

SEND THEM OUT

MAIN POINT.

Jesus invites us to serve Him.



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus came into the world to call sinners to repentance and to lay down His life on their behalf. Likewise, as His followers, we are to tell others about Jesus and call on them to turn from their sin and trust in Jesus.



INVITED AND WELCOMED

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

Mark 2-3

JESUS CALLS THE LOWEST

MARK 2:13-17

13 Jesus went out again beside the sea. The whole crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. 14 Then, passing by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, "Follow me," and he got up and followed him. 15 While he was reclining at the table in Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who were following him. 16 When the scribes who were Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 17 When Jesus heard this, he told them, "It is not those who are well who need a doctor, but those who are sick. I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners."

JESUS SENDS US

MARK 3:7-19

7 Jesus departed with his disciples to the sea, and a large crowd followed from Galilee, and a large crowd followed from Judea, 8 Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and around Tyre and Sidon. The large crowd came to him because they heard about everything he was doing. 9 Then he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, so that the crowd wouldn't crush him. 10 Since he had healed many, all who had diseases were pressing toward him to touch him. 11 Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God!" 12 And he would strongly warn them not to make him known. 13 Jesus went up the mountain and summoned those he wanted, and they came to him. 14 He appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, to send them out to preach, 15 and to have authority to drive out demons. 16 He appointed the Twelve: To Simon, he gave the name Peter; 17 and to James the son of Zebedee, and to his brother John, he gave the name "Boanerges" (that is, "Sons of Thunder"); 18 Andrew; Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, 19 and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

Jesus invites us to serve Him.

Leaders: Jesus called the lowest of us; may we remember where He called us from and what He called us to.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

JESUS CALLS THE LOWEST

MARK 2:13-17

“The Pharisees, who make their first appearance here, were ardent nationalists. For them as well as other Jewish patriots, Jesus’s behavior in Mark 2:13-17 was absolutely outrageous. When he called a tax collector to become one of his disciples, Jesus cast his lot with the people who symbolized everything that ardent nationalists thought was wrong with the Promised Land. Tax collectors were Jewish people who worked for Rome. They bought a franchise that gave them the exclusive right to collect taxes in a particular area. The Roman government stipulated how much money it expected in taxes and supplied soldiers to enforce the process of collection. Rome, however, did not set a limit on how much tax could be collected from a particular franchise. The tax collectors themselves assessed the total amount that would be collected in their district. The difference between what was actually collected and what was sent to Rome was what belonged to the tax collector. The home of Levi, where Jesus ate on this occasion, was surely not an incommensurable shack. For the Pharisees in particular, the people described as sinners were another symptom of the same problem. Let us be clear, though. The sinners who were present at Levi’s house were not necessarily moral monsters. Although there may have been some rough characters in the company Jesus kept, the term sinners essentially referred to people who did not keep the provisions of the covenant law. They did not frequent the synagogues or temple. They may have taken God’s name in vain. They did not wash their hands as soon as they came home from a shopping trip. They associated with non-Jewish people and did not keep the Sabbath. By and large the people called sinners were no worse than many of us. They simply did not pay much attention to covenant law. As far as the Pharisees were concerned, if there were any rabble who might reasonably be blamed for the sorry state of affairs in first-century Galilee and Judea, it was the people with whom Jesus associated.”⁴

JESUS SENDS US

MARK 3:14

“The last part of v. 14 and the first part of v. 15 indicate the two purposes of Jesus’s summons: that they might be with Jesus (one of the most important elements in being a disciple) and that they might be sent on a mission to proclaim the advent of the kingdom of God and demonstrate it by exorcising demons (6:7-12).”⁵

CONTEXT

The Gospel of Mark reveals a key concept that governed Jesus's life: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). The Jews never expected the Messiah to come in this way; they anticipated a powerful ruler, who would restore Israel to its former glory. But Jesus was the ultimate example of service and sacrifice. Jesus taught that His followers must be marked by self-denial (8:34-35) and service (9:35). The disciples, the twelve men Jesus called to leave everything they knew to follow Him, were ordinary men; they struggled to grasp the reality that following Jesus meant a life of sacrifice. When Jesus taught more directly about His impending sacrifice, Peter rebuked Him (8:31-33), the disciples struggled to understand Him (9:30-32), and James and John only thought about themselves (10:35-45). These ordinary men wrestled with Jesus's plan and the call to follow His example. They struggled to understand and obey the call to serve and love others. Like these men, we often struggle to orient our lives around serving and loving others. But the way of Jesus is the path of service and sacrifice. He exemplified this life, and all that follow Him must "deny himself, take up his cross, and follow [Him]" (8:34-35).

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

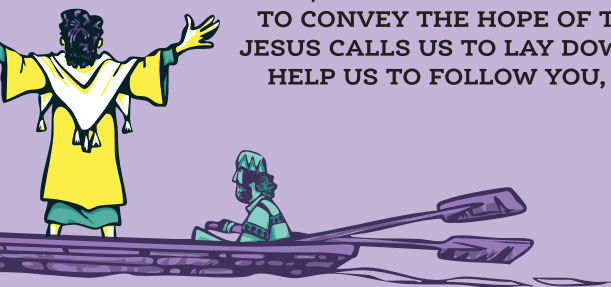


Calling

The calling of God to salvation happens in two ways: externally through the proclamation of the gospel and internally through the Holy Spirit working in the heart of the person who hears. Both of these callings are essential, and both work together to bring someone to faith in Christ (2 Tim. 1:8-10).

LEADERS' PRAYER

GOD, HELP US TO CLEARLY EXPLAIN JESUS'S CALL FOR ALL BELIEVERS. HELP US TO CONVEY THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL, WHILE POINTING TO THE REALITY THAT JESUS CALLS US TO LAY DOWN OUR LIVES FOR THE SAKE OF HIS KINGDOM. JESUS, HELP US TO FOLLOW YOU, EVEN WHEN DOING SO LEADS TO GREAT SACRIFICE.





KICK STARTER

♥ HEART CHECK

Last week, we talked about how Jesus forgives all our sins. Did you struggle this past week to trust your sins are forgiven in Jesus? Was there a time last week when remembering Jesus's forgiveness motivated you to obey Him?

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

1

INVITED

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **HOW DO YOU FEEL WHEN YOU GET INVITED TO SOMETHING?**
- **WHO'S SOMEONE YOU'D DROP OTHER PLANS OR RESPONSIBILITIES FOR IF THAT PERSON INVITED YOU TO DO SOMETHING?**
- **WHAT IS IT ABOUT THAT PERSON THAT MAKES YOU SAY "YES" RIGHT AWAY? HOW LONG HAVE YOU KNOWN THEM? HOW MUCH DO YOU TRUST THEM?**

Saying "yes" when you get invited to a birthday party or on a special trip is easy, but saying "yes" is more difficult when the invitation is to donate money, finish your chores, or help a friend with homework. When we walk with Jesus, He invites us to join Him in both exciting and costly service. In today's passage, we'll see that Jesus invites us to follow His lead in serving others.

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Comparing ourselves to others has never been easier than it is now. We measure our worth against others, but in our culture of edited photos, filters, and highlight reels, insecurity runs rampant. We may ask, "I'll never be as good as them, so why even try?" This insecurity comes from what some call "the comparison trap," and when left unchecked by the truth of the gospel, comparison leads to envy, lust, and even self-hatred. This distorted view of our value and worth infects our view of God's calling on our lives; insecurity convinces us that though we are saved, we still aren't worthy enough to participate in God's mission. But when Jesus called His disciples to follow Him, He invited them to join Him in reaching others (Mark 1:17; Matt. 10:5-8). When we fall into the comparison trap, we discredit the power of God to transform us! The gospel calls us out of comparison and into security because of who Jesus is and what He has done. God values us so much that He sent His Son for our salvation. And He chooses to use us for His glory, regardless of where He found us.

DISCUSSION

MAIN POINT.

Jesus invites us to serve Him.

JESUS CALLS THE LOWEST

READ MARK 2:13-17



HOW DID RELIGIOUS LEADERS FEEL ABOUT JESUS EATING WITH TAX COLLECTORS AND SINNERS? HOW DID JESUS ANSWER THEM (V. 17)?

The Pharisees were appalled and voiced their concern with a question: Why does He eat with them? (v. 16). We can almost hear their condemning tone. Jesus responded by saying that only the sick need a doctor. The first step in getting well is realizing you're sick, but these leaders didn't see their own need. Jesus ironically called people "righteous" to refer to those who didn't see themselves as sick (sinners). **Jesus ate with the "sick" for a reason: to call sinners to repentance—to heal them from sin.** The Pharisees were just as "sick" with sin as the ones they condemned.

HOW DID LEVI RESPOND TO JESUS'S INVITATION? WHY DO YOU THINK HE RESPONDED THIS WAY?

Levi's own people hated him for working as a tax collector for Rome, yet Jesus called Levi to leave his lucrative career to follow Him. **Levi was rejected by his own people but called by Jesus, and when Jesus calls you to follow Him, He welcomes you as a laborer in the harvest (Luke 10:2).** Maybe Levi didn't fully understand what Jesus was calling him to, but he immediately gathered his friends to meet Him. He understood that following Jesus gave him a new message for others and a new purpose (2 Cor. 5:16-21)—one drastically different than anything he had ever known.



HOW WAS LEVI DIFFERENT FROM THE EARLIER DISCIPLES AND THEIR CALLINGS? WHAT DOES THAT TEACH US ABOUT JESUS?

Jesus had called fishermen (Peter, Andrew, James, and John) to leave their nets to fish for men (Mark 1:16-20), but this time, Jesus called a tax official named Levi. Fishing was a respectable trade, even though it was a low paying job. But collecting taxes was the opposite—disgraceful, but very well paid. Tax collectors were often dishonest in their accounts, taking advantage of their own people by requiring and profiting from much higher tax payments than Rome required. **The contrast between Levi and the other disciples stands out because it teaches us that Jesus calls everyone.** The Pharisees' devotion to and worship of the Mosaic law blinded them to their need for a Savior. The Pharisees were eager to look down on sinners (Luke 18:11-14), while Jesus called out to them. Instead of sorting people into sick or healthy—sinner or righteous—Jesus calls all sinners to find healing in Him. **Why is this good for us? Because if we're honest, we're the low ones. We're the tax collectors. The sinners. The outcasts. We're the sick, but Jesus welcomes us and calls us.**

JESUS SENDS US

READ MARK 3:7-19

WHY DID SUCH A LARGE CROWD COME TO JESUS?

Mark emphasized the size of the crowd twice, describing it as those who had heard of Jesus's miracles (vv. 7-8). The crowd was filled with the sick and the demon-possessed, and they pressed around Him so much that Jesus was forced to address them from a small boat on the Sea of Galilee. **The people were eager to be healed by Jesus and to witness His miracles but didn't recognize who He was.** Did you catch who *did* fall down in recognition of Jesus? The "unclean spirits," or demons, confessed Jesus's identity, though His own disciples hadn't yet confessed Him as the "Son of God" (v. 11).



WHY DID JESUS CALL THE TWELVE DISCIPLES TO HIM? WHAT WERE THEY SENT OUT TO DO? WHAT ABOUT US?

This scene resembles the story in Exodus when God called Moses up Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19:20) and then sent him out in God's authority to share His message. Jesus called the twelve disciples, "those he wanted," to three things: to be with Him, to go out and preach, and "to drive out demons." **Notice what Jesus called them to do first—"to be with him." We must first be with Jesus—we must know Him—to speak about Him. All those who are called to be with Jesus (1 Cor. 1:9), those called out of sin and into the light of the gospel (1 Pet. 2:9), are then also sent out by Jesus in the Great Commission.** Here in Mark 3, Jesus sent the twelve disciples, but in Matthew 28:18-20, He explained that all believers must go in His authority to make disciples of all nations.



HOW DO YOU THINK THE DISCIPLES FELT WHEN JESUS CALLED THEM? WHAT FEARS COULD THEY HAVE FELT? HOW DOES THIS ENCOURAGE YOU?

We may assume the twelve disciples had no fear when answering Jesus's call to be sent out, but we'll see later in Mark that these same men would fear storms (4:35-41), argue who was the better disciple (9:33-35), and leave Jesus when He was arrested (14:50)! **The disciples are encouraging to Christians today because they weren't heroes; they were real people who struggled to follow Jesus.** We may think that other people following Jesus have it all together and never struggle, but that's likely untrue. Like the disciples, we are imperfect humans. And like them, God calls us to follow Him, even as we battle fear and doubt. Praise God! He calls and empowers imperfect people to accomplish His perfect plan.

WRAP-UP



WHEN HAVE YOU FELT LIKE GOD COULDN'T USE YOU? WHY DOES GOD USE ORDINARY, SINFUL PEOPLE?

Before playing a game that requires two teams, captains usually pick players one at a time. Two kinds of people stand and wait: those who can't wait to get picked and those hoping to watch from the sideline. When it comes to being used for God's kingdom, which group are you? Many of us sit back quietly, assuming God won't call our name. We may assume that God already has a full team, so though we follow Jesus, we desire to sit on the sideline. **We believe the lie that God wants to use someone more gifted, someone a little older and wiser, or someone more "ready." But when Jesus began His ministry by calling His disciples, He picked men no one would've expected.** Jesus called four fishermen, a corrupt tax collector, and seven other regular people—many of them teenagers! They were ordinary and imperfect, but God invited each one of them to serve Him. So, why would we fall for the lie that God doesn't invite us to do the same? God can and will use us, regardless of our past, our lack of knowledge, or even our feelings of not being ready. Being a spectator isn't an option.