



Fishers of People

(based on Matthew 4:18–22)

Jesus had some extraordinary experiences before he began his ministry. He met John at the Jordan River and was baptized. A voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved son, and I am pleased with him.” Well, those were words to get Jesus moving! He went into the wilderness for forty days and was tested. He came through with flying colors. No question he knew who he was. Jesus had work to do, and the time had come.

So, he began proclaiming, “Repent! Change your hearts and lives! God’s kingdom is here.” It was lonely work, and it was a big task. Jesus knew he would need help if he were to reach people near and far.

One day, Jesus was walking alongside the Sea of Galilee. He saw two brothers who were fishermen: Simon, who everybody called Peter, and Andrew. He had often seen them early in the mornings, preparing their nets to go out to sea and catch fish. Day in and day out, they worked. It was hard work, and they were devoted to it. These were the kind of helpers he would need. It was OK that they were fishermen and not preachers. They had dedication.

Jesus called them by name, “Peter! Andrew!”

Peter and Andrew looked up from their nets to see who was calling them, although later they would both say that they knew Jesus’ voice the minute he said their names. They nodded at Jesus in the way a hard-working person does in the middle of a task.

“Come, follow me!” Jesus invited. And then he said something that the brothers still smile at the memory, “I will show you how to fish for people.”

Well, Jesus caught their attention, and their hearts. They put down the nets, stood up, and walked over to him. Jesus clasped their hands warmly in his, and they knew they were right where they were supposed to be.

They walked along the shore a bit farther and saw the Zebedee brothers, James and John. They were moored about twenty feet out in the shallow water, repairing nets with their father in the boat.

Jesus called to them as well, “James! John! Come, follow me!”

The brothers, to this day, don’t know who jumped in the water first. But there they were, splashing their way to the shore and leaving their father quite surprised in the boat.

That was just the beginning, but Jesus knew he would call men and women, youth and children, to follow him, to help him spread his message about God’s love. And they would catch people with their good news!



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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your children—imagine and wonder.
- Jesus calls us to follow him and gives us a job to do to help him spread his message of God's love. Wonder together about how God has called each person in your family as a disciple. What can you do to spread God's love?
- Watch the YouTube video "12 Disciples Song _ Twelve Disciples Song VBS" (bit.ly/2E9fPi6). Learn the song and sing along.



Responding to God's Grace

- Do some research together about one of the disciples Jesus called: Peter, Andrew, James, or John. What did they do as a disciple of Jesus? If you like research, do some more! Learn about a modern disciple of Jesus. Consider Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, Jimmy Carter, Pope Francis, Sojourner Truth, and others you may know about.
- Have each family member trace one of their feet on a sheet of paper and cut it out. Invite everyone to write or draw one way that they are a disciple of Jesus on one side of the footprint. On the other side, write or draw a picture of one way they would like to follow Jesus that they haven't tried yet. Display the footprints in your home. Talk about ways that you can support one another in the ways you would like to follow Jesus.

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Make some fishing poles or fishing nets with stick pretzels or waffle pretzels. Dip the pretzel in peanut butter or honey and catch goldfish crackers.
- Have fish for dinner and talk about Jesus' call to fish for people. How can you fish for people?
- Have family worship:

Light a white candle and read John 8:12.

Invite each family member to offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for the gift of Jesus, the Messiah.

Sing together "This Little Light of Mine":

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. (3x)
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Note: bit.ly web addresses are case sensitive.