

BIBLE TIME LINE ASSEMBLIES

65. JESUS CALLS PETER TO FOLLOW HIM

Bible Base: Luke 5: 1-11

Key Christian Belief: Following Jesus means accepting His invitation.

Aim: To help children understand that Jesus invites everyone to follow Him.

You will need:

- costume and props (see below)

Introduction

Dress as Peter for this assembly - e.g. in a woolly hat, thick woollen jumper, jeans and fishing boots - and pretend to be Peter throughout. For added effect use props such as a net or a needle and thread as you tell the story.

Good morning everyone. My name is Peter and it's lovely to be here in your school this morning. I come from a little fishing village called Capernaum on the shores of Lake Galilee. Practically everyone in our village has something to do with fishing - we either catch them or we sell them! My father was a fisherman and his father before him. My brother Andrew and I have been catching fish ever since we were little.

Usually we go out fishing in one of our boats late at night - that's when the fish come up near the surface. We drag our nets through the water and try to catch as many of them as we can. On a good night we might catch a couple of hundred fish. When we get back to the shore again we pull up our boat and sell the fish to the market traders for a good price. Then we spend a little while most mornings mending any holes there are in our nets - well we don't want the fish swimming through them, do we? After that it's off to bed and up in time to go fishing again the next night.

I'm here this morning to tell you my story. But before I do, I want to know if any of you have ever been chosen to play for a sports team, sing in a choir or act in a play in your school? If so, would any of you be willing to come up to the front and tell me about it?

Choose one or two volunteers and ask them questions such as:

- *What were you chosen for?*
- *How were you chosen?*
- *How did you feel when you were chosen?*
- *What is it like playing for the team / singing in the choir / acting in a play?*
- *What does it involve?*
- *What do you enjoy most about it?*
- *What is the hardest thing about it?*

Thank your volunteers and perhaps reward them with a chocolate fish (see Amazon) that you caught yourself!!

Bible Story

I want to tell you this morning about how I got to be on Jesus' team. In the next couple of weeks you'll be hearing more about what it was like to be on Jesus team and how I got on. But today I want to tell you how it all began.

It was one of those nights. Andrew and I had been out fishing all night and we hadn't caught a thing. Not a single fish. When we finally pulled up our boats on the shore we were tired, disappointed and fed up. But we began to mend our nets anyway as we usually did, hoping that the next night would be better!

After a while we noticed that a large crowd had gathered by the shore that morning and Jesus was with them. He had come to live in Capernaum - quite near where I live as it happens. I knew he was someone special because I had heard him teaching people about God. He said the time had come for Him to start gathering people into God's Kingdom.

I invited him round to my house one evening and when he arrived my mother-in-law was in bed with a fever. So he just walked up to her, told the fever to get lost and next thing you know she was up out of bed, bright as a button and cooking supper for us all!

Anyhow, Jesus came up to me that morning and asked to borrow my boat.

'No problem' I said. 'What do you need it for?'

'Can you push it a little way out from the shore, so that I can stand in it and teach the people here about God? I want them to be able to see and hear me clearly.'

So although I was tired I did what he said and he spent the rest of the morning teaching people about God - from my boat. It sounded so interesting and exciting that I hardly even noticed the time going by.

Anyway, towards lunchtime, he turned to me and said 'Row the boat out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch.'

'But sir' I said. 'We've been out fishing all night and haven't caught a thing. We're hardly going to catch anything now!'

'He doesn't know anything about fishing' I thought 'or he wouldn't have asked me to try catching anything at this time of day. There won't be any fish about! He's a carpenter; He knows all about making things with wood. I'm a fisherman; I know everything there is to know about fishing. He should stick to His job and leave me to get on with mine.'

But I didn't say any of that. Instead I said 'Alright then - if you say so.'

So I rowed the boat out into deeper water and let the nets down, not expecting to catch anything. But then I got the biggest surprise of my life. I could feel an enormous tug on the nets and when I looked they were full to bursting with fish! There were so many of them I had to call over to my friends James and John to help me get them into the boat.

I knew then that Jesus was more than just a carpenter - and more than just a teacher. I knew God had sent him.

'Go away from me' I said. 'You wouldn't want anything to do with me if you knew what I was really like. I'm not the sort of person you are looking for.'

I used to curse and swear a lot - and I had a very bad temper. I thought Jesus wouldn't want anything to do with me if he knew what I was like.

But he didn't go away. Instead he turned to me and said 'Don't be afraid - from now on you will be gathering people into God's kingdom instead of gathering fish into your nets.'

I was amazed that Jesus actually wanted me on his team. I didn't think I was good enough. But he told me that if I was ready to join his team, he would help me become the sort of person he wanted me to be. Soon I'd be telling others about God's love and helping them to see the difference it made in my life. It sounded amazing!

So right there and then both Andrew and I made up our minds to join Jesus' team. We packed up all our fishing gear, left it all behind and went and followed Jesus!

And do you know what? It was the best decision we ever made.

Exploring Christian Belief

I'm sure you all know that if a complete stranger came up to you and asked you to go with them you shouldn't. Instead you should say a firm 'no' and report them to your parents or teachers as soon as you can.

So why was it that, when Jesus asked me to follow him, I left everything at once and went with him?

I accepted Jesus' invitation first of all because of who he was. Jesus wasn't a stranger. I already knew something about him. And that day on the boat I discovered that when you do what Jesus asks you to do amazing things happen. I didn't think there was any point in letting the nets down for a catch but I did it because Jesus said so and I couldn't believe what happened as a result. It was beyond anything I had ever thought possible.

When I saw what he had done I knew at once that Jesus had come from God. That meant that when he asked me to follow him I knew it was what God wanted me to do. It was like God Himself was asking me to join Jesus' team. And when God asks you to do something, you don't refuse, do you?

So I accepted Jesus invitation because of who he was. I knew he had come from God and that amazing things would happen if I did what He said.

We also accepted his invitation because of what he promised. I didn't think I was good enough to be on Jesus' team but Jesus promised me that with his help I would soon become the sort of person he wanted me to be and that he could use me to help him gather others into God's Kingdom.

Imagine (insert name of well known football manager) invited you to play for (insert name of football team). You might not think you were good enough - but suppose he told you that with his help you would soon be playing premiere-class football. It would be the opportunity of a lifetime - an opportunity to learn how to play football from the greatest manager ever and to play for the best team in the world! You would be mad to refuse!

That's how I felt when Jesus invited me to join his team. Without his help I knew I couldn't do it but he had invited me to join his team and had promised to help me do everything he wanted me to do. It was an opportunity to be part of God's forever kingdom and to help others become part of it too. I would never have thought that someone like me could be on Jesus team - but because he had invited me and given me this promise I decided to say 'yes'. It was too good an opportunity to miss!

I knew it would mean leaving everything to follow Jesus. I would have to give up my own plans to follow his but to me it was worth it because now I belong to the best team and I am doing the best job in the world!

Reflection and Prayer

Christians believe Jesus invites everyone to follow him. If you would like to more about what it means to be on Jesus' team why not pop along to the Scripture Union group in your school or to a kids club in one of your local churches.

Finally, lead the children in a prayer thanking God that Jesus invites everyone to join his team. Ask Him to help the children think carefully about this and, when they are ready, to say 'yes' to Jesus' invitation. Ask Him also to help those who have already made up their minds to follow Jesus to play their part in helping others come to know Him too.