus calls his disciples to spread his message about God's love, giving light to others. Sing "Jesus Bids Us Shine"—**SCM 22**—to affirm our call as disciples.

Turn off the candle.



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

- LD** *Don't assume what children can or cannot do with regard to participating in activities. Think of multiple ways children may be able to participate without feeling excluded.*



Celebrating God's Grace

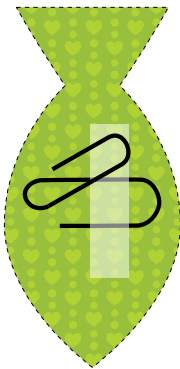
VI F LD A B

*Before the session, cut apart the cards on **SCM 8b** and **SCM 8c**. For each card, open a paper clip at a right angle and tape one side to the fish. This will make the loop to catch the fish.*

Play a fishing game to review the story and consider how we are disciples of Jesus. Ask the children how Jesus' first disciples fished. (*They used a net.*) Explain that the children will be playing a fishing game, using a fishing pole instead of a net. Wonder what the differences might be between fishing with a net and a pole.

Give the children a straw, a paper clip, string, and tape. Have them cut a piece of string, about the length of their arm from shoulder to fingers, and tape one end of the string to one end of their straw. Show the children how to pull one end of the paper clip out to make a hook. Instruct them to tie the paper clip to the other end of the string.

Place a blue cloth or plastic tablecloth on the floor and spread the fish around on it, question side down. Invite the children to gather with their fishing poles around the "sea" you have created. Have them take turns hooking a fish. Read the question aloud on the other side of the fish and invite the child, and others to help if necessary, to answer the question. You may play until all the questions have been answered, or you can throw the fish back in the sea and answer questions again.



Praying God's Grace

TD

Before the session, cut a variety of colors of tissue paper into approximately 1-inch squares.

Draw attention to a world map or globe, and note how colorful the map is. Acknowledge that God's creation is like that too: colorful and diverse. Provide sheets of card stock and invite each of the children to trace their foot. Suggest that, just as Jesus called the first disciples, he calls us to "follow him." Encourage a time of silent prayer, inviting the children to pray that they will be followers of Jesus and that God will use them to share the good news of Jesus with others. Tell the children that, as they pray, they can glue colored tissue paper squares to their footprint to remind them of the colorful and diverse world in which they will be "fishers of people."



TD T A B

Offering God's Grace

Reflect on the ways that Jesus' first disciples were obedient. Wonder together what in the story shows that the fishermen were obedient. Comment that the disciples obeyed Jesus by responding to the call to follow him. Wonder what other things they did to obey Jesus.

Tell the children that they are going to make a fish banner, inviting people in the congregation to be "caught" and follow Jesus.

Provide mural paper and title it, "Caught by Jesus!" Have the children paint their hand and make a handprint "fish" on the mural paper. The heel of their palm will be the head of the fish, and their fingers will be the fins and tails of the fish. Encourage them to place their handprints horizontally, in either direction, on the mural paper so that it looks like the fish are swimming to the left and right. Instruct the children to make several handprints. They can either paint their hand the same color and repeat or wash off their hand and use a different color.

While the paint is drying, the children can add seaweed, waves, sand, and shells to the picture with crayons or markers.

After the paint has dried, invite the children to add details to their fish by adding a smile, an eye, and some gills with a permanent marker. Tell the children to write their name on one fish.

Display the mural on a wall or bulletin board in a common area, with a sign encouraging others to add their name to a fish.

T *Washing hands can take time! Waiting in line for the sink may make some children anxious. Devise a routine for your group so they know what to expect. Use a song, movement poem, or physical activity to match the time required.*

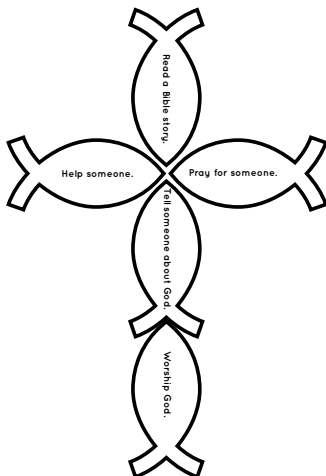
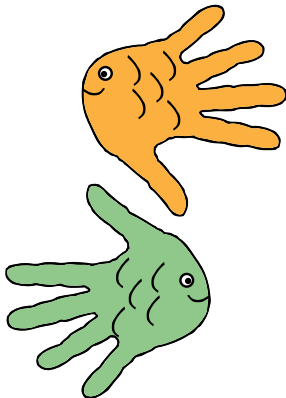
Extra Activity

L LD LG

Make a cross as a reminder of ways to follow Jesus. Hand out copies of **GN 1**. Have volunteers read aloud the ways to follow. Allow time for children to color each of the fish and cut them out. Have the children select a sheet of construction paper to use as a background. Show the children how to make the fish into a cross by gluing one fish pointing down in the center top of the paper. Glue two fish pointing up to meet that fish. Glue the remaining two fish pointing to the intersection.

Encourage the children to take the cross home and share the ways they can be Jesus' followers with their families.

Consider gluing on googly eyes to add interest.





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

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Invite the children to gather, and lead them in cleaning up the worship space.

Gather the children in a circle. Invite them to close their eyes and imagine Jesus calling them by name and saying, “Come, follow me!” Pause and suggest that they consider their response, both what they might say and what they might do. Encourage the children to consider ways they can be a follower of Jesus by thinking about one way they could learn more about Jesus and one person they could share the love of Jesus with this week.

Send each child with a blessing, “(Name), Jesus calls you to follow him. Go in God’s grace, faithful disciple.”

Encourage children to join you again next week.



Pray for someone.



Help someone.



Tell someone about God.



Read a Bible story.



Worship God.

