

Lesson 1

GOD IS CALLING PEOPLE



SCRIPTURE: Mark 1:16-20: Mark 2:13-17

MEMORY VERSE:

John 1:12—Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

KEY THEMES:

- The appropriate response to the call of God is to follow Him
- It is an undeserved privilege to be a child of God; it is worth more than anything else
- God calls sinful people

TEACHER PREPARATION:

VISUALS/MATERIALS NEEDED:

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| ◆ Bible | or clothing (i.e. stethoscope, lab coat, thermometer) |
| ◆ nametags (See Resource Packet 1-a) | ◆ safety pin or tape |
| ◆ six identical items (i.e., plates, pieces of stationary, candy bars) | ◆ bandage (or just a strip of white cloth) or a sling (or just a large, triangular-shaped piece of white material) |
| ◆ signs: "bigger," "more valuable," "prettier," "more durable" (See Resource Packet 1-b, c, d, e) | ◆ heartbeat, x-ray and strong arm pictures (See Resource Packet 1-i, j, k) |
| ◆ Bible people pictures (See Resource Packet 1-f, g) | ◆ five one-dollar bills (or use any denomination of play money and adjust the figures in the lesson as necessary) |
| ◆ medical badge (See Resource Packet 1-h) and if available, other medical equipment | ◆ materials for chosen activities |

Study the scripture passages carefully and prayerfully. Ask God to make them real in your own heart. Be open to what God may be teaching you in this lesson. Study the lesson well. Pray for the children in your class.

Copy the nametag sheet and cut out the nametags. You may want to color them or leave them for the children to color. After they are colored, you may wish to laminate them. Attach the nametags with a pin, tape, or ribbon or elastic. Punch holes in the nametag and weave the ribbon or elastic through the holes. Wear the nametag like a necklace. If you use this method, you may wish to remove the nametags before any active activity.)

You may want to color the Bible people pictures and cut them out. Attach the pin or the tape to the medical badge.

INTRODUCTION:

Call a child to the front. Show him the six identical items. Ask him to choose one of the items. Then question him as to why he chose the item that he chose. Establish that all the items are the same; there is nothing better about any one item that it should be chosen. The importance of the item is that it was chosen by the person. For example

*Why did you choose this (item). Is it better than the others? Is it **bigger**? Is it more **valuable**—is it worth more money? Is it **prettier**? Is it more **durable**—will it last longer than the other ones? This (item) is not bigger or more valuable, or prettier or more durable than the other ones. What makes it important now is that it is the one that you chose. You were the “chooser” and you gave it importance. You could have chosen another one, but you didn’t. You chose this one and that makes it special and important.*

You may want to show signs as you talk about each quality.

LESSON:

Explain that God is also choosing. He is choosing and calling people to be His very own people—to be part of His family. (Show the Bible people pictures. Point to Bible characters as you mention them.) *Some of them you might know about because you can read their stories in God’s book, the Bible: Noah, Abraham, Sarah, David, Daniel, Mary, Joseph and Peter. Were they chosen by God because they were more special than other people? No, they were just ordinary people, no better than anyone else. It was the choosing by God that made them special and important.*

If the children you are teaching do not know who these Bible characters are, it is not necessary to explain. The main point that you want to make is that they had no merit of their own. See Deuteronomy 7:7-8.

Tell the children the story of the calling of the first disciples from *Mark 1:16-20*. If they have Bibles, have them follow along, or ask five children to each read one verse.

Mark 1:16-- And as He was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen.

Mark 1:17-- And Jesus said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.”

Mark 1:18-- And they immediately left the nets and followed Him.

Mark 1:19-- And going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets.

Mark 1:20-- And immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him.

Make the following points from the passage:

- Jesus called Simon, Andrew, James, and John to be His special friends, to share His work, and to be a part of the family of God.
- Simon, Andrew, James, and John did not hesitate when Jesus called. They followed Him immediately.
- Simon, Andrew, James, and John left everything to answer Jesus’ call.

Ask the children why they think that these men did not hesitate and willingly left everything. [What Jesus was offering was so much better than what they had; to hear the call of Jesus and to follow Him is more wonderful than anything else.] When God calls, the right response is to follow Him.

Call three children up to the front. Give one of them the medical badge to pin or tape onto his shirt. (If you have medical equipment or clothing they can also be used as props for this person.) Bandage the arm of the other person. Give the heartbeat, x-ray, and strong arm pictures to the third child. As you identify each person, talk about their role. For example:

(Pin or tape the medical badge on the first child.) *Who do you think this is? Right. He is a doctor. And he is a very good doctor. He knows all kinds of things. He knows how to put a cast on a broken arm, check ears for ear infections, he can listen to a heartbeat and know if a heart is healthy, and all kinds of other things.*

(Wind the bandage around the second child's arm or place his arm in a sling.) *Now this person is in kind of bad shape. He was playing baseball and slid into first base. Unfortunately, he slid on his arm and now his arm really hurts. In fact, it hurts so much that it is possible that it is broken.*

Now this guy, on the other hand, is in great shape. His heartbeat is strong and regular. (Give the heartbeat sign to the child, or pin or tape it to his chest.) *No heart problem here. His heart is in great shape.* (Give the child the xray, or pin or tape it to his chest.) *No broken ribs—no broken bones anywhere.* (Give the child the arm picture, or pin or tape the arm to his arm.) *And look at those arms. He looks like he has been lifting weights. Yep, this guy is one healthy guy.*

Ask the children to which person the doctor will give his attention. *Why?* Make the point that if you are healthy, you don't need a doctor. Sick people need doctors. Doctors help sick people.

Explain that just like the doctor would go to help the sick person (point to the doctor and the sick person), so Jesus came to help people who need Him. He came for sick people.

Tell the children the story of the calling of Levi from *Mark 2:13-17*. If they have Bibles, have them follow along, or ask five children to each read one verse.

Mark 2:13-- And He went out again by the seashore; and all the multitude were coming to Him, and He was teaching them.

Mark 2:14-- And as He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax office, and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he rose and followed Him.

Mark 2:15-- And it came about that He was reclining at the table in his house, and many tax-gatherers and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him.

Mark 2:16-- And when the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax-gatherers, they began saying to His disciples, "Why is He eating and drinking with tax-gatherers and sinners?"

Mark 2:17-- And hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

NOTES

Explain that Levi was a tax collector—He went to people and collected the money that they owed in taxes. In Jesus' day, many of the tax collectors were dishonest and greedy. So they cheated the people. For example, if a person owed three dollars (show bills), a tax collector might collect five dollars from him (show two extra bills). Then he would turn in the three dollars the person owed but he would keep the two extra dollars.

(You might want to place the three dollars in a box or on a table, and put the two dollars in your pocket.)

Make the following points from the story:

- Jesus called Levi, knowing that Levi was a tax collector.
- Jesus called Levi to follow Him even though Levi did bad things—even though Levi was a sinner. Levi was "sick" spiritually—He did not love God or follow God or do what was right.
- Jesus came to invite sick, sinful people into the family of God.

If the terms "sinner" and "sinful" are unfamiliar terms to the children you are teaching, you will need to explain them.

We are all sick, sinful people, even if we think and feel we are healthy.

APPLICATION:

Do you think that it is important to be in the family of God? Is it more important to be in the family of God than in your family? Why?

Do you think that you deserve to be in the family of God? Why?

What do you think it means to "follow Jesus"?

Discuss the memory verse.

Application can most effectively be done in a small group setting. The questions are just suggestions of possible directions to take the discussion. Pray for wisdom and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you. Be sensitive to the answers and the needs of the children.

Be sure to pray for the children and encourage them to pray for each other.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Children can decorate the border of the memory verse and color in the words. (See Resource Packet 1-l) While they are creating the border, discuss the memory verse with them.
2. Children can draw pictures of Bible people as well as present day people on the section of the poster that corresponds to the lesson (GOD IS CALLING PEOPLE TO FOLLOW HIM). Or, they can use people stickers or stamps. Portions of the border and THE CALL OF GOD letters can also be colored each day.
3. Children can cut out and unscramble the letters to spell FOLLOW ME (See sheet in Resource Packet 1-m, n) Then they can glue the letters to the sheet with the picture of Jesus. If desired, they may also color and decorate the sheet. As they are working, discuss the call of Jesus to His disciples and their response. Once the children have unscrambled the word, discuss how the disciples followed Jesus. Ask the children what they might need to give up in order to follow Jesus or what they would be willing to give up.
4. You may want to have someone come and share his testimony of how God called him to be His child.
5. Divide the class into two equal teams. Assign the same Bible character name to one child on each team. (For example, there will be one "Abraham" on each team. Suggested names are: Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Miriam, Aaron, Samuel, Deborah, David, Daniel, Esther, Daniel, Nehemiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, Elizabeth, Mary, Joseph, Peter, John, Matthew, Luke, Paul, and Dorcas.) Line the children up facing each other. (Do not match pairs.) You will need a tennis ball. Place the ball in the middle and call the name of a Bible character. The two people with that name must run to the middle and try to be the first to get the ball. The person who grabs the ball first gains a point for his team.

Variation: Roll the ball into the middle as you call the name.

Variation: Place the children in a circle rather than in two rows.

Remind the children that just as their response to your call to them should be immediate and positive, so they should respond the same way to the call of God.

6. Set up an obstacle course. Make it difficult or unpleasant in spots. (For example, lead the children under a low object forcing them to crawl on their bellies.) Have the children line up and tell them, "Follow me." Periodically as you are leading them through the course repeat the phrase, "Follow me." When you are finished talk about when it was difficult to follow. Ask the children if they were tempted to side step an obstacle and go their own way. Talk about what Jesus meant when He said, "Follow me."
7. Ask each child to print his name on a slip of paper. Place all the slips in a hat or other container. Line the children up side by side. Draw a finish line the distance away that you would for a relay race. Explain that the goal of the game is to get to the finish line first. Each time you call a person's name, that person may take three giant steps. Pull names from the hat. After a name is read, the name should be returned to the hat. Remind the children that they cannot respond unless they are called. Tell them that just as you are calling them, so God calls people. (Note: If there are many children playing the game, you will need to call the names rapidly so that the game does not drag on.)

NOTES

Variation: Rather than three giant steps each time, vary the instructions (i.e. baby steps, frog jumps, hops, etc.). Be sure to give the instruction before the name is called.

8. Play a memory verse game. (See Appendix.)
9. If you have not already done so, the children can color their nametags.

SEND HOME :

- Parent page

