Preschool–Grade 6

Jesus Calls Matthew

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: Jesus calls everyone, including the people others write off. Following Him means getting up, leaving the old life, and turning from sin.
Bible passage: Matthew 9:9–13 and Luke 5:27–32. Students read it out loud themselves.
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)* and "And he left all, rose up, and followed him." *Luke 5:28 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read Matthew 9:1–13, Mark 2:13–17 and Luke 5:27–32. Write both memory verses on the board.

1. Opening game: Who Gets Picked? (5–10 minutes)

Ask: *When teams get picked at school, who usually gets picked first? Who gets picked last? How does it feel to be picked last, or not at all?* Write a few answers on the board. Then ask: *If you were starting a team to change the world, who would you pick?* Say: "Today Jesus picks someone nobody expected, and then He sits down to eat with a whole room of people others looked down on."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Tell the setting: Jesus came into His own city (Matthew 9:1), Capernaum (4:13), and had just healed a man sick of the palsy (9:2–7).
Read out loud: Matthew 9:9–13, then **Luke 5:27–32**. Students take turns. Old words in these passages:

- **passed forth** (Matthew 9:9): walked on from there
- **receipt of custom** (9:9): the place where custom, a tax, was paid; **publican** (Luke 5:27; Matthew 10:3): a man who collected taxes
- **sat at meat** (Matthew 9:10): sat down to eat
- **whole** (9:12): healthy; **physician**: a doctor
- **meaneth** (9:13): means; **mercy**: kindness to someone who doesn't deserve it; **sacrifice**: an offering
- **righteous** (9:13): good and right; **repentance**: turning from sin to God
- **murmured** (Luke 5:30): complained under their breath
  Point out that Mark 2:14 and Luke 5:27 tell this same story and call him **Levi**, the son of Alphaeus.

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3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. Jesus said only two words, "Follow me" (Matthew 9:9). Luke adds, "he left all" (Luke 5:28). What does following Jesus cost? What does it give?
2. Luke says Levi made Jesus a great feast in his own house, and a great company of publicans sat down with them (Luke 5:29). What does that tell you about Matthew after Jesus called him?
3. The Pharisees asked the disciples, not Jesus (Matthew 9:11). Why do you think people complain *about* someone instead of *to* them?
4. "They that be whole need not a physician" (9:12). Is anyone really "whole" without Jesus? *(Romans 3:23)* What happens when someone thinks they don't need Him?
5. Jesus quoted Hosea 6:6, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice" (Matthew 9:13). Hosea adds, "and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6). What's the difference between bringing God offerings and showing mercy to people?
6. Who are the "publicans and sinners" at your school, the people others write off? What would it look like to sit down with them?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: **meaneth** means means; **mercy** means kindness to the undeserving; **repentance** means turning from sin to God; **left all** means left everything.
Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Matthew 9:13 this week; keep working on Luke 5:28 next week too.

5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Jesus said He came to call sinners to repentance, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). So He is calling every one of us. God loves you. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We answer His call the way Peter preached it: '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) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-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 utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, 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.

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6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. If Jesus walked by and said, "Follow me," what would I have to get up and leave behind?
2. Who is someone I tend to look down on or leave out? What is one way I could show them mercy this week?
3. Write a short prayer answering Jesus' call: "Here I am, Jesus. I want to follow You."
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: find one person who is usually left out, and sit with them, talk with them or include them. Read Matthew 9:9–13 again at home.

7. Prayer

"Dear Jesus, thank You that You came to call sinners, and that You called us. Give us hearts like Matthew's, ready to get up and leave all to follow You. Help us show mercy to people others write off. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student asks what Matthew did wrong as a publican: the Bible doesn't say. Matthew 9 only calls him a man at the receipt of custom, and the Pharisees counted publicans with sinners (9:11). Don't add a story the text doesn't tell. The point is Jesus' call and Matthew's answer.

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