

Mark 1:14-39; 2:13-17; 3:13-19

Aim of lesson:

To show the meaning of discipleship and how Jesus chose all kinds of people to be his disciples.

Background study

John 1:35-51; 15:14-17.

Suggested outline of lesson

Qualities of discipleship

You may like to begin this lesson by asking the children what a disciple is. A dictionary definition is: "a follower, one who takes another as teacher and model". The children may be familiar with the word discipline. Show how this word is linked, and that discipleship is more than mere friendship. It is a commitment, requiring devotion, obedience and service. Then ask the question: "What type of men do you think Jesus would choose for disciples?" Would he choose only the cleverest men, those highly educated who would quickly understand his message? Would he choose only the richest people who would make his mission easier in material terms? Would he choose men who were important and well-known, so that they would be in a position to influence others? The answer is simply no. The men Jesus chose came from all walks of life. They ranged from hard-working fishermen to an unpopular tax-collector.

Discipleship is commitment

Briefly remind the children about John the Baptist. John had seen Jesus again (after the temptation) and he had turned to two of his own disciples and said, "Behold the Lamb of God". These two men, one of whom was Andrew, were interested in what John the Baptist had said, and they followed Jesus. When they heard what Jesus had to say, they were sure he was the Messiah, and the Son of God. Andrew went to tell his brother, Peter, the important news, and then brought him to Jesus. The young men talked over what Jesus had told them. If they decided to follow Jesus, there was to be much hard work ahead; they must think over seriously what he had said.

Jesus needed disciples

Recall the experiences of Jesus in being tempted to use God's power in the wrong way and how he overcame this temptation. With firm resolve he began the work which God, his Father, had set him to do. Explain that, in order to spread the message of God's kingdom, he needed the support of close associates whom he could instruct fully and to whom he could entrust the work when his ministry came to an end. Indicate on a map the Galilean area where Jesus began his preaching. Point out that Simon, his brother and his cousins,

having already responded to John's preaching, had returned to their homes in Galilee, where they earned their living by fishing. How many hours during the long nights working on the lake had they talked about their meeting with the man whom John had said was the long-expected Messiah of Israel?

Fishers of men

Describe their reactions when, one morning as they returned to shore, they saw and heard Jesus and answered his call to become fishers of men. They were ready and eager to follow this special man, whom they recognised to be the Son of God. This was more important to them now than their fishing. Just as they had had to learn the work of sailing and fishing, so now they needed to learn how to bring men to understand the kingdom of God, about which Jesus taught. Jesus took great pains to teach them, not only with words but by example.

Relevance to the children's lives

Jesus is alive today. The work of preaching still goes on and new disciples are still being called. How do we hear the call of Jesus? How do we know what we must do if we wish to follow him? Some of the first disciples wrote down what they saw and heard so that we can read and learn what they learned.

Disciples are individuals

Relate the incident of the healing in the synagogue. The congregation was already stirred by the powerful way in which Jesus had taught them, and the curing of the demented young man, no doubt a person familiar to them all, would have caused a sensation. News of the miraculous happening spread quickly through the region.

The healing of Simon's mother-in-law is worthy of note, and no doubt the four disciples were moved by Jesus' compassion for her, and for the many sick who were brought to him. Now, more than ever before, they were sure that Jesus was God's son, because only with God's power could such miracles be performed. Mention also the example that Jesus set them of the need to pray, an example that they were to witness frequently throughout their time with him.

In describing the call of Levi, explain how much the people of Israel disliked tax-collectors. The religious leaders, in particular, looked down on them and criticised Jesus for associating with them. They could not imagine God having any concern for people who were hated as traitors and despised because of their not uncommon dishonesty. Jesus, on the other hand, was not impressed by outward appearances, but held out the love of God to all who were sincerely seeking it. His words (Mark 2:17) pointedly expressed this idea to his critics. Explain that Levi's other name was Matthew, and that he is thought to be the author of the first gospel.

Twelve disciples chosen in total

Having described how Jesus called specific disciples, explain that he chose others in a similar way, until he had selected twelve. (The children might be able to recall another group of twelve men, in the Old Testament). These twelve were from different walks of life, and were specially chosen to be Jesus' closest friends, although many others also

became close followers. The list of these twelve would provide opportunity for class work. The children may care to write out their own list of names and then endeavour to memorise them.

Worksheets

The letters in number order read 'Follow me and I will make you fishers of men'.

Prayer

Dear Lord God, thank you for the faith of Jesus' disciples. Help us to follow Jesus and to love him all we can. Amen.

Memory verse

"Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men'" (Mark 1:17).