

JESUS CALLS

LESSON 4

Mark 2:13–17

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faithinkids

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Jesus is here! Good news from Mark (Part 1)

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We recommend the International Children's Bible for use with children during the lesson. Our leader's notes use the New International Version.

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'All for the glory of God alone' (1 Corinthians 10:31)





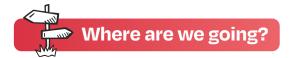
Truth that changes me: Good news! Jesus calls sinners like us to follow him.



Faith in Kids looks like:

Children who are excited to hear Jesus' call and are ready to follow him.

Preparation



Levi's encounter with Jesus was short, but hugely transformative. Two simple words from Jesus got an immediate response. It is shocking that Jesus would call a traitor tax collector like Levi to follow him. And more shocking that Jesus gave Levi the honour of eating at his house, sharing a meal to show his friendship.

We want the children to understand that it is just as surprising that Jesus calls sinners like us to follow him. He doesn't ask us to be good enough on the outside or to try harder. Jesus calls us as we are and then, as we follow him, he changes us from the inside out. Levi immediately left his livelihood, his position - his whole way of life - behind to follow Jesus. We want the children to be as keen to respond to Jesus' call, knowing how much he welcomes them.

Pray and read the Bible passage. Read Where are we going and Look at the passage to give you a better understanding of how to apply the truth.

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Look at the passage

A Surprising Call (v13–14)

Jesus was walking by the lake, a large crowd gathered to hear him teach. Surely if you were choosing someone to join your team, you'd pick someone from this keen crowd. Yet Jesus made a beeline for Levi, a Jewish traitor whose tax collecting booth was positioned right next to his fellow townsmen's fishing boats - ready to take their money, hand it to the occupying Romans and get paid in return.

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Jesus made no mistake as he singled out Levi and said, "Follow me!" We feel the surprise that Jesus called Levi. Do we feel the surprise and delight that Jesus calls sinners like us?

A Swift Response (v14)

Levi didn't need to be asked twice. His response was as quick as the paralysed man rising from his mat! Levi rose from his booth where he sat in his sin, left the money and job that were so important to him and walked away into a new identity, following his Saviour.

This is the story for all Christians. We start off sitting in sin, going nowhere, but then we hear Jesus' call and we rise to follow him.

Who has Jesus come for? (v15-17)

Levi shared a meal with Jesus and invited many tax collectors and "sinners" to enjoy the amazing good news - Jesus welcomed them! Levi would have felt the disapproval of the onlookers, "Why does Jesus eat with them?" The Pharisees thought they were the religious elite with the knowledge and the godly lifestyles. Why wouldn't Jesus favour them? Jesus' reply was clear; he has come for sinners, for those who know they need him. Sick people know they need a doctor, sinners know they need a Saviour. The Pharisees couldn't see their sin and couldn't see their need.

Levi knew that Jesus had called him - that qualified him to be on the team. It's the same today, Jesus calls sinners. We are 'in' by understanding how much we need his help - a truth that silences pride and soothes fear.

Win my heart

What would be your elevator pitch as to why someone should pick you for their team? What strengths would you mention, what qualities and qualifications do you bring? Are you reliable, trustworthy, a team player? What about weaknesses? Which ones would be safe to admit to? How would you show humility without airing the dirty laundry?

Isn't it incredible that Jesus' recruitment process is nothing like this! He can see for himself every reason why he shouldn't pick us but we hear him say, "Welcome, you're exactly who I'm looking for!" Levi's story is the gospel in a nutshell - he begins sitting in sin, he's called by Jesus, he rises to follow and then he reclines at a feast. One day we will be at home in Jesus' house, celebrating his rescue with sinners just like us. How do we respond to Jesus' call? Sometimes following Jesus feels like a dreary duty, to be endured not enjoyed. Often we are reluctant to leave our old lives behind. If we feel the surprise and the delight that Jesus - God's perfect Son - has chosen sinners like *us*, following him will be an exciting privilege, worth leaving everything for.

Questions for your heart

- What sort of people would you expect Jesus to call?
- · How does this lesson silence both your pride and your insecurities?



For your heart, before you prepare the lesson.



5 minutes to focus on your group

What do the children in your group think about following Jesus? Do they assume that they would be assets to Team Jesus and need reminding that we are all sinners? Or do they struggle to believe that Jesus would want anything to do with people like them? Pray that your group would be as keen to respond to Jesus' call as Levi was.

What do the children in <u>your</u> group need?

Pray that the Spirit would help them: • to grasp the truth • to live it out



All together time



This has been written as an all-age slot to introduce the whole church family to what the children are learning today, but it could be adapted for the children's classes.

Helpers Needed

Volunteer to be Levi, volunteer to be Jesus.



Pictures as a PowerPoint or printed, table and money (toy or real is fine), plates and cups for a dinner party.

$igodoldsymbol{ extsf{W}}$ What to Say



| I have got a challenge for you this morning. | |
|---|---|
| I'm going to describe a job and show you some pictures. You have to | |
| pick which is the best person to do that job: | Show pictures to pick from |
| Your new family pet | Puppy, rhino, T-Rex |
| A Nursery School teacher | Darth Vader, Viper from Gladiators, Belle from Beauty and the Beast |
| Someone to teach you ballet | Builder, Misty Copeland, aged Grann |
| Someone to build your house | (Use the same three pictures as |
| We can make good choices about who to pick for a job. | above) |
| In Mark's gospel this week, Jesus chooses someone to follow him, to | |
| be a really good friend of his. What sort of a person is Jesus going to choose? | |
| As Jesus walked along the shore of the lake, a crowd of people followed him. They wanted to listen to his teaching, they loved hearing what he had to say, surely this is the group Jesus will pick from? | |
| Beside the lake, sitting at a desk doing his job - counting his money, was a man called Levi. | Have a volunteer to act as Levi sitting at a table with money. |
| Levi had grown up hearing about God, his family were Jews, God's special people. But Levi was working for the other side, he'd joined the enemy, working for the Romans who'd taken over the land. | |
| He spent his time collecting money from his neighbours to give to the Romans - nobody liked Levi, nobody wanted him around. | |

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| ♥ What to Say | 🕁 What to Do |
|--|--|
| Jesus saw Levi and walked right up to him - what do you think he said? You are a traitor - not a faithful. Sort your life out. Follow me. | |
| Let's find out Jesus says - <i>"Follow me!"</i> No one would have been surprised if Jesus had told Levi off, or called him a traitor, but it was a total shock that Jesus called Levi to join his team. | Volunteer as Jesus walks up to the table - points at Levi (pause for dramatic effect). |
| As much of a shock as picking a T-Rex as your family pet, or Viper to teach nursery school - Jesus chose LEVI as one of his followers. | Show pictures of a T-Rex and Viper again - make the connection - the surprising pick. |
| Levi didn't hang around, he didn't need to be asked twice! Immediately he got up, left his money, left his tax collecting booth behind and followed Jesus. Levi knew that being a follower of Jesus is the greatest thing, more important than money or the job that we do. | Levi stands up, Jesus puts arm around him, they walk off together. |
| Levi threw a dinner party for Jesus and invited his tax collector friends - he was so delighted that Jesus wanted to be his friend that he wanted to celebrate. Some very religious people saw Jesus eating dinner and they were shocked. "Why does Jesus eat with tax collectors and sinners?" they asked, Jesus should know better than to hang out with people like that. | Set some plates and cups on the table. |
| Jesus replied, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick, I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." | You could have the Jesus volunteer say this. |

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\bigcirc What to Say



| Jesus was explaining that he has chosen sinners to be his followers. | |
|--|--|
| Levi realised that he was a sinner - he knew there were lots of ways he had lived that were wrong. | |
| The religious people looking on didn't think that they were sinners - they thought that God was pleased with them already. | |
| Followers of Jesus know that Jesus loves them even though they get things wrong. When Jesus calls them they follow him and trust him to change them from the inside out. | |
| What about you? Are you like Levi, knowing that you aren't the best for Jesus to choose? Or are you like the religious people in the story and think that God is very pleased with you? | |
| Levi knew that following Jesus was better than his money or his job. He left everything behind to follow him. | |
| The same is true for us. Knowing that Jesus wants you to follow him is better than being rich, or famous, or popular. We might have to leave some things behind to follow Jesus, but it will definitely be worth it. | |
| Pray to finish. | |



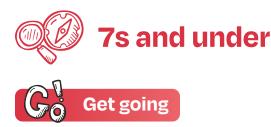






Brain Break





Money Grabbers

Split your group into two teams on one side of the room. On the other side of the room, each team has a pile of coins (*play coins, pasta pieces, cut up squares of paper as cash*).

The teams run relay style and collect one piece of money at a time. They can decide whether to take from their own pile, or steal from the other team. (Add the rule that they have to run in a straight line to the table - and then slide to steal to prevent running crashes.)

Link: Today we hear what happened when a man called Levi met Jesus. Levi was a tax collector, he took money from his friends and neighbours and gave it to the bad guys, nobody liked him. Let's see what Jesus says to him.



Intro

Play a short game with the children. Sit down on a chair and ask them to close their eyes. While their eyes are closed, change your position from sitting, to standing, jogging on the spot and finally lying on the floor. When they open their eyes, they have to spot what has changed.

We will use these changes of position to tell the story of Levi and help them see the big change that Jesus made in his life.

Teach

A Surprising Call: Sitting – Levi is sitting at his tax collecting booth, counting his money, (*act out the scene, count coins etc*) ready to take more money from his neighbours and give it to the bossy Romans who had taken over the land.

Read verse 13-14a - explain that because Levi took people's money and worked for the Romans, other people didn't like him. He didn't get invited to parties, people would stay away from him and not be his friend.

continued —



Flexible resource: look at both lesson plans, pick what works for your group.

Use this activity to introduce today's theme.

Use a suitable Bible translation - we use the International Children's Bible (found online at www.biblegateway.com).

You will need: paper

plate / wooden spoon with a smiley face on one side and a grumpy face on the other.



Explain how Jesus came through the crowd, straight up to where Levi was sitting and said...**"FOLLOW ME!"** Make sure that the children feel the surprise - Levi was not someone you would choose.

A Swift Response: Standing - When Jesus said, "Follow me!" Levi jumped off his chair straight away - *get the children to jump up as you repeat "Follow me"*. Levi was really excited that Jesus had asked him to follow him.

Read the rest of v14.

Walking on the spot - Levi went with Jesus, he wanted to be with him, to be one of his followers. He left his money and his tax collecting job behind and went with Jesus that day, and every day after that.

Who has Jesus come for?: Lying Down – Levi threw a dinner party for Jesus. At this party you lie down on the floor to eat your party food. Ask the children to lie down in a space, imagine the food they might eat, who might they invite to their party?

Levi invited other tax collectors like him to the dinner. He was so happy that Jesus had come to ask him to be his friend, that he wanted everyone else to meet Jesus too.

You could recap the events of the story with actions:

- Sitting Counting his money
- Standing up When Jesus called
- Walking on the spot Following Jesus
- · Lying down Enjoying being with Jesus and inviting his friends

Conclude

Have a paper plate / wooden spoon with a smiling face on one side and a grumpy face on the other.

Show the smiling face. Explain that Levi was really happy that Jesus had called him to be his follower. He was so excited that he was ready to change, to stop collecting taxes and to follow Jesus straight away.

Show the grumpy face. Some people were not happy. They didn't think that Jesus should be friends with people who have been naughty and done wrong. Read v17. Jesus wanted people to understand that he has come for people like Levi - who know that they need to be forgiven, who know that they have done wrong and who want to change.

We are all a bit like Levi. We all do wrong things sometimes, things that make God sad and people sad. Don't answer out loud – just think quietly for a moment. Can you think of something you have done that you know was wrong or that made someone sad?

Jesus said that he came for people like us who sometimes do wrong things. Jesus wants **us** to jump up with excitement and follow him, too. That's great news! We follow Jesus today by getting to know him and by listening to what he says.

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Make sure that the children understand what following Jesus means today when we can't physically walk after him or eat dinner with him.





Simon Says

Play a game of Simon Says. One child (or leader) gives instructions and the children follow them if they begin with, "Simon says" or ignore them if those words aren't used.

After a couple of minutes explain that there is a new rule. When the children hear a leader say, "Jesus says - Follow me!" they have to run to the leader no matter what else is happening. The game of "Simon says" then continues as before. Let different children have a turn at being Simon but keep the same leader saying "follow me" throughout.

Link: When Jesus called Levi to follow him he stopped everything else he was doing and followed Jesus straight away! In this game, we stopped whatever we were doing when we heard the call to follow Jesus.



Craft time – Spinning Story Circle

Make a spinning story circle with the four actions: sitting, standing, walking, lying down. Can the children retell the story using the four actions?

Link: In our story today, Levi started sitting at his tax booth, but when he heard Jesus' call to follow him, he stood up and joined Jesus. Our story ended with Levi lying down eating a meal with Jesus.

Think time

Big question: What did Jesus say to Levi?

A follow up question: What did Levi do? Why do you think he went so quickly?

Pray

Dear God, thank you for the good news that Jesus has come to call sinners like Levi and sinners like us to follow him. Help us to be like Levi and feel excited to follow you. Amen. <u>.</u>

A chance to rest the children's minds before Heart and Hands. Get moving and have fun with this game.

Make a craft and have a chat. Give the children time to reflect on today's big truth, so it can impact their hearts.

You will need: Page 18 printed onto card, split pins, colouring pens.













Musical chairs

Have a row of chairs, one for every child in the group, set out in a line facing alternate directions. When the music plays, the children have to travel in the same direction around the chairs and when the music stops, they must sit down. As the game progresses, gradually remove the chairs. If you don't get a chair when the music stops, you are out.

Link: Today we are going to meet two different characters, one was used to being left out and not having a seat at the party. We are going to see what Jesus has to say to him.



Introduction

Draw two large outlines of people on big sheets of paper. Label one Peter and the other Matt.

Explain that today we are thinking about two people: Mess-up Matt and Perfect Peter.

Ask the children to describe a person who does the right things, like Perfect Peter. What do they do? What are they like? *Shares their sweets, kind and helpful, does their homework. Emphasise the positive results – nice to be around, gets invited for tea etc.* Add the words they use to the Peter sheet.

Ask them to describe Mess-up Matt, a person who always gets things wrong or gets into trouble. What do they do? What are they like? *Late, unkind, rough, greedy. Emphasise the negative results - gets left out, don't want them around.* Add the words to the Matt sheet.

- Which character would you pick to be your friend?
- Who would you expect Jesus to pick as one of his followers?

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Flexible resource: look at both lesson plans, pick what works for your group.

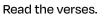
Use this activity to introduce today's theme.

Use a suitable Bible translation - we use the International Children's Bible (found online at www.biblegateway.com).

You will need: two large sheets of paper and pens



Jesus Meets The Tax Collector (v13–14)



Explain that Levi was like Mess-up Matt. He took money from the other Jews and gave it to the Romans. He probably took a bit extra for himself too. Help the children see that he wasn't popular - he didn't have many friends, nobody wanted him on their team.

Jesus was surrounded by a crowd of enthusiastic people there to listen to his teaching. Explain that lots of them would seem like people to pick as a follower. But Jesus went straight to Levi's tax collecting booth and called Levi to follow him!

Ask the children how they think Levi felt. *Happy, excited, honoured, humbled, confused, amazed - there are no right answers, just help them to feel the surprise.*

Explain that Levi's response was amazing! He left his money, he left his job - things that had mattered more to him than anything else - to follow Jesus who called him to be on his team.

• Are you surprised that Jesus chose Levi, a man like mess-up Matt?

Jesus talks to the Pharisees (v15–17)

Read the verses.

Explain that the Pharisees thought they were perfect people who followed all of the rules and that God was pleased with them. Explain why they were shocked that Jesus was eating with Levi - he was a mess, not a good choice of person to hang out with.

Draw two circles on some paper and a stick person in each. Label one "sick" and the other "well". Ask the children to imagine that a doctor walks in. Which person will they help? *The sick one.*

Draw two more circles. Label one "sinners" and the other "righteous".

A sinner is someone who has messed up. They are not right with God, they are separated from him and need help. A righteous person is someone who is right with God, nothing separates them from him.

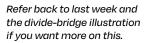
If we asked Levi to put himself in a circle - which would he choose? *Sinner - draw a stick figure in the circle.*

What about the Pharisees? Righteous - draw a stick figure in the circle.

• Which circle do you think you belong in? Why do you say that?

Point to the figure in the sinner circle. Jesus said that just like a doctor helps people who are sick, he has come to help people who know they are sinful - *draw a big red heart around the person in the sinners circle.*

Point to the figure in the righteous circle. Some people think they are good enough on their own. But even the most perfect person you can think of isn't actually perfect. *Cross out the man in the righteous circle.*



Children might say that they are in the righteous circle because of Jesus. We want them to be clear that they are not in this circle on their own strength and merit.





On our own, without Jesus - everybody belongs in the sinner circle, even the most perfect people.

That might feel like bad news, but it is actually the best news ever, because Jesus says that people who know they are in the sinner circle are the people he has come to help!

Today's good news is that Jesus said that he came for people like Levi, Mess-up Matt and us, sinners who get things wrong. Jesus wants **us** to follow him, just like Levi did. That might mean we have to leave some things behind but it will be worth it. We follow Jesus today by getting to know him and listening to what he says.



Party List / Shopping List Game

Play a memory challenge game, the first person says, "I went to Levi's party and I brought a bottle of pop", next person repeats and then adds an item of their own, "I went to Levi's party and I brought a bottle of pop and some crisps." etc.

Link: The people who were invited to Levi's party were other tax collectors and sinners. They were ready to enjoy the good news that Jesus called people like them to follow him.



Did you spot it?

- How did Levi respond to Jesus?
- · Who does Jesus say he has come to call?

Work it out

- Why was it such a surprise that Jesus called Levi?
- · What kind of people would you have expected Jesus to call?
- How do you think Levi felt about being called by Jesus? Why do you think that?

continued —



A chance to rest the children's minds before Heart and Hands. Get moving and have fun with this game.

We have found that this is where children make the most progress relating the Bible to their everyday lives. Please leave enough time for this section.

These questions can mostly be found on the Chat Time (see p.19) sheet which has been designed to aid your discussion. If possible, enlarge the page to A3 so you can work on it together. Make sure each child can still answer the personal questions honestly for themselves (e.g. hand out Post-it notes for them to write/draw their answers to these questions).



Live it out

- Would you call yourself a follower of Jesus? Why or why not?
- Part of following Jesus today is getting to know him and listening to what he says. Like Levi, we might have to give some things up or change some of the things we do to follow Jesus. Can you think of anything you might need to stop or start doing to follow Jesus?
- What could you say to a friend who was worried that she wasn't really good enough for Jesus because she kept messing things up?

Extra stretch

Try to press further into the 'righteous' and 'sinners' labels. This story is extremely simple, so spend longer with older children discussing the two worldviews.

- What kind of person today would think of themselves like the Pharisees did righteous?
- What reasons do people have today for thinking that they don't need Jesus? It's not just the people who are really 'good'. What other reasons can the children think of for people not responding to Jesus?
- What kind of person today would leap up to follow Jesus? Who do you think is waiting to be told that Jesus wants them to follow him? *We could wonder about who is longing to be called, who is longing to be valued by the King*?

Pray

Thank God that he calls sinners like us to follow him and that he welcomes us and wants to spend time with us. Ask God to help us to be excited to hear Jesus' call and to leap up and follow him even if we have to leave things behind.





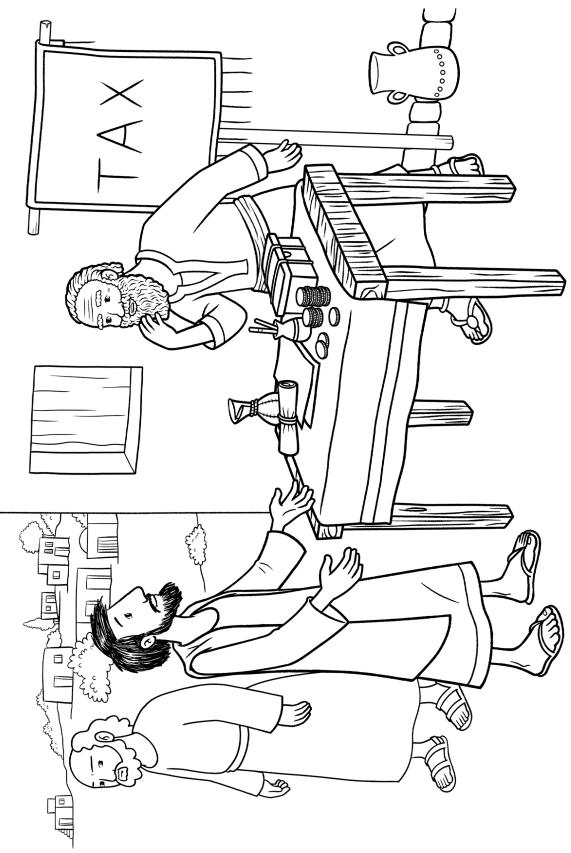
JESUS CALLS

LESSON 4

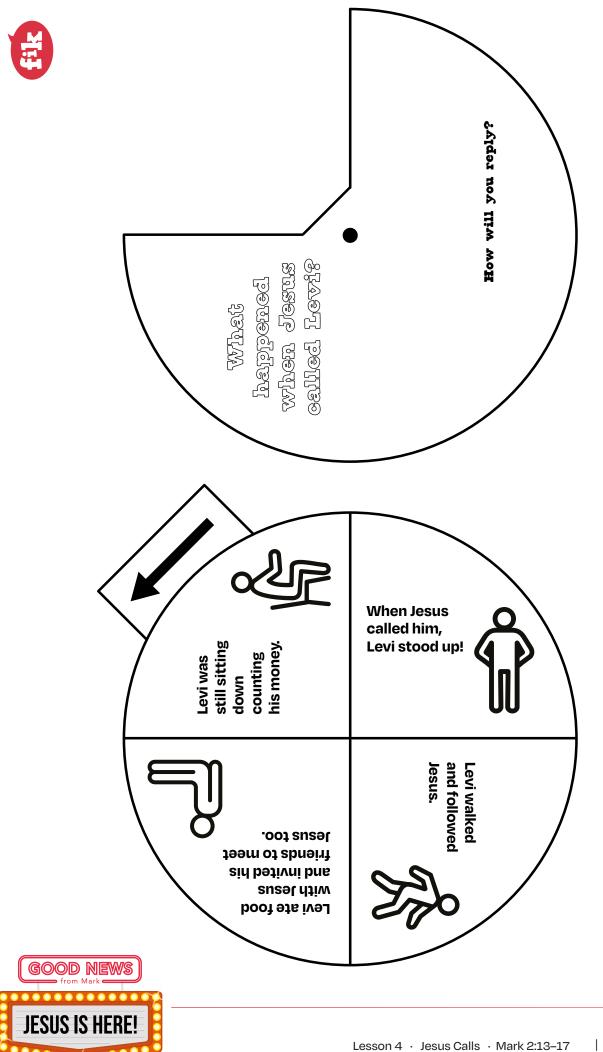








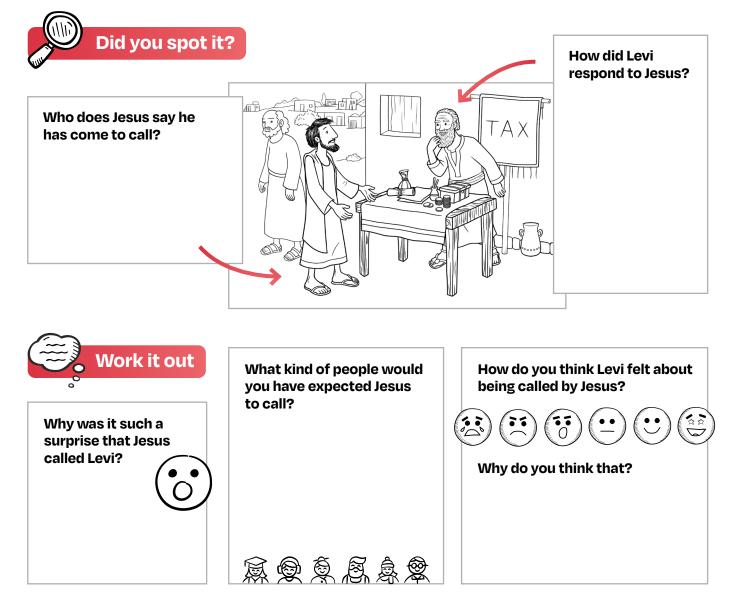


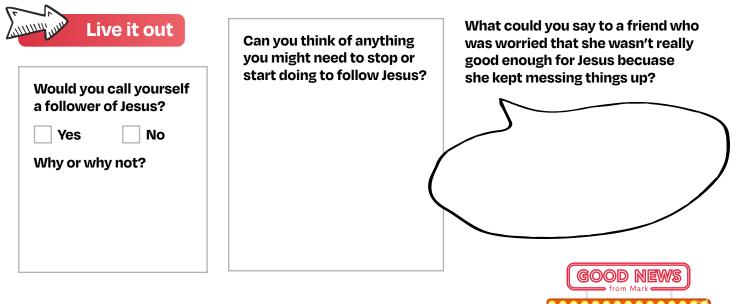




Heart & Hands Chat Time







Take Home Sheet

Carry on the conversation at home and build faith with us!



Truth that changes me:

Good news! Jesus calls sinners like us to follow him.



Faith in Kids looks like:

Children who are excited to hear Jesus' call and are ready to follow him.



Talk Together

Read the verses: "As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth, "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him." Mark 2:14

Use the picture and the verse to answer:

- What job did Levi do?
- What did Jesus say to Levi?
- What did Levi do then?

Jesus called Levi to follow him. This was a surprise because tax collectors were bad people - nobody wanted to be their friends, they took too much money and helped the mean Romans.

Can you tell me...

- 3 types of people you would want to be friends with.
- 2 people you know who are following Jesus.
- 1 thing that is good news from the story.

Live it out: What different calls can you think of? A phone ringing? Mum calling that tea is ready? The whistle at the end of break? What does the person calling want you to do when you hear? Jesus called Levi to follow him and he was so excited that he went straight away.

A prayer to pray: Dear God, thank you for the good news that Jesus welcomes people who get things wrong, like us, and calls us to follow him. Help us to be excited to follow Jesus, like Levi was, and to leave other things behind. Amen.

Look at the picture from today's story – you could colour it in, then choose a path to follow:

- "Talk together" gently starts a conversation about today's big truth.
- "Open the Bible" encourages you to read and apply the truth together.

Open the Bible

Read Mark 2:13–17 and use the picture to talk about some of the following questions:

7s and under

- What was Levi doing at the start of the story? And at the end?
- What made this change?
- Why was it a surprise that Jesus called Levi to follow him?

8s and over

- How do you think Levi felt when Jesus said, "Follow me"? Why do you think that?
- Who did Jesus say he had come to help?
- Is this only good news for bad people? Could it be good news for everyone?

Live it out: This week keep a record of how you respond when you are called to do something. Do you do what you are asked? How long does it take you to respond?

- When Jesus called Levi, he responded straight away. What sort of calls made you respond most quickly?
- Levi left what he was doing when Jesus called.
 What have you had to stop doing to answer calls?
 How did you feel about that?

Pray: Thank God that Jesus calls sinners like Levi and like you to follow him. Ask him to help you to be excited to follow Jesus, even if you have to leave things behind.







Faith in Kids exists to encourage, inspire and equip influencers of faith in children with support, training and resources.

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