

TITLE:	Jesus' Disciples
THEME:	The Life of Jesus
AIM:	To understand who the disciples were and to consider your calling to Jesus.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Jesus didn't choose the biggest and the best. It wasn't their jobs, their characters or their credentials that made them special. It was God's transforming power working in their lives that made them special.

They don't have to be perfect. They don't have to be the cleverest, the most popular, the prettiest or the most talented. God wants each of them to follow Jesus because He loves them and thinks they're amazingly special just for being them!

WARM UP

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHxKeziyuQk>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7IUL9yq0We8>

The 1st video wants to start at about 6:30

Watch this as an introduction to the calling of the disciples. They were an unlikely group and didn't necessarily get on together but Jesus called them all.

MAIN TEACHING

A Motley Crew (Jesus' disciples)

Who can list the 12 disciples? Who knows anything about them?

Matthew (Levi): As a tax collector, he was viewed by fellow Jews as a traitor working for the Roman occupiers and a corrupt sinner.

Simon the Zealot: In stark contrast to Matthew, Simon belonged to a faction dedicated to overthrowing Roman rule, often using violent, extremist, or terrorist tactics.

Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John: These four were local fishermen from Galilee, likely uneducated and not accustomed to traveling far from home. They were often referred to as "unschooled" or "ordinary" men.

Thomas: Often remembered for his doubt, he initially questioned the Resurrection.

Judas Iscariot: The treasurer of the group, who ultimately betrayed Jesus.

James the Less: Known as one of the lesser-known apostles, about whom little is recorded, making him a "forgotten" disciple.

Women Followers: While the core group was 12 men, the ministry included women like Mary Magdalene, who had been delivered from seven demons and supported Jesus from the beginning.

Why the Group was Unlikely

Political Tension: Jesus united polar opposites, such as a tax collector for Rome (Matthew) and a revolutionary against Rome (Simon the Zealot).

Lack of Credentials: The group was generally uneducated, unsophisticated, and lacking the social or religious status usually required of spiritual leaders.

Imperfect Nature: They were characterized by doubt, misunderstandings of Jesus' mission, and, in some cases, fear, often failing to grasp the spiritual nature of the kingdom.

Inclusion of Women: In first-century culture, having women (like Mary Magdalene) travel with a male teacher was highly unusual.

4 of them were local fishermen so probably not very well educated. One, Matthew, was a tax collector and would at the very least been distrusted by the fishermen and probably initially hated and feared by them. As a tax collector Matthew would have been working for the Romans, getting as much money as possible out of his fellow Jews, pocketing some for himself and giving the rest to their enemy the Romans – so he would have been seen as a traitor to his own people. (It's significant that tax collectors were not allowed to be witnesses in court in biblical times because they were viewed as being far too untrustworthy).

Another of the disciples, Simon the Zealot, was probably a revolutionary, plotting to get rid of the Romans; Thomas seemed full of certainty one moment and then doubt another; Judas became the betrayer; James and John had an over ambitious mother – out for all she could get for her boys; and Peter, who claimed total loyalty to Jesus but then denied that he even knew him.

On the surface this looked to be a completely disastrous choice of a team by Jesus, so why did he do it?

Read together **1 Corinthians 1:26-31**. Although this was written about the Christians in Corinth it could equally have been written about the disciples. They could never boast they had done anything in their own strength, but only through Jesus.

Finish by reading **Acts 4:13**.

The Point: Jesus called ordinary people to be his friend, they became extraordinary because they were his friends.

Jesus Friend of Sinners (The calling of some of the disciples)

Get into pairs. Half the pairs take **Luke 5:1-11** to look up and the other half **Luke 5:27-31**.

Make a note of anything they find significant from these verses. Think particularly about how Simon Peter or Levi (Matthew) felt after their encounter with Jesus.

Questions to look at:

Luke 5:1-11

Why do you think Simon Peter reacted so strongly when the fish came in?

What do you think Jesus meant by “From now on you will fish for people”?

Why do you think Jesus called ordinary workers instead of powerful or religious leaders?

Luke 5:27-31

Why do you think Jesus chose someone like Levi?

Why do you think eating together was such a big deal in this story?

What does this story show us about who Jesus welcomes?

Discuss answers as a group.

The main impact this encounter with Jesus had on Peter, was Peter's own awareness of how bad (sinful) he was and his growing realisation that Jesus was no ordinary person – but someone special, powerful, holy even. Jesus, however, responds not by condemning Peter but telling him not to be afraid but to accept his new mission of 'fishing for people'. In other words Peter was now to start introducing other people to Jesus.

Levi, once he had met with Jesus and chosen to follow him, chose to invite all his friends round for a party so that they too could meet with Jesus. Others were quick to point out how these just weren't the sort of people Jesus should be hanging out with, but Jesus soon puts them in their place by saying that he has come to save those who know they are doing wrong, giving them an opportunity to change their lives around.

The same is true for us today – when we first meet Jesus, we will be aware that we are just not good enough, but if we admit that to God then He will accept us and make us aware that He has a plan for our lives.

The Point: Jesus came to be friends with sinners and promises them new life if they believe in Him.

Catchers of Fish, Catchers of Men. (considering your position with Jesus)

Ask everyone to think for a moment about **what they think they will be doing in 10 years' time**. Will they be working? If so what kind of job will they be doing? Will they still be in education? Will they be back-packing around the world? imagine a typical day 10 years on. It's 10am, what do they think they will be doing?

They can share with the group.

Then ask them to imagine that they look up to find someone they know by sight smiling at them and saying “Leave all this and come and work for me.”

In small groups they need to write down a list the 5 questions that would immediately spring to mind such as "How much are you going to pay me?", "What's in it for me?" etc. Ask them to write down the questions on a piece of paper but leaving a good size gap between each question.

When each group has finished collect in the question papers. Thinking back to the 2 sets of brothers who were called by Jesus, there may have been questions asked of Jesus before they realised who he was and followed him.

Each small group is going to imagine they are Jesus answering Simon, Andrew, James and John's questions.

Give each group another group's questions which they wrote down earlier. Each group must now try and answer the questions like Jesus would. E.g. to 'How much are you going to pay me?' Jesus could have answered 'Don't worry about getting money and wealth here, treasure in heaven is far more important' (roughly from Matthew 6:19-21)

The Point: To reflect on Peter, Andrew, James and John's response to follow Jesus and how this challenges us.

Final thoughts/ Jesus is calling you.

Group discussion questions:

What does it look like to follow Jesus by loving people others ignore?

What are some "nets" that people your age hold onto?

What might Jesus be asking you to trust Him with right now?

What's hard about following Jesus when you don't know the outcome?

What's one small step you can take this week to follow Jesus more closely?

The point: To consider the what their reaction is to Jesus' calling.

TAKEAWAY

Equipment:

Videos

Pens and paper.

Question papers

EXTRA INFORMATION