

# 1

# Jesus Is Calling!

JOHN 1:35–50



## GOAL

Children hear how Jesus' first disciples decided to follow him, and consider their own responses to Jesus' call.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



## PRAYER

Thank you, Lord, for your invitation to those early disciples, and to me. Help me to follow faithfully this day, and to invite others to follow your call, as well. Amen.

## THIS SESSION

Just as Jesus' disciples were invited to join in his ministry, we are also given the choice to follow him. As we practice following him, we continue to make choices that lead us toward God's kingdom.

## THE BIBLE STORY

In John's account of the calling of the disciples, there are several different paths by which people meet and begin to follow Jesus. Some are introduced by John the Baptist. Others are introduced by siblings and friends. One begins to follow because he is impressed with Jesus' insight. No matter how they are introduced to Jesus, each one has to make their own decision to follow him. Their curiosity, their faith, or their hope in him as the Messiah lead them to accept the invitation.

## CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Children are offered the invitation to follow Jesus, just like the disciples were. They will practice both inviting and being invited and explore what it means to follow.

## SESSION PREPARATION

- "Come and See" (p. 8): Write the words to the opening ritual on a sheet of newsprint. Save for sessions 2–4.

Depending on the options you choose:

- "Story Connections" (p. 10): Obtain *The Night Gardener* by Terry Fan and Eric Fan (Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2016) or use the YouTube video "The Night Gardener by the Fan Brothers" ([bit.ly /FMGardener](https://bit.ly/FMGardener), 5:51).
- "Following the Leader" (p. 9) and/or "Inviting and Accepting" (p. 11): Plan for space to move around and for playing.



## GETTING STARTED

### FOLLOW THE LEADER

G AM

As children arrive, welcome them. Invite them to play a game of Follow the Leader around the room. Ask the person whose birthday is closest to today's date to be the first leader. Tell the children that whoever is at the back of the line invites any children who arrive in the room while they are playing. Explain that, when you clap your hands and call out "new leader," the next person in line becomes the leader.

Clap your hands and call for a new leader intermittently. Allow the children to play, clapping your hands and changing leaders so that all have a chance to be the leader.

- "Come and See" newsprint

### COME AND SEE

Display the newsprint with the "Come and See" opening ritual for this unit. Invite the children to stand in a circle and respond as you lead.

One: Jesus says to us, "Come and see!"

**All: What is there to see?**

One: Jesus has so much to show us about God's love.

**All: Where are we going?**

One: Jesus is leading us to God.

**All: (turn to one another) I'm going! You come too!**



Keep the "Come and See" newsprint for each session of this unit.



## INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

- Paper
- Crayons and/or markers

### MAKING INVITATIONS

A C

As children arrive, welcome them. Invite them to make invitations by folding a piece of paper in half and writing, "You are invited!" on the inside of the card. Have them decorate the outside and inside of the card as they wish. As they work, talk together about things they have been invited to, such as birthday parties, family vacations, special activities at school, and so on. Ask if they have accepted those invitations. Wonder together about the reasons someone might accept an invitation. Set aside invitations for "Following Jesus" (p. 11).



## FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Show the children the Bible, and explain that it contains four books that tell us about Jesus' life. We call these books *Gospels* because they tell us the good news of Jesus. Today's story will be found in the Gospel of John, near the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Invite the children to think about how Jesus

might have started a ministry to tell the whole world that God loves them. Wonder together what are some of the ways Jesus could have done that.

## ACTING OUT THE GOSPEL STORY

AM D C

Invite volunteers to help tell the story of Jesus calling his disciples. Explain that you will read John 1:35–50 and need their help to act it out. Start the drama with four volunteers: John the Baptist, Disciple 1, Disciple 2, and Jesus, but you can use up to eight. Other volunteers will be needed, but John and Disciple 1 can take multiple roles if your group is small. The other roles are: Simon Peter, Andrew, Philip, and Nathanael. If the children enjoy dressing up, use biblical costumes. Make name tags for Jesus, John the Baptist, Disciple 1, and Disciple 2.

Tell the children that you will pause after you read anything someone says and they can repeat the line. Encourage them to follow the directions given in the text, such as walking, following, and so forth.

Set the scene by telling the children that they are in biblical times, probably somewhere near the Jordan River in Palestine. The day before this scene, John baptized Jesus in the river. John had told several of his followers that Jesus was the one he called “the Lamb of God” and the “Son of God.” Read the Gospel story from Resource Page 1, using the stage directions noted in red.

When you have read the story, wonder together about the following questions:

- ➔ Why did the disciples decide to follow Jesus?
- ➔ Did they all have the same reason(s)?
- ➔ How did each disciple learn who Jesus was? Do you think they had heard of him before this day?
- ➔ Did Jesus ask all of them to follow, or do you think some just started tagging along?
- ➔ Both Jesus and Philip said, “Come and see.” What do you think each wanted others to see?
- ➔ How are you like any of these disciples, or not?



For a small class, children can play more than one role in the Bible story drama.

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- Resource Page 1
  - Eight adhesive name tags
  - Biblical costumes: robes or tunics and headdresses from dish towels or fabric and ties or rope (optional)
  - Markers



## FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or more options.

## FOLLOWING THE LEADER

AM G

Invite everyone to find space in the room to move around. Teach the following rhyme:

“Follow me! Follow me!  
Come and see! 1-2-3!”

Once the group can say the rhyme together, add a motion, such as taking steps forward and back, or doing jumping jacks as they say it. Invite volunteers to make up their own “follow me” action for the group to follow. For a challenge, add the actions cumulatively—so, for example, everyone is

twirling in a circle, then taking two giant steps forward, then hopping like a frog, and so forth as the children keep adding actions.

When all who want to lead have had a chance, talk about the following:

- ✦ Did you like to be the leader or the follower best? Why?
- ✦ How hard was it to follow the leader?
- ✦ What makes it fun to follow a leader?
- ✦ What are some ways that you follow a leader during the week (home, school, church, extracurricular activities, and other places)?
- ✦ What are some ways people can follow Jesus, even when we can't see him?

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- ☐ *The Night Gardener* by Terry Fan and Eric Fan (Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2016) or internet-connected device

## STORY CONNECTIONS



Read the book *The Night Gardener* by Terry Fan and Eric Fan, or show the YouTube video “The Night Gardener by the Fan Brothers” ([bit.ly/FMGardener](https://bit.ly/FMGardener), 5:51). In the book, a young boy named William wakes up to see a work of art outside his window. Then the night gardener calls on William to come and help him make his artwork.

Discuss and wonder together about the following:

- ✦ What surprising things started happening on Grimloch Street?
- ✦ How did William meet the night gardener?
- ✦ How did the night gardener change William?
- ✦ Look closely at the pictures of Grimloch Street. How does the night gardener change the neighborhood?
- ✦ Have you ever met someone who was doing interesting things, and felt the need to learn from them?
- ✦ Do you think that might be how the disciples felt when Jesus said, “Follow me”? Why or why not?



If you use the internet version of *The Night Gardener*, you may need to pause the video from time to time and let the children see the illustrations more closely.

## FOLLOWING WITHOUT SEEING



Children may have trouble thinking about how to follow Jesus when they can't see him. Invite them to consider how two magnets, separated by a piece of card stock, can *follow* each other. The leader, or a volunteer, can guide the magnet underneath the paper, and the others can see how the other magnet moves right along with it. Wonder together about these questions:

- ✦ How do you think the top magnet knows where to go?
- ✦ Does the top magnet have any choice about following? Why or why not?
- ✦ How are Jesus' disciples like magnets? How are they different from magnets?
- ✦ What do you think it feels like to follow Jesus' example, even when you can't see him?

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- ☐ Two magnets
  - ☐ Card stock



## PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

### PRACTICING THE INVITATION



Invite everyone to think of a place, person, or thing that they would show the rest of the group if they could—like a “show and tell” without the actual physical item, person, or place. Talk through possibilities until each child has thought of what they would like to show the others. Perhaps this is a favorite place they have traveled, something at their grandparents’ house, their pet, or their favorite toy. Once they have thought of that place, person, or thing, ask them to draw a picture of it so the group can “come and see” whatever it is. After they have had time to work, invite the children to share with the group.

Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- What made you want to tell your friends about this particular person, place, or thing?
- What do you love about it?
- What exciting things do you think Jesus wanted the new disciples to “come and see”?
- How might you tell about God’s love so that others would want to “come and see,” the way that Jesus and his followers did?

### INVITING AND ACCEPTING



Have the children stand and form a circle. Ask for a volunteer to be the leader. This leader stands in the middle of the circle and chooses one person to invite. The leader goes to that person and invites them: “Come, follow me!” If the person accepts the invitation, the leader turns around so that person can put their hands on the leader’s shoulders to form a “train” moving around the inside of the circle. Go to each person in the circle, inviting them to join the “train.” When all have joined the train, send up a cheer!



## FOLLOWING JESUS

### JESUS’ INVITATION



Hand out the invitations from “Making Invitations” (p. 8). Each child can use the invitation they created, or you can mix them all up. Encourage the children to think about Jesus’ invitation to follow him. Have the children write a note inside the card, responding to Jesus’ call to “come and see.” When messages have been written, ask the children to hold the invitation between their hands as you pray:

Loving God, thank you for inviting us to come and see your love,  
come and see your kingdom, and  
come and see Jesus!

Help us to follow you, and to invite others along too!

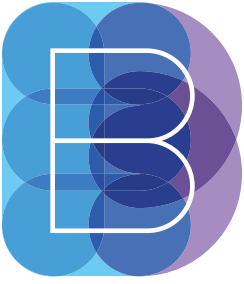
Amen.

Encourage them to keep the invitation as a reminder that Jesus has invited them to follow him.

Session 1—Jesus Is Calling!

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Invitations from “Making Invitations”  
(p. 8)



## BIBLE STORY

### JOHN 1:35–50 (CEB)

*[Place a name tag on Jesus, John the Baptist, Disciple 1, and Disciple 2.]*

The next day John was standing again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus walking along he said, “Look! The Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard what he said, and they followed Jesus.

*[Ask Disciples 1 and 2 to follow Jesus.]*

When Jesus turned and saw them following, he asked, “What are you looking for?”

They said, “Rabbi (which is translated *Teacher*), where are you staying?”

He replied, “Come and see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon.

One of the two disciples who heard what John said and followed Jesus was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter.

*[Remove Disciple 2’s name tag, and write “Andrew” on it. Return tag.]*

He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated *Christ*). He led him to Jesus.

*[Write “Simon” on a name tag, and place it on one of the volunteers.]*

Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas,” (which is translated *Peter*).

*[Remove Simon’s name tag, scratch out his name, and write “Peter.” Return tag.]*

The next day Jesus wanted to go into Galilee, and he found Philip. Jesus said to him, “Follow me.” Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter.

*[Write “Philip” on a name tag, and place it on one of the volunteers.]*

Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law and the Prophets: Jesus, Joseph’s son, from Nazareth.”

Nathanael responded, “Can anything from Nazareth be good?”

Philip said, “Come and see.”

*[Write “Nathanael” on a name tag, and place it on one of the volunteers.]*

Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said about him, “Here is a genuine Israelite in whom there is no deceit.”

Nathanael asked him, “How do you know me?”

Jesus answered, “Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree.”

Nathanael replied, “Rabbi, you are God’s Son. You are the king of Israel.”

Jesus answered, “Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these!”

*[Invite all to walk off, following Jesus together.]*