

Sports Day session

Title: Called to follow – selected to join the team

Bible base: Matthew 4:18–22

Aim: To help the children to understand that Jesus is God's son and he wants people to join his team and to work with him.

Note: This is a completely 'one off' session taking the theme of sports day and looking at being part of a team. This session would fit very well towards the end of the school year around the schools sports day if possible. If you chose to do everything in this session it could take over an hour, so if time is limited to a lunchtime you will need to pick and choose activities.

For leaders

The Sea of Galilee is really a large lake and in today's passage the words 'sea' and 'lake' are both used. In Jesus' time there were about thirty fishing towns surrounding the lake.

We often read this passage and think how the fishermen got up and followed Jesus and we don't always appreciate that they were actually leaving their businesses behind to go and follow Jesus and become 'fishers of men' to help others come to know Jesus. These fishermen already knew of Jesus and had heard some of his teaching, so when they left their nets to follow him they knew something about him and would have realised that their lives were about to change for ever. They didn't come up with lots of excuses or say 'hey, we're too busy'; they immediately they left their nets and followed Jesus. What does this say to us?

We are called to be like Christ and practice his teachings and therefore share his good news with those we meet. If we are willing, God will use us to be 'fishers of men'.

Stop for a moment before you begin to prepare for your group, and think about when you heard Jesus call you to follow him. Celebrate that you heard and obeyed. Think about who God might be asking you to share his good news with. Are you going to be like the disciples and immediately follow his call? Pray that God will help you as you become a fisher of children through your sessions.

Introduction (2–5 min)

If possible, play the theme tune or introductory song for a sports programme, eg *Match of the Day* or *Test Match Special*, as the children arrive, to welcome them whilst you are doing the register or having a drink if the club runs after school.

Once you are ready to start, have some warm-up activities to the same piece of music, eg do five star jumps, five stretches, touch left elbow to right elevated knee five times, etc.

Game (5–10 min)

Choose one of the following games.

Flapping fishes. This game requires a fair amount of space. You will need:

- plenty of newspapers (check for inappropriate content or pictures first),
- a fish shape cut out of newspaper for each team,
- a plastic cup or a chair,
- a rope or masking tape.

Divide the children into teams of no more than five (otherwise it takes too long and they get bored). Give five sheets of newspaper, folded, to each team. A rope or masking tape marks the start line and a plastic cup, chair or rope indicates the finish line. Relay race by using the newspaper to flap the fish shapes to the finish line and back. If necessary they can pick up the fish and run back.

Alternatively, **Guess the sport**. This game can be played in any space. You will need:

- pictures showing different sports or the names of different sports written out,
- paper and pencil for each team (optional).

You could play this in teams, which fits in well with the idea of sports teams, or as a whole group. One child from each team comes to the leader and is shown a picture or name of a sport, which they then mime to their group. Once the group have guessed correctly, the next person comes to find out the next sport and returns to their group to mime it. The team that completes the list first wins.

This could be played Pictionary-style by the child drawing the sport rather than miming it.

Alternatively, **Sports day** (on other occasions this game may be known as Fruit Salad). This game can be played in a limited space. You will need one chair for each person.

Arrange chairs in a circle facing inwards; there should be enough chairs for each person with the exception of one person who stands in the middle of the circle. Go around the circle giving each child a sport name, including the child without a chair. There should be several children with each name; for most groups four names will be enough, eg football, tennis, cricket, swimming.

The person in the centre calls out one of the sport names and everyone with that name swaps places with someone else of the same name, while the person in the middle tries to sit on one of the empty chairs. One person will not have a chair and they become the new person in the middle. If the person in the middle says 'sports day', everyone swaps places. Players are not allowed to sit on the chair they have just got out of; if you wish you could also stipulate that they may not sit on the chair next to the one they have just got out of.

Upfront time (10–15 min)

Introduction. Show some pictures (from magazines or downloaded pictures from the internet) of famous people including a number of sport celebrities, and see if the children can guess who they are. When confirming guesses, tell the group what sport they play or why they are famous. Be sure to include some famous people who are not sporty. Remember that the people you might think are famous or popular may not be the same as the ones the children think of. You could make this into a competition between two teams, giving a clue to each side and swapping who has a chance to answer from each team.

Put all the pictures of the celebrities on show and add pictures of some of the adults at your club. Ask the children which four people they would pick for their team; don't say what the team is going

to be asked to do. You could allow them to choose children in the group as well, but consider whether you think that will cause any problems for those children who are not picked.

Briefly ask the children why they have selected the particular people they have. Now explain that the team they have chosen are going to be asked to: cycle 100 miles, run a week's holiday club, run a 100 metre sprint race, paint a beautiful picture (or choose your own ideas). Ask the children: if you had known that was what your team was doing, would you have chosen the same people?

Explain that Jesus knew exactly what challenges he had for the team he was going to choose and he knew exactly who he should pick. Some of the people he chose may not have been everyone's first choice but Jesus knows best.

Tell the story in one of the following ways.

Either, have the children lie down and listen to the story. So often we give children pictures to look at when telling a story, which often prevents their imagination from developing freely. This time, encourage the children to get really comfortable, and if you have the space have them lie down so that they are not touching anyone else. Encourage them to close their eyes. Have crayons and paper ready so that they can draw or write what they saw or thought once you have told the story. Let the children know that once you have finished the story they need to remain quiet but will have a time to draw pictures or write things that came to their minds as you read the story. After the story share some of their ideas. Encourage the children to think of a title they would give the story. It can be amazing the things that stick out to them or the inspirational titles they come up with.

Read the following slowly and allow the children to develop the scene in their own minds. Emphasise the words in bold to help give shape to the story.

*As **Jesus** was walking beside the sea
he saw **two brothers, Simon called Peter**
and his **brother Andrew**.
They were **casting** a net into the **lake**,
for they were **fishermen**.
'Come, **follow me**,' **Jesus** said, 'and I will make you **fishers of men**.'
At once they left their nets and **followed** him.
Going on from there, he saw **two other brothers, James and John**.
They were in a **boat** with their father,
preparing their nets.
Jesus called them, and immediately they left the **boat** and their father and **followed Jesus**.*

Alternatively, tell the story as an action story with responses and have repetition to involve the children and help the story to stick. Children love traditional stories such as the three bears or three little pigs where events are repeated three times; this is often a favourite style for children as it involves them.

Ask the children to do the following actions when they hear each word:

| | |
|---------|--|
| Jesus | Touch the middle of each hand's palm with the opposite middle finger (represents nails). |
| Sea | Make one hand gently move like the waves, with the sound effect 'swoosh'. |
| Saw | Move your finger in a swift movement from your eye. |
| Casting | Pretend you have a net that you are casting. |

- Lake Make one hand gently move like the waves, with the sound effect 'splash'.
- Fishermen Use one hand to wiggle like a fish and then make a beard shape from your chin and move it down to a point.
- Follow Beckon someone.
- Boat Make both hands into a point, like the front of a boat.

*As **Jesus** was walking beside the **sea** (swoosh),
 As **Jesus** was walking beside the **sea** (swoosh),
 As **Jesus** was walking beside the **sea** (swoosh),
 he **saw** two brothers, Simon called Peter,
 he **saw** two brothers, Simon called Peter,
 he **saw** two brothers, Simon called Peter,
 and his brother Andrew.*

*They were **casting** a net into the **lake** (splash),
 They were **casting** a net into the **lake** (splash),
 They were **casting** a net into the **lake** (splash),
 for they were **fishermen**.*

*'Come, **follow** me,' Jesus said, 'and I will make you **fishers** of **men**.'
 'Come, **follow** me,' Jesus said, 'and I will make you **fishers** of **men**.'
 'Come, **follow** me,' Jesus said, 'and I will make you **fishers** of **men**.'*

*At once they left their nets and **followed** him.*

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*Going on from there, he **saw** two other brothers, James and John.*

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*They were in a **boat** with their father,*

*They were in a **boat** with their father,*

*They were in a **boat** with their father,*

preparing their nets.

***Jesus** called them, and immediately they left the **boat** and their father and **followed Jesus**.*

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To talk about (5 min)

Either divide the children into groups, each with a leader, to discuss the following questions or keep as a whole group.

Refer back to the introduction to the story of choosing a team. Ask:

- How do you feel when you are picking a team? How do you decide who to choose?
- How does it feel when you are standing on the sideline waiting to be picked?

Ask if any of the children have been picked to play for a football or netball club etc, or picked to represent their class or school in some other way (preferably not sport-related to help those children who are not sporty). How does it make them feel? How might those who are not picked feel? Talk about how you don't have to be good at football or netball or drawing to be on Jesus' team.

Make the point that Jesus wants all people to be on his team (to become Christians) and he has different, special jobs for all those who accept him as their team leader. Jesus called his disciples to be fishers of men. Ask the children what they think he meant. Talk about what sorts of things Jesus might ask members of his team to do. Explain how every member of the team is important to Jesus, however big or small the job might be. He values everyone as part of the team.

Prayer activity (5–10 min)

You will need:

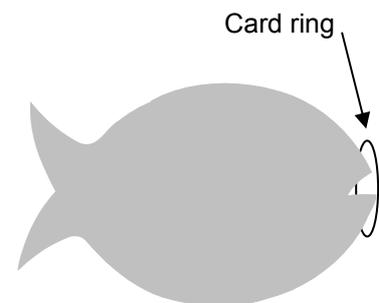
- cut-out paper fish shapes,
- a fishing net; you could use a small net on a rod, or a badminton net, or some packaging can look like fish netting.

Encourage the children to write or draw pictures of things they would like to pray about on the fish outlines, then place them in the net. Divide the children into groups, each with a leader, and pray together about the things that the children have put on their fish.

Craft activity (10 min)

Make fish kites. You will need for each child:

- a sheet of tissue paper,
- felt tip pens,
- glue stick,
- scissors,
- a thin strip of card,
- string.



Lay a sheet of tissue paper out onto a flat surface and fold in half. Draw the outline of a fish onto the tissue paper.

Glue around the outline but **do not** glue over the mouth. Fold the other side of tissue paper onto the top and press down. Cut around the outside of the glued line and the line for the mouth.

Cut a thin strip of card and roll it up to make a ring. Slip the ring inside the gap of the mouth and attach it with glue. Tie a length of string to the ring in the mouth.

Cut strips of tissue paper and attach to the tail. Decorate the kite with felt tips.

Fly the kite by running with the kite behind you. If you have limited time it may be wise to make the basic shapes for the children in advance and just get them to decorate and add details.

Song (2 min)

Sing 'God is an awesome God' from the CD *Light for Everyone* (available from www.scriptureunion.org.uk/25559.id). You could teach the children the Makaton sign language for the words 'God', 'Jesus' and 'love' as below, and encourage them to make up their own actions for the other words as they go along.

God Point with one finger (normally the index finger) to the sky.

Jesus Touch the middle of each hand's palm with the opposite middle finger (represents nails).

Love Make a cross with your arms and lay them over your chest as if you are hugging yourself.

Alternatively, sing 'I'm gonna run' from the CD *Great Big God* produced by Vineyard Music (available from www.vineyardrecords.co.uk/uk/scripts/prodView.asp?idProduct=25).

Memory verse (5–10 min)

Learn Matthew 4:19: "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men" (NIV).

Either play a **fishing game**. You will need:

- a large piece of blue material or paper,
- 13 cut-out paper fish shapes with one word of the memory verse written on each,
- a fishing net of some kind (see 'Prayer activity' above for ideas),
- blu-tack or sticky tape.

In advance, put the fish shapes into the net. Ask for volunteers to pick out a fish from the net and stick it with blu-tack or tape in the right place on the material or paper, so that the words are in the correct order. Together, read out the memory verse several times, then gradually let the fish 'swim away' so that the children say the verse with less and less words in front of them. When they have managed with all the fish taken away, see if anyone can put all the fish back in the right order to show the verse.

Alternatively, **make bookmarks**. You will need:

- a copy for each child of the 'bookmark' resource file for this session,
- wool,
- a hole punch,
- felt tip pens,
- a glue stick.

Before the session begins, cut out the memory verse bookmarks and stick them to larger pieces of card to create a border space for the children to decorate. Punch a hole at the top and bottom of each card.

Give each child a memory verse card and ask them to decorate it and add a wool 'top and tail'. Read the verses together at various points while doing this.