

28.23 Calling Four Fishermen (Matthew 4:13–22; Mark 1:16–20)

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows
[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that usually should not be read. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.
- Nets

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: (Words are enlarged at the end of this lesson for use as flash cards)

- *the Sea of Galilee* (also called *Gennesaret*, *Chinnereth*, and *Tiberias*: This lake is a pear-shaped body of water, about twelve and a half miles long and about seven miles across at its widest place. It is six hundred eighty-two feet below sea level; its waters are fresh, clear and abounding in fish, and it is surrounded by hills and mountains, which rise from six hundred to a thousand feet above it. Its greatest depth is about one hundred sixty-five feet (TFG in Online Bible).
- *disciples*: people who follow a great teacher. In Bible times disciples stayed with the teacher, ate with him, learned from him every day.

Scripture: (ESV)

Matthew 4:13 And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, 14 so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: 15 “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— 16 the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.”

17 From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

18 While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. 19 And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him. 21 And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. 22 Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Mark 1:16 Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” 18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19 And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20 And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

Introduction/Review:

It is interesting to me that the first four to six disciples, chosen by Jesus from among John the Baptist’s disciples, ✓are not mentioned in Matthew, Mark, or Luke but only in the Gospel of John. We can see in the book of John that these first disciples went with Jesus to the marriage in Cana of Galilee; to Capernaum, where Jesus spent a short time; to Jerusalem, where they witnessed Jesus’ cleansing of the temple; to Judea, where they baptized; and to Sychar of Samaria, where Jesus talked with the woman at the well. ✓I am guessing that the disciples went back to their hometowns at that point and did not see the nobleman whose son was healed 20 miles away. Nor does it seem they were present in Nazareth, when the people tried to force Jesus off a cliff in order to do away with Him.

✓Perhaps the disciples considered their following of Jesus to be a temporary matter, lasting a short time. The

Bible isn't specific on this point, but it does tell us that Jesus, like John the Baptist (who was now in prison), began to preach just as John the Baptist had preached, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is right here."

Story:

"People walking in darkness have seen a great light"

Jesus continued to preach in Galilee [locate on a map] and ✓set up headquarters in Capernaum* (Matt. 4:13). In fact, Matthew 4 tells us that His being in this area was a direct fulfillment of scripture (Is. 8:21–9:2). These verses in Isaiah mention this place and then say, "The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned."** Who do you suppose is that Light? [Jesus.] These people, living in a faraway dark place, in Galilee*** of the Gentiles (unloved by the Jews), will see Jesus, who is the "Light of the world."

Calling Peter and Andrew

So up there Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee. He saw two brothers whom we have already met—Simon Peter and Andrew. These guys were fishermen, and they were casting their nets into the water.

Jesus called to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

What does that mean? [Allow answers.] It means that they would follow Jesus—become His disciples—they would help Him as He changed the hearts of people to believe in Him and to live for Him—something like fishing for men, not for fish.

Immediately—with no hesitation—Simon Peter and Andrew left their jobs as fishermen and followed Jesus to help Him "fish for men." They had followed Him before; they knew Jesus was worth every bit of their time and effort. He was worth their leaving jobs behind.

Calling James and John

The three—Jesus, Peter, and Andrew—walked along the shore a little further. There they saw another set of brothers—James and John. These men were in their boats, mending nets with their father, Zebedee. Jesus called these brothers ✓to be fishers of men, and they, too, immediately followed Jesus. ✓Surely, they had already told their father about Jesus; so Zebedee was probably prepared for his sons' leaving the family business.

Jesus is worth all our devotion. Peter, Andrew, James, and John all knew Jesus was worthy of their full discipleship. Are you a disciple of Jesus?

Notes from Online Bible:

*"Our Lord seems to have chosen [Capernaum] for several reasons. Four or five of the Twelve lived there; it had a considerable and mixed population, securing some freedom from that intense bigotry which even to this day characterizes all places where Jews in large numbers dwell nearly alone; it was central, so that not only on the approach of the annual festivals did large numbers pass through it or near it, but on any occasion multitudes could easily be collected about it; and for crossing and recrossing the lake, which our Lord had so often occasion to do, no place could be more convenient" (JFB in Online Bible).

** "And to them which sat in the region and shadow of death: the same persons who sit in darkness, sit also in the region of death; for such are dead in trespasses and sins: where there is no spiritual light, there is no spiritual life, and such are in danger of the second death; but the happiness of these people was, that to them "light is sprung up," like the rising sun, and this without their asking or seeking for: Christ, the sun of righteousness, arose upon them, without any desert, desire, or expectation of theirs, with healing in his wings; and cured them of their darkness and deadness, turned them from darkness to light, and caused them to pass from death to life" (Gill in Online Bible).

*** “Galilee was a remote part of the nation, the inhabitants were less cultivated and refined, their very language was broad and uncouth to the curious, their *speech betrayed them*. They who were picked up at the sea of Galilee, had not the advantages and improvements, no, not of the more polished Galilaeans; yet thither Christ went, to call his apostles that were to be the prime ministers of state in his kingdom, for he *chooses the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise*.

“They were men that were accustomed to *hardships* and hazards; the fisher’s trade, more than any other, is laborious and perilous; fishermen must be often wet and cold; they must watch, and wait, and toil, and be often in *peril by waters*. Note, Those who have learned to bear hardships, and to run hazards, are best prepared for the fellowship and discipleship of Jesus Christ. Good soldiers of Christ must endure hardness” (MH in Online Bible).

Lessons from this lesson:

- Like the fishermen, work hard at your job.
- When Jesus calls some people to follow Him, he wants them to leave everything behind and do His will. (Think of missionaries.) Are you willing to follow Jesus if He calls you to follow Him in this way?
- All of us can be “fishers of men”—those who evangelize, seeking to win people to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- When you grow up, if your children want to leave everything to follow Jesus, encourage them to do it. (Think of ✓Zebedee who, we assume, had no reservations about his sons’ following Jesus.)
- We should pray for the parents and extended families of missionaries who live in far-away places.

Activities:

- Play dough: nets; fish; boats
- Play “Follow the Leader”; set up safe obstacles to cause greater interest in this game and to demonstrate that following Jesus is not always easy
- Play Big Fish, Little Fish tag: Use ropes to form two circular “fish nets” on the floor on opposite sides of the room. Choose two children to be fishermen. Say, “Jesus had many friends who were fishermen. They caught lots of fish, and then they sold the fish in the market for people to eat. When I call out, ‘Big fish, little fish, swim, swim, swim!’ everyone will run from the fishermen. If a fisherman tags you, go stand inside one of the fish nets. When the nets get too crowded, I’ll call out, ‘Big fish, little fish, swim away free!’ Then you can all escape and play again.” Change fishermen often. (Copied; for preschool–Gr. 2)
- Review the story by having students tell it with flannelgraph.
- Eat fish crackers for snack, or fill a clean goldfish bowl with prepared blue Jell-O. Add gummy-type fish when it’s normally time to add fruit (from Group).
- Review Questions: (Game: If playing with teams, pin two produce nets to the flannel board. Cut out small fish from card stock. A correct answer allows the students to place fish in their team’s net.)
 1. Which town became Jesus’ headquarters? [Capernaum.]
 2. How was Jesus’ being in Capernaum a fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy? [It was in the region of Naphtali and Zebulon, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.]
 3. Finish the sentence: “The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great—.” [Light.]
 4. What had dawned upon those dwelling in the region and shadow of death? [Light.]
 5. Why did Jesus begin to preach, “Repent”? [The kingdom of heaven is at hand.]
 6. Who were the first fishermen brothers that Jesus called to be disciples? [Simon Peter and Andrew.]
 7. Who were the second fishermen brothers that Jesus called to be disciples? [James and John.]
 8. What was the name of the father of James and John? [Zebedee.]

9. What did Jesus say the disciples would become if they followed Him? [Fishers of men.]
10. How long did it take for these four fishermen to decide to follow Jesus? [They immediately left their nets.]

Handwork:

- Make a boat on water. (See sample below.) Use a card stock for background, construction paper for the waves and for the boat. Glue waves at the bottom of the paper. Fit the boat under a wave; glue. Write, "Jesus said, 'Follow Me.'" on the foreground. Glue or tape 4x5" pieces of soft produce net bags on the boat for nets.
- Or color the *ichthus* design found below. (Copied)

Memory Verse[s]:

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- John 1:1–14:
 - 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
 - 2 He was in the beginning with God.
 - 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.
 - 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.
 - 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.
 - 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John.
 - 7 This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe.
 - 8 He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light.
 - 9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.
 - 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.
 - 11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.
 - 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:
 - 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
 - 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Sea of Galilee

disciples





"Follow Me," said Jesus,

