

Jesus Chooses 12 Apostles



Scripture Reference:

[Matthew 4:18-22](#); [Matthew 9:9](#); [John 1:35-50](#); [Matthew 10:1-4](#)

Suggested Emphasis: Follow Jesus.

Memory Work: Name the 12 Original Apostles: Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Thomas, Matthew, Bartholomew, James (the less), Simon, Thaddeus, Judas



Background Study



Story Introduction



Telling the Story



Review Questions



Songs



Learning Activities



Other Online Resources

Story Overview:

Many people followed Jesus. These followers were called disciples. There were many disciples but Jesus chose twelve men to be His special followers. These men were granted special abilities and were called Apostles.

Background Study:

After spending [forty days in the wilderness after his baptism](#), Jesus returned to the area around the Jordan River. John the Baptist was still in the area preaching and many people had become disciples, or pupils, of John. Disciples liked to spend lots of time with their teacher because they wanted to be like their teacher.

John the Baptist was not concerned about his own popularity. He wanted the people he taught to follow Jesus. John pointed Andrew and Peter to Jesus. They began to follow him but might have gone back to fishing for a while before it was time to begin traveling with Jesus.

Andrew and Simon Peter were disciples of John and were the first disciples called by Jesus. Andrew heard about Jesus first and then went to get his brother, Simon ([John 1:40-41](#)). They were fishermen. Simon was already known

by the name “Peter” which was a Greek name. Jesus tells him that he will be known as “Cephas” which is the Aramaic translation of Peter and means “rock” [John 1:42](#). This will have more meaning later when Jesus uses Peter’s name to teach a lesson about the kingdom ([Matthew 16:18](#)). Peter is mentioned in the Gospels and Acts more than any other apostle. He preached the first Gospel Sermon ([Acts 2](#)) and wrote two New Testament books.

The disciples must have had very tender hearts to follow Jesus so quickly. They immediately left their careers (fishermen, tax collector, etc.) to travel with Jesus. Most of them did this based on his simple invitation of “Follow Me”. It was not their education or talent that made them special - it was their commitment to Jesus.

All followers of Jesus who try to be like him are his disciples in the general sense (including you and me). In the early church, disciples were eventually called “Christians” ([Acts 11:26](#)). In the ministry of Jesus there were many disciples but twelve of them had a particular role. These were sometimes referred to as “the 12 Apostles”, “the Apostles”, or even “the Twelve”. In addition to the 12 apostles the word “apostle” can also have a more general meaning of one sent on a mission.

Just before the crucifixion there were 12 apostles including Judas Iscariot. After Judas betrayed Jesus and then hung himself only 11 apostles remained. He was replaced by Matthias in [Acts 1:12-26](#). So Matthias then became one of the twelve.

Later, Jesus came to Paul and named him as a special apostle to the Gentiles ([Acts 9](#) - especially verse 15).

The names of the apostles can be confusing! Some have the same name and others are known by more than one name.

There was Simon Peter (Cephas) and also Simon the Zealot. A Zealot was a member of a Jewish revolutionary group that was trying to overthrow the Roman government and free the Jews.

There was James the son of Alphaeus (sometimes called “James the Less because he was younger than the other James) and then James, the son of Zebedee.

James had a brother John (not to be confused with [John the Baptist](#)) and these both numbered among the 12. The brothers, James and John worked together in their father’s fishing business before following Jesus. They were known as the “sons of thunder” because of their tempers.

This John was one of Jesus’ closest friends. Later, when Jesus was dying on the cross, Jesus asked John to take care of Mary. This John is traditionally the author of the Gospel of John, 1-3 John and the book of Revelation.

Matthew was also known as Levi ([Matthew 9:9](#) and [Luke 5:27-28](#)). He was a tax collector for the Romans when Jesus called him as an apostle.

Bartholomew’s other name was “Nathanael” and he seemed to almost always be mentioned with Philip. [Matthew 10:3](#); [Mark 3:18](#); [Luke 6:14](#); [John 1:45-49, 21:2](#); and [Acts 1:13](#).

Thaddeus is called “Judas” in [Luke 6:16](#) and he is sometimes referred to as “Judas not Iscariot”. Judas Iscariot was the one who later betrayed Jesus.



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Way to Introduce the Story:

Before class today write the names of the 12 Apostles on the chalk/white board or on a paper.

Play a game of “follow the leader” and lead the children around the church building or outside. Talk about what it means to lead and what it means to follow. “Who should be the leader in our lives? (Jesus) What does it mean to follow Jesus? (Do what He did. Act the way He did. Do what He wants because He is the leader.)

In our story today we are going to learn about some men who followed Jesus. Some of them used to be fishermen but they decided to leave their fishing and follow Jesus. Jesus told them that they would not be fishing for fish any more. They would be fishing for men. Jesus would make them fishers of men. Here are the names of the men who became fishers of men (show the children the names of the apostles).

How many of you can make “fish lips”? Today, as I tell the story I want you to make fish lips every time I say the name of one of the men on this list.”

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The Story:

Have you ever played the game “follow the leader”? One person is the leader and everyone else follows. Whatever the leader does every follower copies and does exactly the same. The followers want to be like the leader.

In the New Testament times a follower was called a disciple. John the Baptist was a leader and he had disciples who followed him.

His disciples wanted to be just like John the Baptist and do and say things just like him. Andrew and Simon Peter were brothers and fishermen. They were also disciples of John the Baptist.

But there was one man John the Baptist admired more than anyone. That man was Jesus. John the Baptist knew that Jesus was sent by God to save the world.

When Jesus began his ministry he asked people to follow him and become his disciples. One day when Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee he saw Andrew and Simon Peter casting nets to catch fish. Jesus called out to them and said, “Follow me and I will make you fishers of people.”

What do you think Jesus meant by fishers of men? Fishermen usually cast out nets and bring fish in. Fishers of men go fishing for men. They teach people and then bring them to God. Peter and Andrew wanted to become fishers of people. They left their fishing immediately and followed Jesus.

Going on, they saw two other brothers, James and John, mending nets with their father, Zebedee. Jesus called them and said, “Follow me”.

James and John left their boat and their father and began to follow Jesus.

Jesus’ group of followers was growing. Now Jesus had four disciples - Peter, Andrew, James and John. On His way

to Galilee, Jesus found Philip and invited him to come along too. Philip was from Bethsaida, the same town as Andrew and Peter.

Philip went to find his friend Nathanael. "Nathanael, we've found the one that Moses wrote about in the Scripture! He is Jesus from Nazareth."

When Nathanael met Jesus he was very surprised. He had never met Jesus before but Jesus knew all about him. Because of this Nathanael knew that Jesus was someone very special sent from God. He started following Jesus too. You might know Nathanael by his other name. His other name was Bartholomew.

Jesus called others to follow him. Matthew was a tax collector in the town of Capernaum. Some people thought that Matthew could never be like Jesus. Tax collectors were often cheaters. But Jesus knew that Matthew could have a good heart. When Jesus said, "Matthew, come follow me" Matthew got up from the table and began following Jesus.

Jesus invited others to follow him. Soon James (called "James the Less" because he was younger than the other James) and Thomas followed Jesus. Another Simon, Thaddeus and Judas Iscariot.

More and more people became disciples (followers) of Jesus. Even though many followed Jesus twelve men were with him almost all of the time. This group of twelve men became known as the "twelve apostles". Jesus gave these men special jobs to do and special powers to make sick people well and to cast demons away.

Peter, Andrew, James and John. Philip, Thomas, Matthew and Bartholomew (Nathanael). James (the less), Simon, Thaddeus and Judas.

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download the slideshow](#) or [click here to download the pictures to print.](#)

Be selective. Each teacher is unique so only use the illustrations that best relate to the way YOU are telling the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Review Questions:

1. What kind of fishermen did Jesus tell the apostles that they would be? Fishers of men.
2. How many original apostles were there? 12
3. Name the twelve apostles. Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Thomas, Matthew, Bartholomew, James the Less, Simon, Thaddeus, Judas.

Song Suggestions:

- [Apostle Song](#)
- [Fished All Night and Caught No Fishes Song](#)
- [Fishers of Men Song](#)

- [Apostle Song with slideshow \(outside source on Youtube\)](#)
- [The Books of the New Testament.](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

- Sing: [The Apostle Song \(Jesus Called Them One by One\)](#) You could take the song a step further to add a visual element. Write the lyrics on a white board or piece of paper big enough for your class to see. As you go through the song, have the students identify the names of the apostles and circle them.
- Play "Apostle Bingo." Make a bingo grid and put the names of the apostles (instead of numbers) in the squares. Play like normal bingo but use names instead of numbers.
- Play "Apostle Concentration." Make up 12 matching pairs of cards (2 with Andrew written on them, 2 Peters, 2 Johns, etc.). Mix up the 24 cards and lay them face down on the table. Children take turns turning two cards over. If the two cards they turn over match, then they get a point for the matching pair - and also win an extra turn. Keep playing until all cards have been matched. The child who has won the most pairs wins. [Printable pictures of the apostles from Bible Fun for Kids and More](#)
- Write the apostles' names on 12 separate cards. Hide the cards before class and let the children find them.

Check the [Teaching Ideas](#) page on this website for ideas that are adaptable to any lesson.



[Click here for "Naming of the Twelve Apostles" printables to print on A4 size paper](#)
[Click here for "Naming of the Twelve Apostles" printables to print on Letter size \(USA\)](#)

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Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring pages and worksheets about Jesus calling his first disciples \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring pages and worksheets about Jesus calling the apostles "fishers of men" \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Printable pictures of the apostles from Bible Fun for Kids and More](#)
- [PowerPoint slides with Bible facts and traditions about each apostle. Source not apparent.](#)
- [Chart: "Interesting Facts about the Apostles" from biblecharts.org](#)
- [Craft: Fishnet out of recycled mesh net for Fishers of Men from scrapreusedandrecycledartprojects.blogspot.co.nz](#)
- [Craft: Wreath about following Jesus from sundayschoolcrafts.net](#)
- [Craft: Patterns and instructions for a boat and people from sundayschoolkids.com](#)
- [Craft: Printable pattern form simple apostle finger puppets toddler-activities-at-home.com](#)
- [Craft: Cute fish mobile made from toilet paper or paper towel tubes from catholicicing.com](#)
- [Craft: "Teach a man to fish" craft from a handprint busybeekidscrafts.com](#)
- [Lesson plan and activities: Great visuals and fun egg carton activity that students could easily make on their](#)

[own during class or in groups found from kidsbibledebjackson.blogspot.co.nz](#)

- [A good selection of both online and printable puzzles, activities and story words covering the apostles, Mary and Martha from gardenofpraise.com](#)

<https://www.pinterest.com/marynnz/jesus-early-ministry/>
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