

The Disciples

Lesson At-a-Glance

Scripture Reference

**Matthew 4:12-23; 9:9-13;
10:1-4**

Lesson Focus

Jesus calls us to follow him.

Bible Memory Verse

**"[Jesus said,] 'Follow me, and I
will make you fish for people.'"
Matthew 4:19**

Gather (10 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Arrival Activity Kids play Duck-Duck-Repent to learn a new word.	Spark Activity Pages, Spark Coloring Pages	Colored pencils
Circle Time Kids learn what a disciple is and play a version of "The Hokey Pokey."	Spark Song CD, Spark Songbook	Music source
Opening Prayer Kids say a follow-on prayer, repeating everything the people before them prayed for before adding their own petition.	None	None

Open the Bible (15 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
The Disciples Story Kids practice getting up and following Jesus as the story is read, then learn the names of the disciples.	Spark Story Bibles Spark NRSV Bible	None
Jesus Changes Everything Kids make a hidden picture of themselves to understand how Jesus sees things differently.	Leaflets	Light gray markers, red markers, red cellophane cut into 6-inch squares (one square per kid)

Activate Faith (15 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Go Fish Kids make paper-clip fishing lines and fish for people.	Leaflets, Spark Bible Stickers	Pencils or crayons, hole punch, paper clips, string in 4-foot lengths (one per kid)
Stop, Drop, and Follow Kids play a modified "Follow the Leader" to re-enact the calling of the disciples.	None	Items for obstacle course

Send (5 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Closing Conversation Kids review the Bible Memory Verse and look at Faith on the Go!	Leaflets	None
Closing Prayer Kids say a follow-on prayer of thanksgiving in the same manner as the opening prayer.	Spark Family Pages	None

Bible Background

As Jesus begins his ministry, he invites disciples to follow him. The first four disciples are fishermen. When Jesus calls them, they drop everything and follow. The immediacy of the response to the call is repeated when Jesus calls Matthew the tax collector from his booth. These few verses give a good indication that life in the kingdom of heaven is radically different. Everything changes! These five men leave family and occupations. Those who follow Jesus are called from old ways of life into a new set of relationships and into new priorities. There is no account in Matthew of the calling of the other seven disciples. We find out that there are twelve in Matthew 10:1, where we also find out what their mission is—to cast out unclean spirits and to cure those who are sick.

Why This Story Matters

Kids are sensitive to being left out versus being chosen—just think about how teams are often picked in games. Kids need to know that Jesus is different and sees each of them as uniquely qualified to be his disciple. They can also begin to understand that Jesus is more important than anything else, and they can drop what they're doing and follow.

Gather (10 minutes)

Arrival Activity

If some kids arrive earlier than others and you need a lesson-based activity, make copies of the Activity Page and Coloring Page and set them out for kids to try.

Welcome to Sunday school! Invite the kids to sit in a circle on the floor. **We're going to learn a new word today: repent!** **When Jesus started traveling and telling everyone that God's kingdom was near, he told people to repent. Have you heard that word before? Any idea what it means?** Give kids a chance to guess if they don't know. **It means "turn around"!** **Jesus was telling people to change their lives—to turn away from what they were doing and turn toward God.** **We're going to play Duck-Duck-Repent!** **When you hear "repent," turn around and follow me.** Have the kids stand up in the circle, facing in. Walk around behind them, tapping them on the head and saying, "Duck." At some point, choose a kid and say, "Repent!" That kid should turn around and fall in line behind you. Continue until the whole group is following you in a line.

Spark Resources

Spark Activity Pages
Spark Coloring Pages

Supplies

Colored pencils

Circle Time

Have the kids sit back down in the circle. **When Jesus started preaching and teaching and calling people to repent, he went from his hometown of Nazareth to a town called Capernaum. On his way, he chose some people to become his disciples. Does anyone know what a disciple is?** Someone who follows—it literally means “learner.” **What do you think it would take to be a disciple of Jesus?** Accept answers, or prompt with questions like: Do you think they should be really smart? Or holy, or good, or rich and famous, or that they should always do the right thing, etc. **Jesus chose people no one expected to be his disciples. He didn't choose the strong and powerful and rich and holy. He chose ordinary people like you and me. And when he asked someone to be his disciple, they immediately dropped what they were doing and followed Jesus! We're going to read a story today about how Jesus chose some of his disciples and what it means to be a disciple.**

MUSIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Song 1: “I Am a C (H-R-I-S-T-I-A-N)” (tracks 9 and 26 on Spark Song CD, page 50 in Spark Songbook)

Song 2: Piggyback song to the tune of “The Hokey Pokey”

You pick your fishnets up, you put your fishnets down.
You do what Jesus said and you turn yourself around. (Repent!)
You drop the things you're doing and you follow Jesus' lead.
That's what it's all about! (Discipleship!)

Feel free to make up your own motions. Suggestions follow:

Stand in a circle to sing/move to the song, all facing one another.
Line 1: Mime picking up nets full of fish and then dropping them into the water.
Line 2: Turn around in place until you're facing each other again.
Line 3: Mime dropping something, and then turn to the left and follow in a circle.
Line 4: Turn back toward the center of the circle and jump forward, shouting “Discipleship!” at the end.

Repeat two or three times.

Opening Prayer

Have kids line up youngest to oldest. **We're going to do a “follow-on” prayer today. I'm going to say a short prayer, like this: “God, I pray for my family.” Then the first person is going to repeat my prayer and add their own. For example, “God, I pray for my family and my dog.” Then the next person is going to repeat my prayer, the second prayer, and add their own until we get all the way through the line. Try to keep them simple so we can all remember. God, I pray for _____.** When the prayer is completed, it's your turn to go through the whole list of prayers and end with: **And most of all today we pray that you would help us to follow Jesus. Amen.**

Spark Resources

Spark Song CD
Spark Songbook

Supplies

Music source

Spark Resources

None

Supplies

None

Open the Bible (15 minutes)

The Disciples Story

Invite kids with Spark NRSV Bibles to each find and sit with a buddy with a Spark Story Bible. Ask kids to keep their Bibles closed until you tell them to open them up.

In this story, Jesus asks several people to follow him. Every time you hear the words “Follow me,” get up and switch chairs with your buddy. Read the story, allowing time for all the chair switching.

Invite the older kids to look up the story in their Spark NRSV Bibles on pages 1061 and 1068-1069, and the younger kids to find The Disciples on pages 258-263 of the Spark Story Bible. Older kids can help younger kids when they have found their own pages.

Look in the two Bibles and find the place where it lists the names of all twelve of Jesus' disciples. Do any of you have the same name as any of the disciples? Do you know anyone who does? Allow time for the kids to share. Then go around the room and ask each kid to name one of the disciples. Older kids can give a name to younger kids who are not readers. Continue until all twelve disciples are named. **Jesus actually had a lot more than twelve disciples, including women, but twelve was an important number for the Jewish people, and these twelve were seen as Jesus' closest followers.** Invite the older kids to place an “I Read It” sticker next to this passage.

Spark Resources

Spark Story Bible
Spark NRSV Bible

Supplies

None

Bible Memory Verse

“[Jesus said,] ‘Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.’” Matthew 4:19

Reread the Bible Memory Verse a short phrase at a time and have the kids repeat it, then combine the phrases into longer phrases until the group can repeat the entire verse. Challenge kids to see if they can recite it by themselves.

Jesus Changes Everything

Before kids arrive, cut red cellophane into 6-inch squares. Cut enough for each kid to have a square.

Jesus sure had a different way of seeing things! He picked fishermen and tax collectors—the people no one would have expected—to be his disciples. He reminded us that people in the world look at our outside appearances, but God looks at our hearts and knows and loves us no matter what. We're going to make a picture that shows how Jesus' love changes everything.

Use the gray marker to draw a simple picture of yourself. You could just draw your face, or maybe you could draw yourself doing something to help someone, or sharing Jesus' love in some way. Be creative, but only use the gray marker,

Spark Resources

Leaflets

Supplies

Light gray markers
Red markers
Red cellophane cut into squares (one square per kid).

and don't use too much marker or it will soak the paper. When you've completed your picture, I'll give you the next instruction. Give the kids a few minutes to create their portrait in gray.

Now I want you to take a red marker and draw over the top of your gray picture. If you're a writer, write down reasons why someone might not think you would be good enough to be a disciple. Examples: I don't always listen to my parents, I get mad at my sister, I don't always share my things. **If you're not a writer yet, you can just scribble over the top of your gray picture. Don't fill it in completely, and remember not to soak the page. Leave spaces between your red lines so that it hides the gray picture but doesn't completely cover it. Older buddies can write things on your younger buddies' pictures, if they have ideas for why they might not be a good choice for a disciple.** You might want to have done an example in advance so you can show the kids what works best in terms of coverage.

When everyone is done, pass out the red cellophane squares. **These squares are Jesus' love. When you put them over your drawing, it should make all the red scribbles, all the reasons you wouldn't be a good disciple, go away and just show the picture of you underneath. Jesus sees us as we really are and knows that anyone can follow him!**

Invite kids to read and discuss the Bible Bits together.

Activate Faith (15 minutes)

Go Fish

Jesus told Andrew, Peter, James, and John that they would "fish for people."

What do you think he meant? Have a conversation with the kids about what it might mean, getting to the idea that as disciples, our job is to invite others into the way of Jesus. **We're going to do some fishing together! On your leaflet, draw a picture of a person you could invite to follow Jesus. Then make your leaflet into a fish to catch!** Buddies should work together to turn their leaflets into a person/fish. Have kids roll each leaflet into a loose tube and punch a single hole at the indicated spot. Hook a paper clip through the hole to keep the tube together. It will open out slightly into more of a fish shape. Then have the buddies work together to open a paper clip into a fish hook and tie a string to it to make a fishing line. Buddies put their leaflet/person/fish on the ground and then stand up or sit on their table and take turns trying to hook their leaflet/person/fish. To save time, you could prepare the fishing lines in advance of the class.

Ask for volunteers to read the Did You Know? items aloud. Invite kids to place a sticker or special marking next to the item they find most interesting.

Spark Resources
Leaflets
Spark Bible Stickers

Supplies
Pencils or crayons
Hole punch
Paper clips
One piece of string per kid
(4-foot lengths)

Stop, Drop, and Follow

Remember how when Jesus called his first disciples, they immediately stopped what they were doing, dropped their work, and followed him? We're going to act this out in a game of "Follow the Leader."

Ask each of the kids to choose an activity they can act out while standing in one place. Examples would be hammering/building, reading a book, or even going fishing. Choose one kid to be Jesus, and have the other kids scatter throughout the room and pretend to do their activity. Jesus should go up to one kid and say, "Follow me." That kid should freeze, then pretend to drop whatever they are doing, and then follow Jesus to the next kid and repeat the process. When all the kids have been collected into a single line, choose another kid to be Jesus and play again. For a fun twist, set up a simple obstacle course in the room for the kids to follow Jesus through.

Spark Resources
None

Supplies
Items for obstacle course

Send (5 minutes)

Closing Conversation

Look at the Faith on the Go! ideas. Who wants to share one idea they think they can do this week? Encourage kids of different ages to share. **Remember that Jesus calls anyone and everyone to be his disciples, and that as Jesus' disciples, we can invite others to follow Jesus too!**

Spark Resources
Leaflets

Supplies
None

Closing Prayer

Distribute Family Pages to kids and point out For Younger Kids under Live It. **This says it's for younger kids, but it's really for all of us! Try this one out this week!**

Spark Resources
Spark Family Pages

We're going to do another follow-on prayer, but this time we'll make it a prayer of thanksgiving to God for all God has given us! I'll start: God, thank you for _____. Continue in the same manner as the opening prayer until you get all the way around the circle. Repeat the entire string of prayers and add **...and for calling me and all these wonderful kids to be your disciples! Amen.**

Supplies
None

As you say goodbye to kids, make sure they take home their leaflets and Family Pages.