Preschool–Grade 6

Jesus Calls Matthew

Sunday School Lesson for Kindergarten to 2nd Grade, 45 minutes

Main point: Jesus calls everyone to follow Him, and He calls sinners to turn from sin.
Bible passage: Matthew 9:9–13. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." *Matthew 9:13 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible, a small table and a chair, 5 index cards, a marker, crayons, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the 5 cards (see part 4). Set the table and chair at one side of the room. Put a bookmark in your Bible at Matthew 9:9.

1. Opening game: Follow Me (5 minutes)

You are the leader. Say, "Follow me!" and walk around the room. The kids follow you and copy what you do: tiptoe, take giant steps, flap your arms, march. Then let a child be the leader. Ask: *What did you have to do to follow the leader?* Say: "You watched the leader and went where the leader went. Today Jesus says two words to a man: 'Follow me.'"

2. Bible story: Jesus Calls Matthew (10 minutes)

Hold up your Bible open to Matthew 9, so the kids can see the story comes from God's Word. Tell it in your own words:

One day Jesus was walking along, and He saw a man named **Matthew** (Matthew 9:9). Matthew was sitting at the **receipt of custom**. That was the place where people paid **custom**. Custom was a tax, money people had to pay. Matthew was a **publican** (10:3), a man who collected the taxes.

Jesus looked at Matthew and said two words: "**Follow me.**" What did Matthew do? He **arose**, he got up, and he followed Jesus (9:9)! Another Gospel tells us he left everything behind (Luke 5:28).

Later, Jesus **sat at meat**, which means He sat down to eat, in the house. And look! Many publicans and **sinners**, people who did wrong things, came and sat down to eat with Jesus and His disciples (Matthew 9:10).

The story continues: Some **Pharisees** saw it. The Pharisees were religious leaders who worked very hard to keep God's law. They asked Jesus' disciples, "Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" (9:11). That means: why does Jesus eat with people like that?

Jesus heard them. He said, "They that be whole need not a **physician**, but they that are sick" (9:12). A physician is a doctor. Who needs a doctor, a person who is well, or a person who is sick? The sick person! Jesus came for people who need Him.

Read Matthew 9:13 from your Bible. Jesus told them to go and learn what this means: "I will have **mercy**, and not sacrifice." Mercy is being kind to people, even when they don't deserve it. Then Jesus said, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to **repentance**." Repentance means turning away from sin and turning to God.

3. Questions to ask (5 minutes)

1. Where was Matthew sitting when Jesus saw him? *(At the receipt of custom, Matthew 9:9)*
2. What two words did Jesus say to Matthew? *("Follow me," 9:9)*
3. What did Matthew do? *(He arose and followed Jesus, 9:9)*
4. Who came and sat down to eat with Jesus? *(Many publicans and sinners, 9:10)*
5. Who needs a physician? *(They that are sick, 9:12)*

4. Memory verse: Follow the Cards (5 minutes)

Write one part on each card: *I am not come / to call the righteous, / but sinners / to repentance. / Matthew 9:13.* Explain the old words: **righteous** means good and right, **sinners** means people who do wrong, and **repentance** means turning from sin to God. Read the verse together. Then give the 5 cards to 5 kids, mixed up. Say, "Follow me!" and the kids follow you to the front and line up in the right order. Read it again. Play again with 5 new kids.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Jesus called Matthew, and He calls you too. God loves you very much. But everyone has done wrong things. The Bible calls that sin: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God who came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Jesus died for our sins, He was buried, and He rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)! Jesus came to call sinners to repentance. The Bible tells us how to obey the gospel, the good news about Jesus: '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 we are sorry for our sin and we turn away from it. We are **baptized**, buried all the way under the water, in Jesus' name, so our sins are washed away (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). **Remission** means God takes our sins away. And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, His own Spirit, and we speak in other tongues, words God gives us, just like the believers did in the Bible (Acts 2:4)."
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: be kind to someone that other kids leave out. Jesus sat down with people others stayed away from.

6. Activity (10–15 minutes)

Choose one: 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), the coloring page or craft (vbshq.com/bible-stories/matthew-the-tax-collector), or **Follow Me Chain:** one child sits at the table, the "receipt of custom." You walk by and say, "Follow me!" The child gets up and follows you. Now that child walks by and calls the next child sitting down, until the whole class is following in one long line. Say: Jesus "saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him" (Matthew 9:9).

7. Prayer

"Dear Jesus, thank You for calling Matthew, and for calling us too. Thank You for loving people that others leave out. Help us turn from sin and follow You every day. In Jesus' name, amen."

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

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