THE CHURCH IN NEW YORK CITY

CHILDREN’S MEETING LESSON

# DATE: October 1, 2017

**SUBJECT: GOD’S CALLING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: In the Gospels—the Calling of Simon, Andrew, James and John to be Fishers of Men**

# SCRIPTURE: Luke 5:1-11; Matt. 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20

**AIM:** To help the children see that the Lord is calling us to follow Him and be fishers of men, to bring other people to Jesus.

**MEMORY VERSES:** Matthew 4:19-20 (And He said to them, Come after Me, and I will make you fishers of men. And immediately leaving the nets, they followed Him.); Mark 1:17-18 (And Jesus said to them, Come after Me, and I will cause you to become fishers of men. And immediately leaving the nets, they followed Him); 1 Timothy 2:3b-4 (...our Savior God, Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge of the truth.)

**SUGGESTED SONGS:** 35 (Fishers of Men); 2507 (Follow Me); *BSS Go Jesus Go Song #6 (Jesus Passed By the Sea); BSS Acts Song #3 (You Shall Be My Witnesses); 130 (Be Strong and of Good Courage); 76 (Come to Jesus); 153 (Obey His Call)*

**CRAFT IDEAS:** (1) Make a fishing pole out of a wooden dowel, string, and paper fish. May use magnets on the end of the string and paper clips attached to the fish. (2) Make a net out of burlap, mesh bag, produce mesh bags (onions or clementines) or string. Glue pictures of fish or people within the net. Draw a picture of a fishing boat. (3) Make a fish outline from pipe cleaners. String on pony beads and attach names of friends to each fish.

**APPROACH:** Ask the children if they have ever gone fishing. What do they think—is catching a fish easy or hard? What equipment would they need to catch a fish? When is the best time to go fishing—day or night? What did it feel like when they finally caught a fish?

**BACKGROUND:** Some of the Lord’s disciples were fishermen. Fishing was an ancient trade and an honored one. Since the diet of the common people at that time was largely of fish and bread, fishing was a big industry. Fishermen had unique characteristics—they especially needed to be strong, diligent, and patient.

To catch large quantities of fish, the fishermen used special nets. One of the types of nets they used was called a seine (pronounced like “sane”). It could be five hundred yards long and twelve feet high. It had floats to hold up the top end and sinkers to hold down the bottom end. It was stretched out like a twelve-foot high wall and used to enclose (sometimes by two circling boats) large schools of fish. The fishermen pulled in the catch by the long ropes that were attached to each end of the net. (This may have been the type of net that Simon, Andrew, James and John used.) The nets were expensive and needed a lot of maintenance. When they were dragged through the water they accumulated seaweed and small rocks. Also, larger rocks at the bottom of the lake would sometimes rip the nets in various places. Thus, after a night of fishing, (fishing was done at night because the fish came to the surface at night to eat) the nets needed to be washed and often mended. The boats the fishermen used were large and sturdy, built to carry large amounts of fish and built to weather the frequent storms that unexpectedly swept over the lake. Note: Serving saints might want to consider showing pictures of the seine fishing nets to help the children envision the equipment better.

The Sea of Galilee (also known as the Lake of Gennesaret), the place of today’s story, is located sixty miles north of Jerusalem. Though called a sea, it is really a lake. At the Lord’s time, and even today, it is noted for being filled with a lot of fish. (Note: A map showing Jerusalem and the Sea of Galilee might be helpful)

**CONTENT:** One day, Jesus was standing by the Sea of Galilee teaching the people the word of God. A crowd was pressing around Him to hear the word. He saw two ships lying by the lake but the fishermen were not in them. Simon and his brother Andrew were casting their nets into the sea, washing them after their night of fishing (Matt. 4:18; Luke 5:2); John and James, the Sons of Zebedee, were mending theirs (Matt. 4:21).

The Lord Jesus got into one of the ships, Simon’s, and asked him to put out a little from the land. The Lord sat down and began to teach the people from the ship. After He finished speaking, He said to Simon, “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.”

At this point, Simon must have had a lot of thoughts. They had been fishing all night and had caught nothing. He also knew it was not the right time of day to fish. (Remember, fishing was done at night.) He knew all this, yet he was open. He told the Lord, “Master, through the whole night we toiled and caught nothing; but based on Your word I will let down the nets.”

When they did this, they “enclosed a great number of fish”. It must have been very great because their nets began to tear apart! They had to signal for their partners, James and John, to come and help them. They came and filled both the boats with fish, and the boats (though large and sturdy) began to sink!

Simon Peter was so deeply impressed when he saw this, that he fell down at Jesus’ knees saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, Lord.” The Bible says that amazement had taken possession of him and all that were with him (including James and John, Simon’s partners) because of the catch of the fish which they took. The Lord told Simon not to be afraid and that from now on he would be catching men alive. When they brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed Him.

**SUGGESTED APPLICATIONS TO CHOOSE FROM:** *Please pray and fellowship over which applications to cover. Please do not try to cover all the applications. It is sufficient to cover just* ***one or two applications*** *which are appropriate for the age group of the children you are serving.*

* **The Lord wants every person in the world to believe into Him.** The Bible compares people to fish. Jesus wants to ‘catch’ them all (1 Tim. 2:4) but He needs some fishers of men. Just as in the Sea of Galilee there are a lot of fish around us. As fishers of men, the most important thing to do is pray. For example, “Lord, I pray for my friend John.” In addition to daily prayer, we may also say something, perhaps share a verse or invite a friend or neighbor to children’s meeting or our homes to hear about the Lord.
* **We need to be strong and patient to be fishers of men.** Like the Galilean fishermen, we have to be strong. Sometimes a fish may put up a fight. However, like any fisherman, we need to be patient. Sometimes our friends may not be interested the first time we tell them about the Lord, but we should not give up. Keep praying. Keep taking the opportunity to speak a little something.
* **Bringing our friends to the Lord does not depend on our own labor.** The Lord will gather many around us for us “to catch”. The Lord knew where the fish were that day in the Sea of Galilee. If we pray, He will direct us and guide us to the fish. We simply need to be open (like Simon Peter) and ready. Also, we need to realize that on that day on the Sea of Galilee the Lord was in the boat! As we fish, He is with us. We are not doing something without Him.
* **Use every opportunity to tell our relatives and friends about the Lord.** When the Lord called the disciples to follow Him, they readily responded. “And immediately leaving the nets, they followed Him” (Mark 1:18). Perhaps there are times when the opportunity arises for us to invite our relatives, friends, or neighbors to children’s meeting or to tell them about God. We might rather continue playing or doing other activities, but it would be wonderful if we could obey God immediately. Bringing our friends to know God is one way to follow God.

Reference: *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus.* By Henri Daniel-Rops. Hawthorne Books, Inc. 1962

Adapted from the Church in New York City Children’s Meeting Lessons: 2/28/82; 2/11/90, 10/9/94; 9/24/00; 9/24/06; 9/30/12