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# “Fishers of Friends”

## Sunday School Lesson on Matthew 4:12-23

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Children know the importance of following directions or being obedient (at least in theory!). But what does it mean to truly follow a person? Is it like following a celebrity in the media? Being a fan? It’s important to explain to youngsters that Jesus invites us to follow Him. In this day and age, that entails going against the grain sometimes. It also means studying the Bible to know what Jesus said and did, and praying to ask God for help. These things equip us to be “fishers of men” and tell others about Christ, as well.

**Lesson focus:** As Christians, we are called to do whatever it takes to follow Jesus. This lesson focuses on becoming a disciple, as well as bringing others into God’s family. Learners will explore how the first followers came to Christ, and how we can be “fishers of men”, too.

**Passage:** Matthew 4:12-23

**Target Audience:** Kindergarten-6<sup>th</sup> grade

**Materials Needed:** Fishing equipment, goldfish crackers, toilet paper or paper towel roll tubes, paper plates, decorative materials, papers, glitter or sequins.

**More Teaching Ideas:**

- See the [“Fishers of Men” crafts direction video](#)
- Compare another [Sunday School Lesson from Matthew 4:12-22](#)
- Compare the [Sunday school lesson on Jesus preaching and calling disciples](#)
- Compare our [“Fishers of Men” children’s sermon / object lesson](#)
- D is for [Disciples Coloring Page \(included in the download above\)](#)
- See our [Great Commission object lesson](#) with dominoes
- Don’t miss all our new [Sunday School lessons](#) each week on [Sunday School Works](#)



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# Game and Lesson Introduction

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**Lesson Opening:** Open up with some “fishy fun” for the kids, as well as activities that involve following and getting others to follow...

- Follow which leader?  
Have two or three students (depending on the size of your group) come up and start giving directions to everyone else. Don’t tell kids which leader to follow, but let them choose what to do. Discuss whether it is difficult to pick a leader, and if it’s confusing when multiple voices are trying to direct you.
- “Jesus says” ...play a classic game of “Simon says” but have students follow along according to whether or not instructions are prefaced with “Jesus says”.
- Mirror images: Have students partner up. Explain that one partner will make mime-like motions that the other must follow. Encourage them to get a little goofy with their movements, and try to get their partners to follow along in kind.
- Let’s go fishing! This is a fun activity for younger students especially. Have a box or bucket full of treats or small toys, and place a blanket or partition in front of it. One at a time, let kids come up with a “fishing rod” of a string and handle with a clothespin attached. Invite children to toss the “line” over the blanket, and use the clothespin to “hook” on a treat for them to take. Alternatively, use a magnet for the “hook” and have paper clips attached to pictures or Bible verses for the children to fish out.
- Outside activity: if youngsters need to run off some extra energy, play a rousing outdoor game like “sharks and minnows”, tag, or “steal the fish” (“steal the bacon” revisited with a fish toy).

Explain to students that today they will learn what it means to be a “disciple” and to follow Jesus. All of us are called to live by Christ’s example and to love and serve Him. Did you know that we can also be “fishers of men”? We can spread the hope and joy of our faith to those around us!



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# Bible Lesson (Matthew 4:12-23)

## Fishers of Friends

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Ask students if they have ever been fishing. Hold up pictures of fishing boats and fishing nets. If you have some available, bring in fishing equipment like rods, bait, lures, or nets.

Explain that these things help us catch fish if we want to. Well....what if we catch people? Does that make sense? Ask students if they think we can fish for people. Do we catch them on hooks or in nets?

Let children know that Jesus invited His first disciples to be fishers of people, and He wants us to do the same thing. In today's story, we are going to see those first disciples called to follow Jesus, and learn how we can follow, too.

If this is a follow-up to the previous lesson about sharing Jesus, review what had been covered before about His life, and who some of the disciples were. Take a look at prophecies written about Him:

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*Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. <sup>13</sup> And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, <sup>14</sup> so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:*

*<sup>15</sup> "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,  
the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—  
<sup>16</sup> the people dwelling in darkness  
have seen a great light,  
and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death,  
on them a light has dawned."*

*<sup>17</sup> From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." -Matthew 4:12-17*



Remind students of who John the Baptist was. Note that here, Jesus is using the same language John had used before. John prepared the way, and Jesus took it over. In fact, the same thing happened with disciples, as we saw how some of John’s followers started to look to Jesus for instruction (at John’s encouragement). Jesus came across two brothers who happened to be fishermen:

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*While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. <sup>19</sup> And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” -Matthew 4:18-19*

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Jesus lived close to a sea. Naturally, the fishing industry would have been a trade that involved a lot of people. It was hard work, as the boats needed kept up and the nets were very heavy—especially when they were full of fish! Peter and Andrew had probably grown up in this profession, or had done it quite a long time. Pay close attention to what comes next...

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*Immediately they left their nets and followed him. <sup>21</sup> And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. <sup>22</sup> Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. -Matthew 4:20-22*

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Ask students how long it took for Simon Peter and Andrew to decide to follow Jesus. No time at all! The verse says “immediately” they left their nets! They didn’t even wait to wrap things up or make a final fish sale. They knew that Jesus was someone significant, and they were willing to leave their jobs behind and abandon what they had done, just to follow Jesus! They weren’t the only ones either...James and John (also fishermen and sons of a fisherman) also left their boat *immediately* and came to follow Jesus.

**ASK:** Are there things you would have to give up to follow Jesus? What does it mean to follow Jesus?



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*And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. -Matthew 4:23*

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Explain that they might not have fishing boats to walk away from, but God still wants us to follow Him, and we can still be disciples (followers) of Jesus. This means praying and reading our Bibles so that we can understand what He says. It means living our lives in ways that are pleasing and honoring to Jesus, rather than selfishly or with mean intent toward others. Following Jesus means that we want to love other people and serve them, just like we love and serve Christ.

If time allows, discuss the stories of some of the other disciples, and review who they were with students. The lives of Philip, Nathaniel, Simon the Zealot, Matthew, Thomas, Bartholomew, James, and Judas can be briefly explored and reviewed. This might be especially good for curious older students. If there is plenty of time, you might even consider making paper bag or stick puppets representing these twelve, and place representational items with each one.

For additional Scriptures on the call of disciples, see the following:

- Mark 3:13-19
- Luke 5:1-11
- John 1:29-42



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# Sunday School Crafts: Fishy Fun...

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There are several fun crafts that are great to do with this story. Of course, following Jesus and being disciples ourselves are important features. But with the idea of being “fishers of men” (or fishers of friends, or fishers of people) is a unique image that lends itself to some great “fishing” crafts. Options include:

- Make disciple puppets with paper bags or popsicle sticks (decorate and “name” them).
- “Fishers of friends” fishing rod: attach a string or ribbon to a paper towel tube or toilet paper tube. Decorate the tube, and add a fish cut-out on the end of the string. These “fish” should have names of people that students want to pray for or share Jesus with.
- Fishing boat: cut a paper plate in half, and decorate it like a boat. Add a “sail”, verse caption, and string “fish” through the sides.
- Big fish, little fish... in the style of the book *Rainbow Fish*, create a group craft with consideration of people who need to hear the Gospel: make a large fish shaped poster or paper. Add sequins and glitter, and smaller fish shaped papers with names of people who need to hear Jesus.

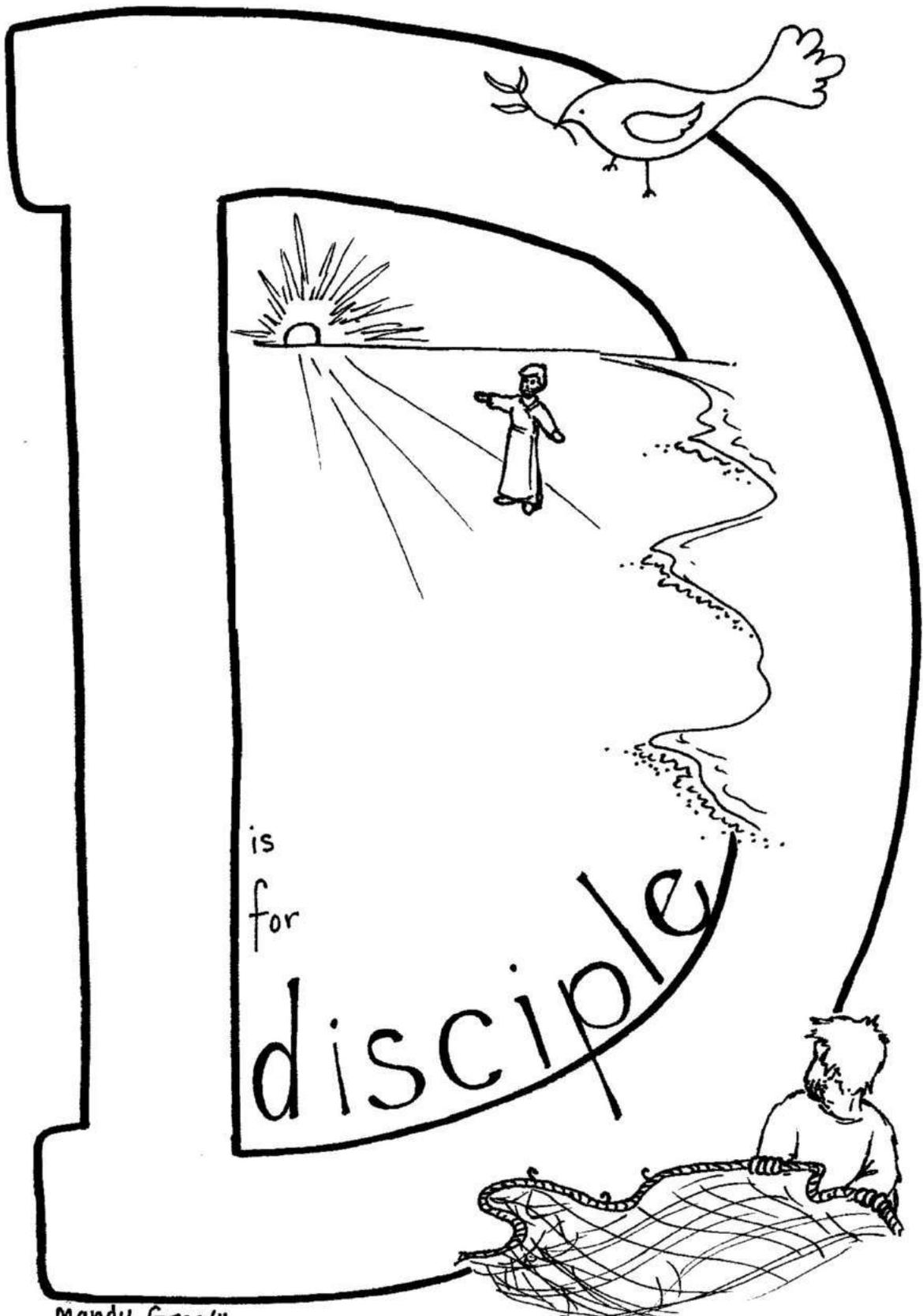
**Close** with prayer and thank God for Jesus. Ask God to help us follow Jesus, and to encourage us in bringing others to follow, too.



Simon \* Andrew \* James \* John \* Phil

\* James \* John \* Philip \* Bartholomew \* Matthew \*

\* Bartholomew \* Matthew \* Thomas \* James \* Simon \*

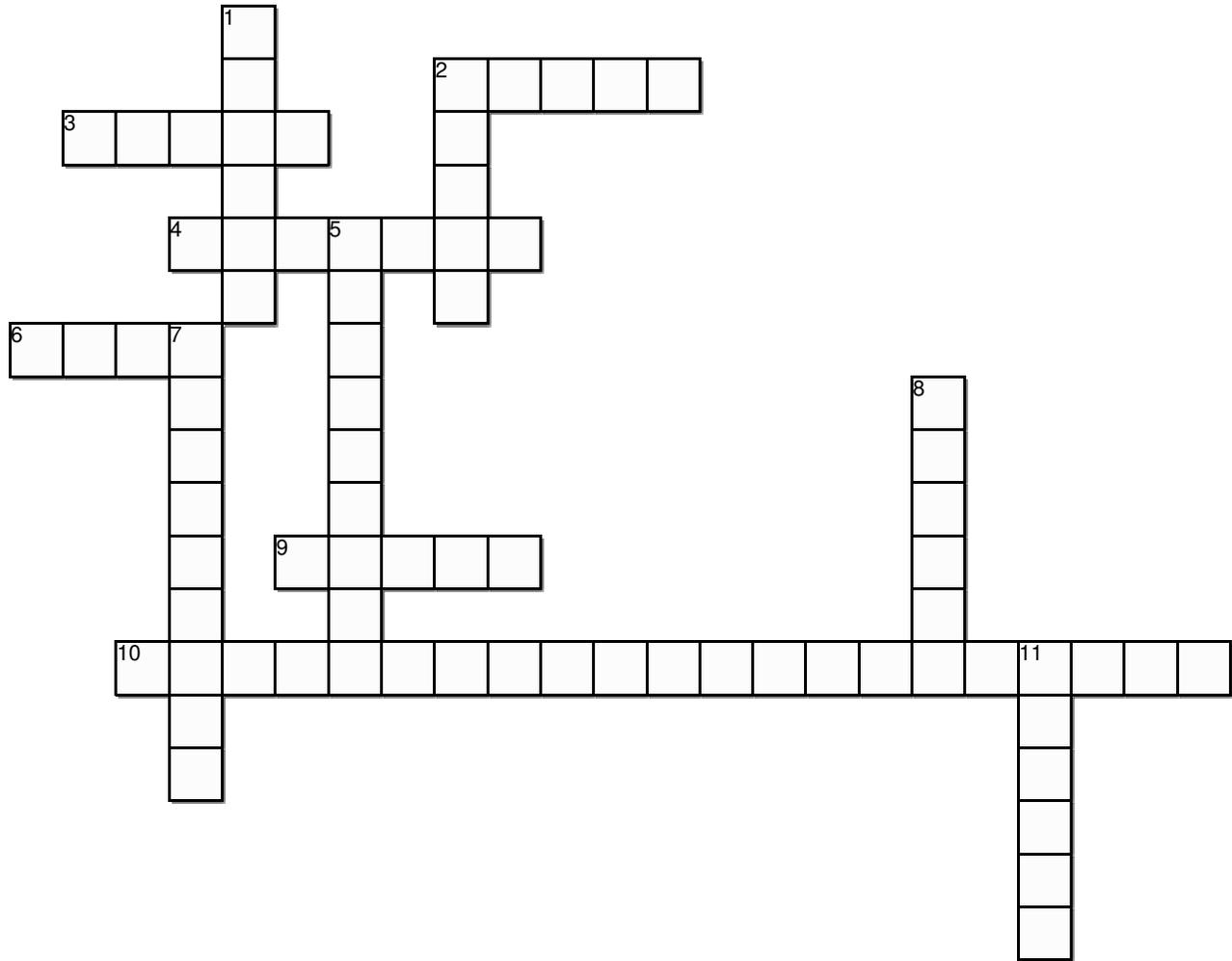


Mandy Grace '11

Thaddaeus \* Judas \* Simon \* Andrew

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Twelve Disciples



Created on [TheTeachersCorner.net](http://TheTeachersCorner.net) Crossword Maker

## **Across**

2. The disciple who betrayed Jesus, first name only (Matthew 10:4)
3. Also goes by 'the Zealot' (Matthew 10:4)
4. The tax collector, also known as Levi (Matthew 9:9)
6. The other son of Zebedee (Matthew 4:21)
9. Also goes by 'Simon' (Matthew 4:18)
10. Shares his name with another disciple (Matthew 10:3)

## **Down**

1. Known for doubting Jesus (John 20:27)
2. One of the sons of Zebedee (Matthew 4:21)
5. The tenth listed disciple (Mark 3:16-19)
7. Philip led this person to Jesus, also known as 'Bartholomew' (John 1:45)
8. Jesus found him on the way to Galilee (John 1:43)
11. Peter's brother (Matthew 4:18)

# Learning the Names of the Disciples

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 [ministry-to-children.com/twelve-disciples](http://ministry-to-children.com/twelve-disciples)

Written by Reader Submitted Last updated May 31, 2011 Leave a Comment Filed Under: Uncategorized May 30, 2011

*This ministry idea shared by one of our readers, Linda M Howard from First Baptist Church Tyrone, GA.*

I do have something I would like to share with you so you can share it with others. I wanted my class to learn the disciples but couldn't find any 'help' when searching the internet. So I decided to put them in alphabetical order and I was amazed at how easy it was then. This is the results:

A ~ Andrew

B ~ Bartholomew

J ~ James, James, Judas, Judas, John

M ~ Matthew

P ~ Peter, Philip

S ~ Simon

T ~ Thomas

They loved learning this and wanted to say them every time we met. One asked if they could learn the Books of the Bible in Alphabetical order! If you want to use Thaddaeus, you can add him in the "T" list and take out one Judas.

Hope this will be as much fun for others as it was for us.

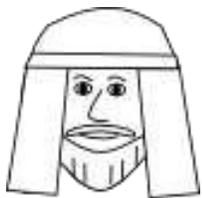
## Reader Interactions

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# Twelve Disciples Coloring Activity

Jesus' disciples were twelve men he picked to travel with him and learn from him.

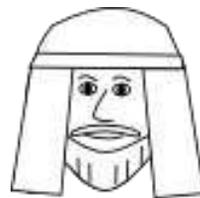
1. Color the twelve disciples and read their names.
2. Peter and Andrew were brothers. Draw a circle around both of them together.
3. James and John were brothers. Draw a circle around both of them together.
4. Peter, John, and Matthew all wrote books of the Bible. Put a check mark next to each of them.
5. Judas turned against Jesus and betrayed him. Draw a big X to cross out Judas.



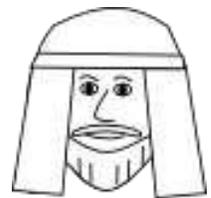
Peter



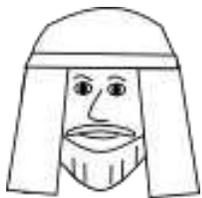
Andrew



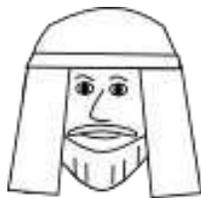
James  
(brother of John)



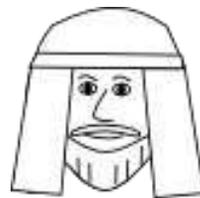
John



Philip



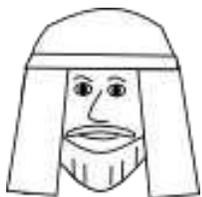
Bartholomew



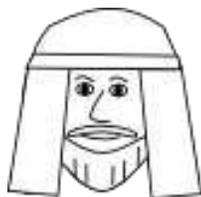
Thomas



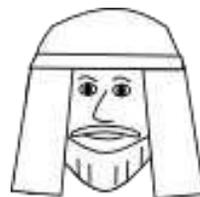
Matthew



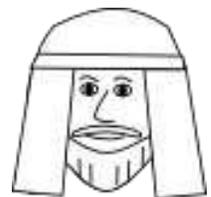
James  
(son of Alphaeus)



Thaddeus



Simon



Judas

A disciple is someone who learns from Jesus. How can you learn from Jesus?

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# Fishers of Friends! Craft Ideas for Following Jesus & Fishing for People

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These Bible crafts teach kids about their role in telling friends about Jesus. See more Bible crafts, activities, and coloring pages on our website.

**Fishers of men?** What can this mean? As we discuss with children the importance of loving and following Jesus, we will also communicate the blessing of sharing the Gospel good news with others around us. In this way, we can join with Peter in making new disciples and “fishing for friends.” These crafts use the idea of fishing as an opportunity to create some fun reminders of our call to share the faith and serve Christ. Go fish!

Don't miss the [children's sermon](#) & [Sunday School lesson](#) that inspired these crafts. You can watch a [video demonstration](#) of this craft on YouTube

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## Bible Verses or Craft Captions:

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*I will be a fisher of friends!*

*Jesus calls us to be fishers of men...share His love with others!*

*And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” –Matthew 4:19*

*God loves you...and so do I! Share the good news!*

*I can be a follower of Jesus, and I want to tell others about Him*

*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit... -Matthew 28:19*



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# Craft: “Fishers of Men Boat”

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## You will need:

- Paper or notecards
- Scissors
- String or pipe cleaners
- Markers or decorating materials
- Hole punch or tape

## Procedure:

1. Cut the paper plate in half.
2. Decorate the half-plate to look like a boat, adding color, stickers, or writing.
3. Place a “sail” on top of the boat with a pipe cleaner and paper, if desired.
4. Add a verse caption or note on the boat.
5. Cut fish shapes out of paper. Write the names of friends who need prayer or attention.
6. Punch holes in the fish as well as the boat. String the fish onto the boat so that they dangle and can be “reeled” up and down.



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# Craft: “Fishing for Friends” Rod

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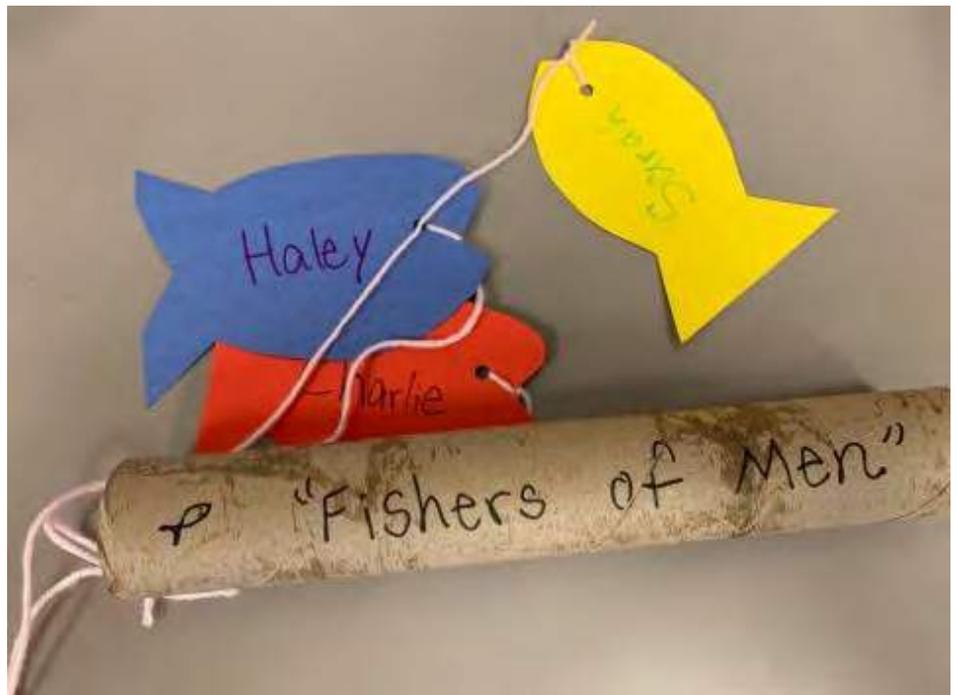
## You will need:

- Paper or cardstock
- Pipe cleaners, ribbon, or string
- Toilet paper or paper towel tubes
- Scissors
- Hole Punch
- Decorative materials (markers, fabric paint)



## Procedure:

1. Cut fish shapes out of the paper.
2. Decorate the fish, writing down names of people that need prayer or people who need to hear the good news of Jesus.
3. Decorate the tube, adding the verse caption as well as color or stickers.
4. String the fish and attach them to the tube using punched holes or tape.
5. Remember to pray for the “fish” and follow Jesus!



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# Craft: “Caught in a Net”

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## You will need:

- Paper or cardstock
- Scissors
- Decorative materials (markers, crayons, colored pencils)
- Paper bags



## Procedure:

1. Decorate your paper bag to look something like a fishing net. Cut the top off, draw lines, or crumple it to look rugged!
2. Add verse caption and title, if desired.
3. Cut the paper into fish shapes.
4. Write the names of people who need prayer onto the fish, and decorate if desired.
5. Let the fish “jump” in and out of the “net.” Remember to pray for and share God’s love with those in your bag!





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## *Best Sunday School Curriculum & Resources*

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Let's make Sunday School great again! Here are some of the best resources to help you get started:

1. [Sunday School Lessons](#)
2. [Coloring Pages for Sunday School](#)
3. [Sunday School Crafts](#)
4. [Bible Games for Sunday School](#)



We are proud to partner with Ministry-To-Children.com to share all the best free online [Sunday School curriculum](#) for kids. Don't miss their latest [children's ministry](#) ideas!