Preschool–Grade 6

Jesus Calls Matthew

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: Jesus calls everyone, even people others look down on. When He calls, we get up, turn from sin and follow Him.
Bible passage: Matthew 9:9–13 (and Luke 5:27–32). Read it before class.
Memory verse: "But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." *Matthew 9:13 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), paper and a pencil for each child, a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board.

1. Opening game: Who Needs a Doctor? (5–10 minutes)

Read each person aloud. Kids stand up if that person needs a doctor, and stay seated if not: a boy with a broken arm; a girl who just ran a race and feels great; a man with a high fever; a grandma who is healthy and strong; a baby with an earache. Ask: *Why would a doctor go to the sick people and not the healthy ones?* Say: "Jesus said something like that about Himself. Today we find out why."

2. Bible story: Follow Me (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to Matthew 9. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

The man at the table. Jesus had come to His own city (Matthew 9:1), Capernaum (4:13). **Look up Matthew 9:9.** The **receipt of custom** was the place where custom, a tax, was paid. Matthew sat there. He was a **publican** (10:3), a man who collected taxes. Mark and Luke tell this same story and call him Levi, the son of Alphaeus (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27).

Two words. Jesus said, "Follow me." Matthew arose and followed Him. **Look up Luke 5:28.** He left all.

The meal. Look up Matthew 9:10. Jesus **sat at meat** (sat down to eat) in the house, and many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. Luke says Levi made Him a great feast in his own house (Luke 5:29).

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The complaint. The **Pharisees** were religious leaders who were very strict about keeping the law. **Look up Matthew 9:11.** They asked His disciples why their Master ate with publicans and sinners.

The answer. Look up Matthew 9:12. Whole means healthy, and a **physician** is a doctor. **Look up Matthew 9:13.** Jesus said, "Go and learn what this means," and quoted the prophet Hosea: "I will have **mercy**, and not sacrifice." Hosea wrote that God desired mercy "and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6). God wants us to show mercy to people, not only to bring Him offerings. Jesus came to call sinners to **repentance**: to turn from sin and turn to God.

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. Matthew got up right away and left all (Matthew 9:9; Luke 5:28). What might be hard to leave behind to follow Jesus?
2. Why do you think the publicans and sinners wanted to sit down with Jesus (9:10)?
3. The Pharisees thought Jesus should stay away from sinners (9:11). Who do kids sometimes stay away from? What would Jesus do?
4. Jesus said the sick need a physician (9:12). How is sin like being sick? Why do we all need Jesus? *(Romans 3:23)*
5. Mercy is kindness to someone who doesn't deserve it (9:13). How can you show mercy this week?

Recall questions

1. What was Matthew's job called? *(A publican, Matthew 10:3)*
2. What other name do Mark and Luke use for him? *(Levi, Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27)*
3. Who complained about Jesus eating with sinners? *(The Pharisees, Matthew 9:11)*

4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **meaneth** means means; **mercy** means kindness to someone who doesn't deserve it; **sacrifice** means an offering given to God; **righteous** means good and right; **repentance** means turning from sin to God. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Jesus came to call sinners to repentance, and that means all of us. God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we answer His call and obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."

Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

This week: sit with, play with or talk to someone who is often left out. Show them mercy the way Jesus did.

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6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. Matthew 9:9: Where was Matthew sitting? *(At the receipt of custom)*
2. Matthew 9:9: What did Jesus say to him? *(Follow me)*
3. Luke 5:28: What did he leave? *(All)*
4. Luke 5:29: What did Levi make for Jesus in his own house? *(A great feast)*
5. Matthew 9:11: Who asked why Jesus ate with publicans and sinners? *(The Pharisees)*
6. Matthew 9:12: Who needs a physician? *(They that are sick)*
7. Matthew 9:13: What will God have, and not sacrifice? *(Mercy)*
8. Matthew 10:3: What is Matthew called in the list of the twelve apostles? *(Matthew the publican)*

Or choose the **Jesus Calls Matthew word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/matthew-the-tax-collector-word-search), crossword (vbshq.com/puzzles/matthew-the-tax-collector-crossword), maze (vbshq.com/puzzles/matthew-the-tax-collector-maze) or worksheet (vbshq.com/worksheets/matthew-the-tax-collector-worksheet).

7. Prayer

"Dear Jesus, thank You for calling Matthew, and for calling us. Help us get up and follow You, turn away from sin, and show mercy to people others leave out. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child asks what Matthew did wrong: the Bible doesn't say. It calls him a publican (Matthew 10:3), and the Pharisees counted publicans with sinners (9:11). Don't add what the Bible doesn't say. What we know is that Jesus called him, and he left all and followed.

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