

**Follow Me**

(based on Luke 5:1-11, 27-28; 8:1-3)

Simon Peter the fisherman was fed up. He had worked all night, but he hadn't caught anything. He sat on the shore washing his nets. Suddenly, Simon Peter heard the sound of many voices. He looked up and saw Jesus walking toward him. A crowd of people pushed and jostled. Everyone wanted to see Jesus.

"Simon," called Jesus. "Would you take me out in your boat? Take me out a little way, so I can talk to the people. Then everyone will be able to hear me."

"I can do that," replied Simon Peter. "Jump in."

Simon rowed out a little way. Jesus sat in the boat and taught the crowd. Jesus was a wonderful teacher. When Jesus had finished teaching, he turned to Simon Peter and said, "Row out a little farther into the deep water. Then you and your friends can let down your nets."

"Teacher," Simon replied, "we've been fishing all night and haven't caught anything. But I will do what you ask."

So Simon rowed out and let down the nets. To Simon's astonishment, the fishermen began to catch fish—loads of fish—the biggest catch of fish that Simon had ever seen in his life! The nets began to break.

Simon Peter called his friends, James and John, to help pull in the nets. What an enormous catch of fish it was! None of the fishermen had ever seen so many fish. Everyone was amazed.

Simon Peter thought about all the times he had not followed God's ways. "I don't deserve to have all these fish," he thought. "I shouldn't even be with Jesus."

"You should leave me," Peter said to Jesus. "I haven't always done the right thing."

Jesus smiled. "Don't be afraid," he said to Peter. "Come and help me with my work. From now on, you will be catching people with God's grace."

Simon Peter, James, and John pulled their boats onto the beach, left everything, and followed Jesus.

A few days later, Jesus met a tax collector named Levi sitting in his office. Jesus said to him, "Follow me." Levi jumped up, left his office, and followed Jesus.

Jesus called the fishermen and the tax collector to be his disciples. Soon Jesus called other men, including Bartholomew, Thomas, Judas, Philip, and Andrew to follow him. Jesus also called women—Joanna, Susanna, and Mary Magdalene (MAG-duh-lehn), among others. They followed, watched, and listened.

Eventually, they learned how to teach about God's love and help others as Jesus did. They were ordinary people who would learn to do extraordinary things. God's grace was on the move.



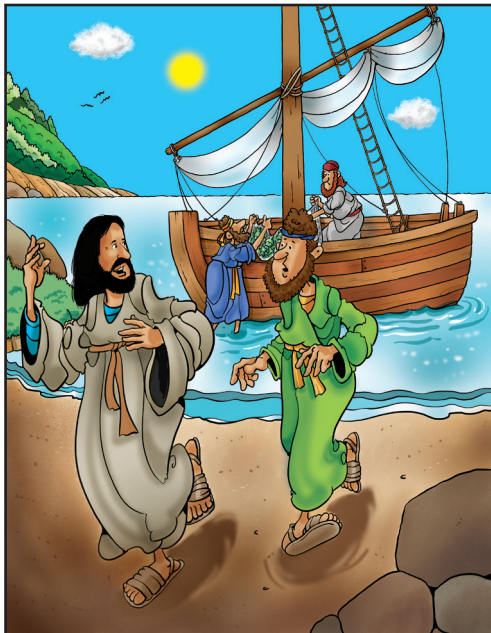
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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your child—imagine and wonder.
- Invite everyone to pretend to fish. Wonder what it is like to be a fisherman like Simon Peter—the smells, the sounds, the tastes, the sights, and the textures. Pretend to pull in very full nets and fishing lines.
- Jesus asked Simon Peter to give him a ride in his boat, take the boat from shore, fish in deeper water, trust him, and follow him. Play “Follow the Leader” using the actions in the story.
- Even when it was hard or seemed silly, Simon Peter said, “Yes!” and followed his leader, Jesus. Whisper to someone in your family one thing that God may be asking you to do that seems hard or silly. Let the other person whisper something to you. Say a prayer that each of you will be able to say yes to following God's lead.



Responding to God's Grace

- Jesus invited Simon Peter to be a different kind of fisherman, one who fishes for people. Ask: Do we need tools for people fishing? Are there special sounds, sights, tastes, smells, or textures of God's love? Draw pictures of what it looks like to fish for people with God's love.
- Invite everyone to cut out paper fish. On each fish, write the name of someone who needs to hear or feel God's love. Place the fish in a bowl. Each day, choose a fish and pray for the person named. Talk about ways to tell or show God's love to that person, and make plans to do so. Add more fish when you think of other people to serve.
- Invite your child to write or draw his or her special skills, gifts, or talents on one side of an index card. On the other side, help your child write or draw ways that God is calling him or her to use those talents to tell or show God's love. Take the card to put into the offering plate at church as a way to say yes to God's call to follow and to serve.

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Find the “12 Disciples Song” on YouTube and watch it. Learn the names of Jesus' first disciples.
- Pray the following prayer each day this week:

Dear God, help me follow you, fishing for people with your love. Amen.