

Study Series: Follow Me

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Lesson Title: “The Great Invitation” (pp. 115-128)

Session 9

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The main point of this lesson is: Salvation is not primarily a matter of inviting Jesus into one’s heart, but a matter of responding positively to Jesus’s invitation to follow Him.

Focus on this goal: To help adults acknowledge that their salvation is not because they chose Jesus but because He chose them

Key Bible Passage: Matthew 4:18:22; John 15:16

Before the Session

Continue displaying the Matthew 4:19 poster.

During the Session

Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Invite adults to name playground games they enjoyed when they were kids. Note that some games, like Follow the Leader, were individual rather than team activities. Other games, like Red Rover, involved choosing sides. Invite volunteers to share how they felt about the process of choosing sides and why.

State: The common Christian phrase, “I invited Jesus into my heart” sounds like people choosing Jesus for a game of Follow the Leader, with them being the leader that Jesus follows. The challenging, and incredibly good, news is that we don’t choose Jesus, He chooses us to follow Him.

Read the main point of this lesson statement (p. 126).

Step 2. An Adopted Child

Discuss Day One, activity 1 (p. 115). Determine parallels between human adoption and the believer’s adoption by God.

Discuss Day One, activity 2 (p. 116). Declare: We should be absolutely awed at this love that is entirely beyond our imagination and out of our control. Why might we miss that when we describe becoming a follower of Jesus as inviting Him into our hearts? How can we retain that awe?

Step 3. Dead People Don’t Invite

Lead a discussion with: Why do we even need saving? Do you ever question whether the punishment for sin in the Old Testament is over the top? What perspective do we have when we question God’s judgment of sin? What perspective can help us understand why God is so severe against sin?

Relate the story about Azeem and the taxi driver from Day Two (p. 117). Consider things people say that demonstrate they underestimate the seriousness of their sin.

Request adults underline all the “no one” statements in Romans 3:10-18 as you read that passage aloud. Ask how they feel about the statements Paul made about people, and why. Evaluate why sinners are utterly unable to call on Christ.

Read the last paragraph of Day Two (p. 119).

Step 4. The Invitation

Assert that the overarching story of the entire Bible is God calling dead people to life and enabling them to live. Invite volunteers to recall what they know of the exodus story. Request they describe the Hebrew people’s actions and attitudes after God delivered them from slavery in Egypt.

Invite a volunteer to read Deuteronomy 7:7-8. State Jesus could say the same of the men he called in Matthew 4:19 (read from the poster). Discuss Day Three, activity 1 (p. 120). Ask why Jesus would choose people like those men. Consider how Israel’s and the apostle’s stories are the story of every follower of Jesus (see the Day Three Note, p. 119).

Consider why everything changes when we realize Jesus takes the initiative and invites us to follow Him. Invite responses to Day Three, activity 2 (p. 120). Explain the Gospel writers wrote to specific audiences for specific purposes and therefore don’t all provide the same details. Matthew and Luke provide different details in the calling of the first disciples, but what is the same in both instances is that Jesus took the initiative to call sinful men to follow Him. Like Peter, we should be awed by the majesty of the one who calls us.

Encourage adults to underline in the next to last paragraph of Day Three (p. 121), “Do we realize the weight of the One who has invited us to follow Him? He is worthy of more than church attendance and casual association; He is worthy of total abandonment and supreme adoration.”

Step 5. Love or Wrath?

Read John 3:16 and 36. Ask adults if they find it harder to grasp God’s great love or God’s great wrath, and why. Analyze why God must have wrath against sin.

Determine how God showed righteous wrath and holy love at the same time. Read from Day Four (p. 122-123) the two “Does God hate . . . Does God love . . .” statements. Discuss Day Four, activity 1 (p. 123).

Step 6. The Overcoming Grace of God

Invite a volunteer to read 2 Corinthians 5:21. Determine the great exchange that occurred at the cross. Ask whether that exchange occurred because of our initiative and decision, or Christ’s. Ask: Does that mean we don’t play a role in our salvation at all? Explain.

Discuss Day Five, activity 1 (p. 124). Relate the illustration of Vitalina from Day Five (pp. 124-125). Invite volunteers to share whom God used to pursue them just as He used the author and his wife to pursue Vitalina.

Read the Day Five paragraph (p. 125) beginning with, “I praise God He has not left . . ..”

Step 7. Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Urge adults to silently fill their names in the blanks of Day Five, activity 2 (p. 125) as you read the statement from Jesus’s perspective. Ask: How should we feel upon hearing Jesus say that directly to us? How can that change everything for us?

Close in prayer.

