

WEEK THREE: CALLING THE DISCIPLES

Monday

Matthew 4:12–22

When Jesus was about 30 years old, he went to live in the city of Capernaum, by the Sea of Galilee. There he began his ministry, teaching and preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is near."

One day, while Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers named Andrew and Peter. They were fishermen and were cleaning up their fishing nets as Jesus walked nearby.

Jesus called to Andrew and Peter, saying, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Right away, Andrew and Peter left their fishing boats and followed Jesus.

Jesus walked a little farther and saw two more brothers named James and John. They were sitting in a fishing boat with their father Zebedee. They were repairing their fishing nets after a long, hard night of fishing. Jesus called them to follow him too. Right away, James and John left what they were doing and followed Jesus.

Andrew and Peter, and James and John, were Jesus' first disciples. Jesus chose these men to be his friends and helpers and to follow him wherever he went. They would learn from him and they would help him with his work here on earth. Later, when Jesus went to heaven, his disciples continued his work and told many other people about him and what he had done.

God wants all people to know that he sent Jesus to earth to take away our sins. God gives us pastors and teachers and parents and friends who teach us about Jesus. And God gives us the Bible to read and learn about everything God has done for us. Through faith in Jesus, God makes us his children so we, too, can follow Jesus and share his love with others.

Close with prayer

Tuesday

Mark 2:13–17

One day Jesus went out by the Sea of Galilee. A crowd of people was following him, and he was teaching them. As he passed by, Jesus saw Matthew (also called Levi) sitting at the tax collector's booth, doing his work. Matthew's job was to collect money from his fellow Jews for the Roman government, which ruled over them. People did not like tax collectors because they took their money and because they were often corrupt. But Jesus loved Matthew. He said to Matthew the tax collector, "Follow me."

Matthew got up and followed him. Later, Jesus and his disciples ate a meal at Matthew's house. Jesus sat down with many tax collectors and other people who were known to be sinners. By eating with these people, Jesus was showing that he loved them.

Some Pharisees who were proud of knowing God's rules saw Jesus eating with this tax collector and other sinners. They did not like Jesus bring so kind and friendly with such sinful and socially unacceptable people. So they asked Jesus' disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

Jesus heard the question and answered it himself. He told the Pharisees that it is sick people who need a doctor, not healthy people. He told them, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Sometimes, people think they must become good before they can come to Jesus or be loved by him. Jesus knows we are sinners who do wrong things every day. He came to save sinners. He came to save us. He calls sinners like us to believe in him and follow him.

- **What did Jesus do that the Pharisees did not like?**
- **What did Jesus tell the Pharisees?**

WEEK THREE: ZACCHAEUS

Wednesday

Luke 19:1–10

Jesus went to a city called Jericho. A big crowd began to follow him along the road.

Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector in Jericho, and he was very wealthy. Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, but he was too short and couldn't see over the crowd. So he ran ahead of everyone and climbed up in a sycamore tree. From there, he would be able to see Jesus when he passed by.

When Jesus came near the tree, he looked up at Zacchaeus and said, "Zacchaeus, you come down, for I'm going to your house today."

Zacchaeus hurried down. He was excited to have Jesus come and stay at his house. But some people, who heard what Jesus said, grumbled. They said, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." They did not think that Jesus should be friends with someone like Zacchaeus.

When they got to his house, Zacchaeus stood up and told Jesus that he would give half of what he had to the poor. To anyone whom he had cheated out of tax money, he would pay back four times what he had taken. By making these promises from his heart, Zacchaeus was showing that he had repented of any sins he had committed. Rather than living for himself, Zacchaeus wanted to live for God.

Jesus said, "Salvation has come to this house. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." Zacchaeus didn't have to give to the poor or make up for his sins. He already had salvation, because he loved Jesus.

We, like Zacchaeus, are among the lost whom the Son of Man seeks. We, too, are called to repent and have faith in Jesus, as Zacchaeus did. Jesus gladly forgives our sins and saves us, too.

- **Why did people complain about Jesus going to Zacchaeus' house?**
- **What sins do we need to repent of?**

Close with prayer

Thursday
Genesis 12:1–9

Abram lived in a faraway land called Ur. In that land, the people worshiped lies and meaningless things. These lies and meaningless things they worshipped were represented by statues of false gods made out of metal, wood, or stone. One day, the Lord God spoke to Abram. God told him to leave his home, this place of idol worship, and to travel to a land that God would show him. "I will make you into a great nation," God promised Abram, "and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing."

So when Abram was 75 years old, he took his wife Sarai, and his nephew Lot (his brother's son), and all their possessions, and set out for the land of Canaan. After a very long journey on foot, Abram arrived in Canaan, where the Canaanite people lived. There in Canaan, at a place called Shechem, God appeared to Abram. In thanks, Abram built a place of worship to God. Then Abram moved on to the hill country, where he set up his camp. Once again, he built a place of worship to God and worshiped him.

God kept his word. It took a long time, but a great nation did come from Abram, and God did give the land of Canaan to them. Best of all, the Lord Jesus Christ, the promised Savior, came from that nation of the family line of Abram. Jesus came to save us from our sin. And that is the great blessing the family and nation of Abram has and offers the whole world.

Close with prayer

Friday
Luke 7:36–50

Jonah was a prophet, called by God to proclaim the Word of the Lord. God told Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh, to tell the Ninevites that God was angry with them because of their sin.

But Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh. He was afraid the people would repent. Then God would forgive them. Jonah did not want that to happen – he wanted Nineveh to be destroyed. Jonah did not like the Ninevites. He did not want to talk to them. He did not want to help them. So Jonah tried to run away from God instead. Jonah bought a ticket to sail far away on a ship, away from the presence of the Lord!

But God obviously knew where Jonah was, and he sent a strong wind over the sea. Huge waves crashed over the ship's deck, so that the ship was about to sink. The sailors were terrified. They threw things overboard to make the ship lighter, and they prayed to their gods. But nothing helped.

At last the sailors discovered that God had caused the storm because of Jonah! Jonah told the sailors they must throw him into the sea. Then God would stop the storm.

The sailors did not want to hurt Jonah, so they tried instead to row to shore. When that did not work, they prayed to the Lord and asked him not to hold them guilty for Jonah's life. Then they threw Jonah overboard. Immediately the storm stopped raging.

God sent a great big fish to swallow Jonah and keep him safe from drowning. Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights. He prayed and asked God to help him, and he promised to obey God.

God heard Jonah's prayer. He still loved Jonah, and he forgave Jonah for disobeying him. God told the big fish to throw Jonah out onto dry land.

Once more God told Jonah to go to Nineveh. This time Jonah obeyed. Jonah told the Ninevites that God was going to destroy the city because of the evil they had done.

The people of Nineveh believed God. They put on sackcloth and stopped eating to show they were sorry for their sins. Their king told them to call out to God for forgiveness. God told Jonah he would not destroy the city after all, because the people had turned from their evil ways.

This made Jonah angry again. He still did not want God to forgive the people of Nineveh. But God is loving and patient – even with Jonah, and God helped Jonah see that Jonah must be loving and patient too. Jonah, and all of us, should care about other people, even evil people, praying that they would repent and love God. Jonah, and all of us, should forgive, just as God forgives all who ask for his forgiveness.

Our God is gracious and merciful. He is slow to anger. He abounds in steadfast love. Our God loves to save. He sent a fish to save Jonah. He sent Jonah with a message to save the people of Nineveh. Best of all, he sent Jesus to save us. Jesus died on the cross to pay for the sins of people who didn't like him, including us. After three days in a tomb, Jesus came back to life so that everyone would hear the message about his forgiveness and his love, and trust him as their Savior.

- **How did God show his love and mercy to the people of Nineveh?**
- **How did God show his love and mercy to Jonah?**
- **How has God shown his love and mercy to you?**