

Isa. 6:1–8 (9–13)

Ps. 138

1 Cor. 15:1–11

Luke 5:1–11

Fishing for People

Goal for the Session

Children will dig into the story of Jesus calling disciples and practice telling what they know about Jesus.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Luke 5:1–11

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Gay L. Byron

At first glance Luke 5:1–11 is difficult to classify. It is generally considered a call narrative. This passage is also considered a miracle story, given the abundant outcome manifested at verse 6. Yet the theme of discipleship provides a theological anchor for this story about the fishermen and their experience with Jesus. The lection ends with the theme of renunciation, indicated by the terse statement, “they left everything and followed him” (v. 11). This is the heart of discipleship. For Luke, it includes the denial of family, friends, and physical possessions (5:28; 9:57–62; 14:33; 18:22–23).

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” David L. Ostendorf

The life-altering power of God’s word—spoken, heard, and heeded—is dynamically evident in this story of call. The word begins to move horizontally—outward and outbound from Jesus. It falls on the ears of crowds hungry for that word; it falls on the ears of Simon and James and John, afraid, amazed, attracted, and ready. Not knowing what lay ahead on that open and uncharted journey from their familiar fishing boats, “they left everything and followed him,” unbound, outward-bound, horizon-bound, captured by a word that they would, in turn, carry “on the ground” among people waiting for it, listening for it.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Howard K. Gregory

The invitation to put out into the deep for a catch provides a sharp contrast to our human penchant for the predictable and the routine. It is an invitation to venture into new ground or new depths, but it also points to new challenges in mission and ministry for the church in every generation. We are challenged to respond to the urgings of God breaking into human lives. In the case of Simon, as for the Christian faced with such a command, there is the realization that the most profound and significant experiences of God and life are not to be found in the safe ways and places. Simon obeys the instruction and is surprised.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Peter Eaton

The NRSV rendering “catching people” masks a dynamism in the Greek that is lost in translation. Jesus is saying to Peter that he will be “taking” or “saving men and women alive” for the kingdom. “To take men and women alive” is a very different image from simply catching them as though they are food to be consumed. So how can the preacher and the community of the body of Christ make Jesus real for others and for ourselves in ways that are both true and genuinely compelling?

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Luke 5:1–11

Focus on Your Teaching

Have you watched children who have good news to share? Nothing dampens their enthusiasm. In this session, affirm your learners as messengers of the good news of God's love. Some children have no reservations telling others about Jesus. Some feel self-conscious and don't want to be perceived as being different—they'll readily discuss favorite TV shows or video games with their peers, but may be afraid to talk about Jesus in the same way. Provide opportunities for learners to practice telling the good news of Jesus Christ, first in the safety of your group and then in the larger world.

YOU WILL NEED

- ❑ green cloth
- ❑ white battery-powered candle
- ❑ offering plate
- ❑ Bible
- ❑ masking tape
- ❑ Resource Sheet 1
- ❑ Color Pack 21, 22, 28
- ❑ 1" x 8 ½" green paper strip, tape, paper chain started Dec. 2
- ❑ *Singing the Feast*, 2018–2019; CD player
- ❑ construction paper, scissors, marker

For Responding

- ❑ option 1: Resource Sheet 3; scissors; basket; chairs; *Singing the Feast*, 2018–2019; CD player
- ❑ option 2: copies of Resource Sheet 2 on card stock, fine-tipped markers, scissors, hole punch, new pencils
- ❑ option 3: index cards, pens
- ❑ option 4: Resource Sheet 4, scissors

God, open my eyes to opportunities to tell others about Jesus and increase my confidence as a teacher of your Word. Amen.

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, cut out six construction-paper fish shapes. Print the following words on the fish: Jesus told Simon, / "Don't be afraid! / From now on / you will / bring in people / instead of fish!" If you are using option 1 in Responding, cut the strips from Resource Sheet 3 (Fishy Questions), fold them, and place them in a basket. If you are using option 2, bring two new pencils for each child.

Greet each child. Invite early arrivals to help you set up the worship space with a green cloth, a battery-powered candle, an offering plate, the paper chain started December 2, and a Bible open to Luke 5.

Gather around the worship space. Light the candle as a reminder of Jesus' promise to be with his followers. Lead this litany:

Leader: Jesus has come.

All: Rejoice, rejoice!

Leader: Today we light the white candle, a symbol of Jesus.

All: Rejoice, rejoice!

Leader: We want to follow Jesus,

All: Rejoice, rejoice!

Leader: We pray for the light of Jesus to show us the way. Amen.

Ask a child to pass the offering plate and then place it next to the candle.

Invite the children to tell stories of times they have gone fishing or to imagine what it would be like to go fishing. Ask:

✪ How many fish do you think you could catch in one day?

✪ What is it like to go fishing and catch nothing?

Explain that in the Bible story today, they will meet some fishermen who knew Jesus.

EXPLORING

Show Color Pack 21 and say that the Bible story talks about fishing. In Jesus' day, fishing was done with nets that were thrown out by hand, somewhat like this photo. It was common to fish at night so that the fish would not see the nets and swim around them. This also allowed the fishermen to sell freshly caught fish at the morning markets.

Storytelling tip: Look up from the page often as you read the story. This helps maintain eye contact with the children and is an effective way to draw them into a story.

Invite the children to help you make an outline of a boat on the floor with masking tape. Have everyone sit inside the boat shape. Show your Bible opened to Luke 5. Say that a man named Luke wrote down stories about Jesus, so they would never be forgotten. Read aloud the story from Resource Sheet 1 (The Amazing Catch of Fish).

Invite learners to act out the story, using the boat outline. Ask for volunteers to be Jesus, Simon, James, and John. Others can be the crowd watching from shore, the waves around the boat, or even the fish.

After acting out the story, ask learners to stand around the edges of the boat shape. Explain that, as you ask each question, they are to jump inside the boat if they want to give an answer (and then jump out again after they respond). Ask:

- ✪ What do you think it would be like to be someone who fishes for a living?
- ✪ How would you feel if you could not catch any fish to sell?
- ✪ What did Jesus tell Simon to do after Jesus had finished teaching the crowd?
- ✪ Do you think Simon thought this was a good idea? Why or why not?
- ✪ Why did Peter want Jesus to go away after Jesus helped him to fill his net with fish?

Place Color Pack 22 inside the boat shape. Ask learners to point out the figures of Jesus, Simon, James, and John. Place the six paper fish with the memory verse on the image. Work together to arrange the words in the right order. Say the verse together. Turn some of the fish over and repeat the verse again. Turn a few more over and repeat the verse again. Ask:

- ✪ Why do you think Simon, James, and John went with Jesus?
- ✪ What do you think Jesus meant when he told Simon, "From now on you will bring in people instead of fish"?

RESPONDING

Offer at least two options so children have a choice. One might be more challenging to interest older children who can work on their own.

1. **Game** Children will enjoy a game that explores how to tell others about Jesus. Place chairs in a circle, one fewer chair than there are players. Play a favorite song from *Singing the Feast, 2018–2019*, as learners march around the circle of chairs. When the music stops, everyone races to sit in a chair. The child left standing draws a slip of paper from the basket and answers the question. Invite others in the circle to add any ideas to this child's response. Continue the game until all the questions have been drawn.

EASY
PREP

Ideas from the Bible include: God's love is like a river; light; a fortress; a hen's wings around her chicks.

If your group is small, form two groups and give each one two stories.

- 2. Pencil Toppers** Learners will make pencil toppers with messages about God's love and give them away. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 made on card stock. Follow the instructions to make and decorate pencil toppers, helping with the steps as needed. As a group, practice what you will say when you give a pencil to someone. Ask each learner to name the persons who will receive their pencils.
- 3. Drama** Children will practice telling others about Jesus through skits. Ask the group to list the people they might meet and places they might go in a typical week. Print each idea on a separate index card. Place the cards in two stacks, one pile for people and one for places. Recall that wherever they go and whomever they meet, they have the chance to tell the good news of Jesus' love. Form groups of three. Ask each group to take one card from each pile and then work together to create a skit in which they talk about Jesus in that place. After a few minutes, have groups present their skits to everyone.
- 4. Do Not Be Afraid** Learners will ponder what it means to follow Jesus as they discuss contemporary stories. Form four groups. Give one group one of the situation cards from Resource Sheet 4 (Should I Follow?). Tell each group to read the story on its card and then discuss reasons why the person might follow the sense of calling and reasons why he or she might not. After about five minutes, gather the group together and discuss: What were some of the strongest reasons your person may have had for deciding to follow Jesus' call? For deciding not to? What did your group decide that your character should do? Remind the group that Jesus told Peter: "Do not be afraid." How might remembering Jesus' words help his followers today?

CLOSING

Gather around the worship space. Add a green paper link for Ordinary Time (or Season after the Epiphany) to the church year paper chain.

Ask the group to clap hands in time with the music while singing "Dance and Sing" (Color Pack 28; track 4 on *Singing the Feast*, 2018–2019).

Pray aloud:

God, thank you for making us your children and calling us to follow Jesus. Give us the courage to do as you ask. Amen.

Say good-bye to each child with this blessing: "(Name), look for ways to tell the good news of God's love."

Dance and Sing

Dance and sing, for God
will be with you,
Glory, hallelujah!
Dance and sing, for God
will be with you,
Glory, hallelujah!

Chorus:
Dance and sing for joy,
Glory, hallelujah!
Dance and sing for joy,
Glory, hallelujah!

*Repeat verse and chorus (1x)
Repeat chorus (3x)*

The Amazing Catch of Fish

Simon, James, and John were fishermen. They worked hard to catch fish to sell in the market. One night, they went out fishing and didn't catch a single fish.

The next morning, Simon sat on the shore cleaning his nets. He was so tired and discouraged. "I hope we catch some fish tonight," he thought.

Suddenly, Simon heard loud voices. He looked up and saw his friend Jesus walking toward him. A crowd of people followed him. "Simon," called Jesus. "Would you take me out a little ways from shore in your boat so I can talk to this crowd from your boat? That way, everyone will be able to hear me."

"Sure, I'll take you out!" exclaimed Simon. Jesus climbed into the boat and Simon rowed out. The crowd quieted down and listened to Jesus teach about God's love.

When Jesus finished speaking, he turned to Simon and said, "Row out into the deep water and let down your nets." Simon was puzzled. Jesus was an amazing teacher, but what did he know about fishing? Still, Simon did what Jesus said.

To Simon's amazement, the nets quickly filled with fish. Not just one or two fish, but loads of fish! It was an enormous catch of fish. There were so many fish that the nets started to break! Simon called out to his friends James and John to come and help him. Everyone who saw this was totally amazed.

Simon was worried. "Jesus must be very close to God to have the power to bring in all those fish," he thought. "I am not good enough to be his friend."

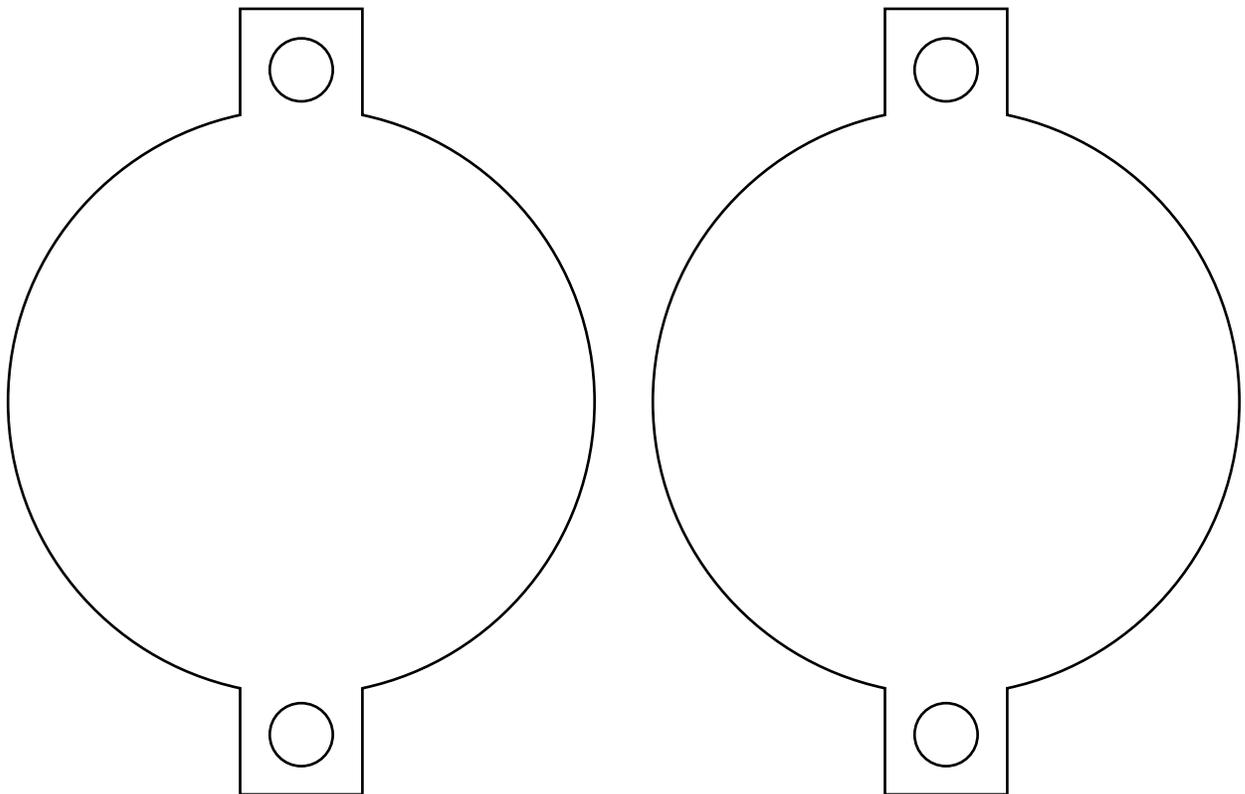
Jesus looked at Simon, "Don't be afraid," Jesus said gently. "Come and follow me. From now on you will bring in people instead of fish. You will help me tell them about God's love."

When they got back to shore, Simon, James, and John left their boats and followed Jesus. They wanted to help bring people to meet Jesus and spread the good news about God's love.

Pencil Toppers

Directions:

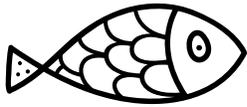
1. Write a message about God's love on each pencil topper.
2. Use markers or colored pencils to draw patterns and designs around the words.
3. Cut out the toppers and use a paper hole punch to punch holes where indicated.
4. Slide pencils through the holes.
5. Give the pencils to friends or family members. It's an easy way to tell them about God's love!



Ideas for messages:

- God's love is for all.
- God loves you.
- God's love surrounds you.
- God's love is like _____.

Fishy Questions



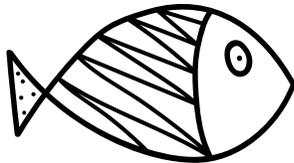
What is one way to tell other people about Jesus?



Who is one person you could tell about Jesus?



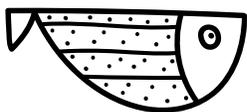
What would you say if someone asked you,
“Who is Jesus?”



What would you say if someone asked you, “What are
some things Jesus did?”



What would you say if someone asked you, “What did
Jesus teach?”



What would you say if someone asked you, “Why do you
go to Sunday school?”



One way to tell others about Jesus is by acting like he did.
What is one way you can behave like Jesus this week?

Should I Follow?

1

Mia notices that there is a moving truck across the street at a home that's been vacant for months.

After watching out her window for a few minutes, she sees a girl about her age. She's carrying a box and a guitar case just like Mia's! Even though she is naturally pretty shy, Mia wonders if Jesus is calling her to reach out to this new neighbor.

3

Sophie and her mom are headed out to spend her Christmas money on some new clothes she's

been wanting. As they walk along, they see a little boy sitting on the edge of the sidewalk with his mom. There is a sign in front of them: "We are hungry. Can you help?" Sophie sees a fast food restaurant across the street, but she knows she won't have enough money for new clothes if she buys a fast food gift card to give them. Still, she feels Jesus calling.

2

"Take a look at this!" says Juan's pastor as she passes him a brochure for church camp. "I know

you love the outdoors, and I think this would be a great opportunity for you! There is money in the church budget to help pay your fees, and I'm sure you could find a friend who'd like to go along!" Juan studies the picture of kids kayaking on a lake on the front of the brochure. The place looks great, but he's never been away from home for a whole week. He feels a stir of interest, as though Jesus is calling him to this adventure.

4

Marc's youth group is serving soup at the homeless shelter tonight. He has never served

before, and he is given a job in the serving line, passing out bowls of soup. After a while, the coordinator asks him to go sit and eat with a homeless family who has a son about his age. He wonders what in the world he could talk about with them and doesn't really want to go. "C'mon," he says. "They're just people." In spite of his nervousness, Marc feels like Jesus might be calling him to go meet the boy.