

Receive Jesus' Invitation

1

JOHN 1:35-51



GOAL

Youth “come and see” who Jesus is and recognize that Jesus’ invitation to “follow me” is an invitation for all youth today.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- AT** Abstract Thinking
- C** Conversation
- CT** Concrete Thinking
- D** Drama
- G** Game
- M** Music
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

Dear God, help me to set aside my need to be perfect and correct. Make me a listener and an encourager. Allow me to learn new ways of following you from the youth that you bring into this space. Amen.

THIS SESSION

This session explores the different ways that Jesus invites his disciples to follow and the variety of responses those disciples have. We receive and respond to invitations from Jesus to follow throughout our lives. We want youth to begin to recognize that they, too, are the recipients of such invitations. The invitation to follow Jesus is the invitation to a lifestyle of radical love and service to others.

THE BIBLE STORY

This Bible story is really two stories at once. They occur early in the ministry of Jesus (just after his baptism by John the Baptist), and are both considered *call* stories where different disciples were called, or invited, to follow Jesus.

On the first day, John the Baptist tells Andrew and an unnamed disciple that Jesus is the Lamb of God. They approach Jesus, following him (literally) and talking with him. Andrew eventually invites his brother, Simon (later renamed Peter), to join as well.

On the second day, Jesus approaches Philip and speaks first, asking Philip to follow him. Philip also invites Nathanael to follow Jesus. Nathanael is reluctant at first, but does agree after Jesus demonstrates his divine power to Nathanael.

CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

All youth seek acceptance and love. This session offers them the opportunity to recognize that Jesus’ invitation to follow is for them just as it was for the early disciples. Jesus was not only welcoming and accepting of the earliest disciples; Jesus is also welcoming and accepting of who the youth are. Youth will be invited to make a commitment to this hospitality and acceptance, both for themselves and for others.

SESSION PREPARATION

- Read through this session and determine which activities will work for your group. Notice that a few of them require advanced preparation.
- Consider mailing out “old fashioned” invitations (e.g., to a child’s birthday party) to potential participants about a week before the session. Additionally, hang up a sign on a wall in your space that says “I will follow Jesus.”
- Think about ways that *you* follow Jesus. While you may not share these with the youth during the session, it will help you to identify with their reflections.

GETTING STARTED

- ☐ Colorful construction paper (1–2 pieces per participant)
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Pencils

PREPARING FOR CLOSING ACTIVITY

A C

As participants arrive, give them a piece or two of construction paper and invite them to trace around the bottom of their shoes and cut them out. If they finish one and everyone hasn't arrived, encourage them to trace and cut out a second or third. Everyone doesn't have to participate in this activity as long as you have enough "feet" for one per participant (and maybe a few extras) when you finish. While making the "feet," check in with youth about their week.

Once enough "feet" are made, set them aside. Clean up materials.

INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.



For youth who do not have nice shoes, sharing where their shoes have been can be a challenge. Model acceptance and encourage honesty. One youth being vulnerable often changes the dynamics of a group in a positive way.

CHECKING THE SHOES

C CT

Form groups of two or three. Tell the youth to look at the shoes they are wearing and answer these questions with one another about their shoes.

- ➔ Where have these shoes been?
- ➔ Why did you choose these particular shoes?
- ➔ What do you like about these shoes?
- ➔ Where do these shoes want to go next?

End the activity by telling youth that today you will be thinking about where we have been and where God might be encouraging us to go next.



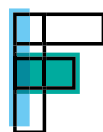
The obstacle course should take each youth about a minute to complete. If you have only a few youth, consider having the youth run the course a second time with slight modifications or having different youth lead everyone through the course.

FOLLOW ME OBSTACLE COURSE

AM X

Before the session starts, set up an obstacle course near the meeting space. Keep it simple and make sure it is an obstacle course that *you* would be able to do. To begin, tell everyone "follow me" and go through the course yourself with the youth following behind in a single-file line.

End the activity by saying something like, "We are so good/horrible/hilarious following each other! We are also invited by someone in the Bible to 'follow me'."



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or both options.

Tell the youth that the group is going to read a story about Jesus and his earliest disciples in John 1:35–51. Explain that the *John* in the story is John the Baptist who had just baptized Jesus. The other men present (those who would later become known as disciples) are meeting Jesus for the first time, but they have already heard about him. For us, it would be like meeting someone who is a celebrity. We already know them from their work and reputation before we actually meet them.

ACTING IT OUT

D AM

Copies of Resource Page 1

Distribute copies of Resource Page 1, a skit to retell the Scripture from John 1. Assign the seven parts. If you do not have enough youth to cover all parts, allow other leaders to participate or allow those playing John and Andrew to also read the parts of Philip and Nathanael.

Have the actors stand and improvise movement while reading their parts in the skit.

After the reading, ask the following questions:

- In this story, who meets Jesus and decides to follow him? (*the unnamed disciple, Andrew, Simon/Peter, Philip, and Nathanael*)
- Does anyone hesitate to follow Jesus? (*No, but Nathanael is skeptical of where Jesus is from.*)
- How does Jesus respond when they agree to follow him? (*He speaks with them; he promises them great things; he changes Simon's name.*)
- How would you respond if you recognized Jesus asking you to follow him?

CHARTING IT

C AT X

Board or newsprint
 Markers
 Bible

On a board or newsprint, create a chart that looks like this. Just write the left column and top row titles (in **bold**). The youth will fill in the answers, provided here in *italics*:

| Disciple Name | Why he first notices Jesus | Jesus' response when noticed | Actions after meeting Jesus? |
|-------------------------|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| Unnamed Disciple | <i>John says he is the Lamb of God</i> | <i>Jesus chats with him all afternoon</i> | |
| Andrew | <i>John says he is the Lamb of God</i> | <i>Jesus chats with him all afternoon</i> | <i>Getting his brother, Simon</i> |
| Simon/Peter | <i>Andrew introduces him</i> | <i>Jesus renames him</i> | |
| Philip | <i>Jesus approaches him</i> | <i>Jesus tells Philip to follow</i> | <i>Telling Nathanael</i> |
| Nathanael | <i>Philip tells him to meet Jesus</i> | <i>Jesus compliments, promises visions</i> | |

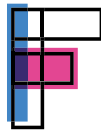
Explain that the group will fill out as much of this chart as possible while reading John 1:35–51. Whenever they think they hear a way to fill in one of the squares, have them yell, “Stop!” and fill in the square.

Read John 1:35–51. Discuss some of the following questions:

- What are some similarities/differences in the ways that Jesus calls these disciples?
- What action or words would help you to notice Jesus near you?
- How might Jesus respond if you approached him?
- What action might you take after meeting Jesus?



Don't have preconceived *right* answers to the questions at the end of this section. Allow youth to explore and even use their imaginations. If the room is silent when you first ask the question, allow for some silence and then repeat the question. Resist the temptation to offer an answer.



FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or both options.

- Internet-connected device
- Large piece of paper or poster board for each group
- Marker for each group



This activity is best if most participants are active on social media and have a smartphone with them.

- Game pieces from copies of Resource Page 2 printed on card stock; one per group

LOOK IT UP!



Form groups of four or five. Give groups a large sheet of paper or poster board with a marker. Instruct each group to select a “scribe” who will write.

Ask youth to take out their smartphones and scroll through some of the people they follow on social media. These may be famous people or simply friends and peers. Using the pictures and the statements that they see, invite youth to make a list of the ways that the people they follow on social media are showing others love and serving others (i.e., following Jesus).

Allow groups to share their list with the larger group.

Have each group turn over their paper or poster board and imagine that they are in charge of a social media account for Jesus. Have them create at least five posts that Jesus might put on his social media. They can recall events from his life, writing tweets or drawing pictures. Encourage them to use hashtags!

After all have created the list, ask the group:

- ➔ What would you expect to see on Jesus’ social media?
- ➔ Would you emulate anything you saw on Jesus’ social media?
- ➔ What hashtags would Jesus use that you could see yourself using as well?

WHO DID IT?



Form groups of four and introduce this matching game. All pieces should be face down. One at a time, youth will turn over two game pieces. The two pieces “match” if one contains the name of a famous person who follows Jesus and the other contains something from that person’s life. Youth take turns trying to find matches. If they have a match, then remove those pieces from the game.

After all matches are found, ask the youth to discuss:

- ➔ What is one way that these people followed Jesus that surprised you?
- ➔ What could you emulate from these followers of Jesus?
- ➔ If you were making up this game, who would you add to the pieces and why? (*This could be someone famous or someone from your community/ church.*)



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

- Pens
- Paper

MAPPING THE JOURNEY



Give each participant a pen and a piece of blank paper and invite them to find a spot in the room where they can be comfortable and quiet. Tell participants you are going to ask them a series of questions and encourage them to respond on the paper in any way they feel comfortable (reflective writing, drawing, etc.). Assure them there is no correct or incorrect answer and they will share their responses or show their drawings only if they choose. Leave about thirty seconds between each of the following questions and two to three minutes following the final question. Give participants a heads-up about a minute before you plan to end the exercise.

- ➔ What is your first memory of experiencing or learning about God?
- ➔ What is the place that you feel closest to God?
- ➔ Imagine that you are in that place where you feel close to God, and Jesus approaches you and asks you to follow him. What would that look like?
- ➔ What would it feel like for Jesus to ask you to follow him?
- ➔ How would you respond to Jesus asking you to follow?
- ➔ What questions would you ask Jesus?
- ➔ What else might Jesus ask you to do?
- ➔ How would you show yourself and others that you are following Jesus?

Following this activity, youth may choose to share what they wrote or drew depending on time and their comfort level.

“A PILGRIM’S HYMN”



Prepare to play the song “A Pilgrim’s Hymn” by Landon Whitsett ([bit.ly/FMAPilgrimsHymn](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FMAPilgrimsHymn), 5:31). Invite participants to find a spot in the room where they can both be comfortable and listen attentively to the music you are about to play.

Play the song and then distribute colored pencils. Tell the youth you will play the song again and, while they listen, they can draw or write how they think Jesus invites them to follow. Then invite a few volunteers to share what they have drawn or written as they feel comfortable.

If there is time, ask these questions, giving youth time to think about their responses before answering:

- ➔ Imagine that Jesus is asking you to follow him on a faith journey. How does it feel to be chosen by Jesus?
- ➔ Who walks with you on the road?
- ➔ Where do you think Jesus might lead you in the future?



FOLLOWING JESUS

THE JOURNEY

Gather participants into a semicircle facing the sign you hung before the session, which says, “I will follow Jesus.” Pass out markers and the “feet” that you created at the beginning of the session, one per participant. Tell the participants that they have been invited to begin—or continue—a journey and pay special attention to the effect it has in their lives. This journey may lead to a lot of questions. It may significantly impact and change their lives. However, the invitation for each of the participants in the room is the same as the invitation for the disciples so long ago. Whether we hear it enthusiastically or hesitantly, it is still an invitation for each of us.

Encourage the participants to commit to the journey—if only for the four meetings of this unit. It may look different and feel different for each of us, but we are all welcome to follow Jesus. Tell participants that, if they feel comfortable, they should write their names on the “foot” that they have in their hands and then tape it to the wall. As each person puts their “foot” on the wall, have the whole group respond by saying,

“We will journey with you.” Let the repetition of this phrase be a closing prayer for your group. Leave the “feet” and the sign on the wall until you meet again. Each meeting, we will add more to the wall.

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- Internet-connected device
 - Colored pencils
 - Paper

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- “Feet” created in “Getting Started”
 - Markers
 - Wall-safe tape

John 1:35–51 Skit

Narrator: The day after John the Baptist baptized Jesus, he was standing with Andrew and another disciple (*pause while John, Andrew, and the Unnamed Disciple group together*). When John saw Jesus walk by (*pause to let Jesus walk by*), he exclaimed:

John (the Baptist): Look! Here is the Lamb of God.

Unnamed Disciple: Did you just say that he (*pointing to Jesus*) is the Lamb of God?

Andrew: Yeah—I think that’s what John said. Wanna follow him?

Unnamed Disciple: Yeah—let’s follow him.

Narrator: And so, they followed Jesus. When Jesus saw them following, he said:

Jesus: What are you looking for?

Andrew: We are looking for you.

Unnamed Disciple: Rabbi, where are you staying?

Jesus: Come and see (*Jesus leads them across the room*).

Narrator: They followed him and saw where he was staying. After talking all afternoon, Andrew asked Jesus a question:

Andrew: Hey, Jesus! I think my brother Simon would also like to meet you! Can I bring him here?

Narrator: Jesus agreed (*Jesus nods, and Andrew goes to get Simon/Peter*).

Andrew (to Simon/Peter): We have found the Messiah (*Andrew leads Simon/Peter to Jesus*).

Jesus (to Simon/Peter): You are Simon, son of John! You will now be called Cephas.

Narrator: Cephas is another way to say Peter. (*Andrew, Simon/Peter, and the Unnamed Disciple move away from the action*.) The next day, Jesus decided to go to Galilee (*Jesus walks across the space*). Once there, Jesus saw Philip and said:

Jesus: Follow me.

Narrator: Philip went to find his friend Nathanael (*Philip walks to Nathanael*).

Philip: Hey, Nathanael! We have found the one that Moses talks about in the law! The prophets wrote about him too! He is the son of Joseph of Nazareth.

Nathanael: Can anything good come from Nazareth? That’s like something good coming from _____ (*insert name of nearby small town*).

Philip: Come and see (*together they walk to Jesus*).

Narrator: When Jesus saw them, Jesus said to Nathanael:

Jesus: Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!

Nathanael: Where did you come to know me?

Jesus: I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.

Narrator: Nathanael had, indeed, been under the fig tree earlier in the day.

Nathanael: Truly, you are the Son of God! You are the king of Israel!

Jesus: Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see great things! You will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man!

Narrator: This is the Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

This page is one complete game set. The answer to each name is the piece to its right. Decide how many game sets you need. Photocopy this page onto card stock. Ideally, make each game set a different color to avoid mixing them up.

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| <p>MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.</p> | <p>American Civil Rights leader of the 1960s</p> | <p>GRETA THUNBERG</p> | <p>Spoke to the United Nations about the importance of climate change at age 16 after organizing multiple protests</p> |
| <p>EMMA WATSON</p> | <p>Launched the UN Women Campaign “HeForShe” that advocates for global gender equality</p> | <p>RUTH BADER GINSBURG</p> | <p>Co-founded women’s rights project of the ACLU where she participated in over 300 cases of gender discrimination; later a US Supreme Court justice</p> |
| <p>MOTHER TERESA</p> | <p>Opened homes for people with leprosy and AIDS</p> | <p>MUHAMMED ALI</p> | <p>Advocate for racial justice, religious freedom, and Rwandan refugees</p> |
| <p>KRISTEN BELL</p> | <p>Fosters animals for the Humane Society, provides aid for children in northern Uganda, and helps register voters</p> | <p>CINDI LAUPER</p> | <p>Advocate for runaway and homeless LGBTQ+ youth</p> |
| <p>PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER</p> | <p>Farmer, Sunday school teacher, and volunteer at Habitat for Humanity</p> | <p>BILL GATES AND MELINDA FRENCH GATES</p> | <p>Created a foundation that provides vaccines and other crucial health supplies to poorer countries</p> |