

EVANGELISM

Week 1:
Talk With Your Ears

This includes:

1. Leader Preparation
2. Lesson Guide

1. LEADER PREPARATION

LESSON OVERVIEW

When Jesus walked the face of our world, he shared God's love with everyone around him. He called his disciples to follow his example, and it's our responsibility to do the same: to share God's love with people. In this series, your students will discover what it means to "fish for people." Before our friends care to hear we know about Jesus, they need to know we care for them. One great way to communicate care is to learn how to listen well.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. WHAT: We need to earn the right to be heard before we say anything, and listening well is a great way to build relationships.
2. WHY: If friends know we care for them, they will be more willing to have spiritual conversations about God's love.
3. HOW: Students will be encouraged to listen before speaking and to pray for opportunities to have conversations with friends about Jesus.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

Matthew 4:18-22

SECONDARY SCRIPTURE

Matthew 16:13-16

TEACHING PREP

The short overview below is designed to help you prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your teenagers, you'll definitely want to refer to it as you lead your lesson.



LEADER
TIP

Read Matthew 4:18-22.



It's always intriguing to read through the Gospels and see how Jesus spoke in ways that specifically connected with his audience. In this passage, he calls some of his first disciples, and many of those men were fishermen. Jesus translated their daily experiences into an explanation of their purpose in life: to "fish" for people.

Jesus told these disciples that he would show them how to fish for people, and that's exactly what he did through his compassion, his miracles, his teachings, his sacrifice on the cross, and his resurrection from the dead.

During this lesson, students will be challenged to grow in their asking and listening skills—to build friendships in which they earn the right to talk about God because they care about their friends' perspectives, opinions, and feelings. When we show an active interest in others, we can earn the right to talk about what it means to follow of Jesus.

Help your students avoid seeing their friends as spiritual "projects." People who need to experience God's love and forgiveness through Jesus; we dehumanize them when we treat them as an agenda item on our spiritual checklist. God wants your students' conversations to be motivated by love and concern for their friends, not by some attempt to convert people and move on or to perform spiritual duties.

THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]

Text Message Questions

We've provided a couple of different text message questions to send out to your students prior to your meeting. Feel free to use one or both of the questions below. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.

- Ever tried to talk with your ears? You'll learn how at small group tonight. Hope to see you there!
- Ready to go fishing? Find out what I mean tonight at small group!

Parent Email

We've provided you with an email below that you can send to your parents following the lesson. Our hope is to encourage parents to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.



Dear parents,

This week, our small groups launched a three-lesson series on evangelism. Our goal is to help our teenagers confidently and effectively tell their friends about their faith in Jesus and what it means to become a follower of Christ.

In this first lesson, we focused on Matthew 4:18-22, when Jesus called some of his first disciples and told them that he would teach them “how to fish for people.” This is what Jesus did in his three years of ministry through compassion, miracles, teachings, his sacrifice on the cross, and his resurrection from the dead.

During our lesson, we challenged students to grow in their asking and listening skills—to build friendships in which they earn the right to talk about God because they care about their friends’ perspectives, opinions, and feelings. When we show a genuine interest in our friends, we can earn the right to talk about what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

As you talk with your teenager this week, here are some questions you might want to ask:

- Is it more enjoyable to talk to someone who’s talking at the same time, or would you rather talk with someone who’s actually listening to your words? Why?
- If you ask and listen, how can that open the door to sharing your faith and telling a friend about God’s love?
- What are some places where you might find lots of people who need to hear about Jesus? How easily can you spend time there and have conversations with people there?

I pray that this is a blessed week for you and your family!

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2. LESSON GUIDE

GETTING THINGS STARTED [OPTIONAL]

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then SAY SOMETHING LIKE:

I'd like to spend a few minutes hearing about some of your hobbies or your favorite activities. I'd like you to tell me how you got started with this hobby or activity, and why you enjoy it so much. But there's a catch: I want everyone in the group to answer this question at the exact same time. Don't talk quietly; boldly tell me about your hobby or activity, OK? I'm going to give you about three minutes. Go!

You may have to shout "STOP" at the three-minute mark if everyone is still talking loudly, or your students may run out of things to say before time is up. Once the activity is complete, **ASK:**

- *OK, what did you think of this activity? Did you enjoy it, or was it frustrating?*
- *How long do you think you could talk in that kind of setting?*
- *Is it more enjoyable to talk to someone who's talking at the same time, or would you rather talk with someone who's actually listening to your words? Why?*
- *Is it possible to do a really good job of talking and listening at the same time? Why or why not?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Trying to listen and talk at the same time is impossible if we really want to hear what the other person has to say—and if we want to be heard. As we'll see today, the gift of listening to someone is a really powerful thing. God can use your willingness to listen to your friends as an opportunity to share his love. So let's dive in and see what it might look like to "talk with your ears!"*



If you came up with an opening activity, movie clip, or game that worked well with your group, and you'd like to share it with other youth workers, please email us at ideas@simplyyouthministry.com.



TEACHING POINTS



LEADER
TIP

The goal of the Teaching Points is to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. The main points we have chosen here are (1) God wants you to go “fishing,” (2) Share God’s love by asking and listening, and (3) Pray for opportunities to listen and share.



LEADER
TIP

Remember: All throughout these lessons, it’s up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use, and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read Matthew 4:18-22 together as a group. Consider allowing one or more of the teenagers to read the text.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Let’s spend a few minutes talking about what it means to “fish for people” and how we can play a part in sharing God’s love with our world.*

1. God wants you to go “fishing”

ASK:

- *How many of you have ever gone fishing? What’s the biggest fish you’ve ever caught—or ever had a friend or family member claim that they caught?*
- *What factors can make fishing either easier or more difficult? [NOTE: Factors might include the weather, the number of fish in the lake or river, the kind of bait you’re using, who you’re with, and so on.]*
- *What do you think Jesus meant in this passage when he said he wanted these guys to learn “how to fish for people”?*
- *Jesus said he would show his disciples how to fish for people. What are some ways Jesus demonstrated and showed this?*
- *Does God want you to be concerned with what your friends believe about Jesus? Why or why not?*
- *Why is it important to tell our friends about Jesus?*
- *If you’re trying to catch fish in places that don’t have fish, you’ll never succeed. How does this idea relate to our mission of “fishing for people?” [NOTE: It’s important to have solid Christian friends, but we need to interact with people who aren’t Christians, too.]*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *We all have the opportunity to tell our friends and family members why it’s so meaningful to have a friendship with Jesus. God will guide*



and direct us in sharing his love with people through conversations. But remember something important: Your friends are not “projects.” Your friends are people who need to experience God’s love and forgiveness through Jesus. God wants your conversations to be motivated by your love and concern for your friends.

2. Share God’s love by asking and listening

ASK:

- *When it comes to talking to your friends about Jesus, are you most likely to be talkative about your faith, quiet about your faith, or ready to ask friends about their view of faith? Why?*
- *If you spend all your time talking to a friend without asking questions or truly listening to the other person, how do you think that makes your friend feel?*
- *Now think about it the other way: If you take time to ask questions and genuinely listen, what does that say about how you value your friend?*
- *If you ask and listen, how can that open the door to sharing your faith and telling a friend about God’s love?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *When we ask questions and listen to what another person says, we earn the right to share about God and his love and truth. It can be tough to remain patient in conversations and allow our friend to share first because we have so much to say. But if we hog all the conversation time, we’re basically saying we don’t care about the other person. If your friends know you care about them and value what they think, they will be more likely to be open to hearing your story of why you’re a follower of Jesus.*

3. Pray for opportunities to listen and share

ASK:

- *What are some specific places where it would be easiest to have conversations with friends—places you can talk AND listen well?*
- *How can prayer help you develop a deeper interest in your friends and be prepared to share when the time is right?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *It’s an incredible experience to be part of God’s plan to share his love with someone and to help that person understand who God is. We can be even more effective in sharing God’s love when we are prayed up and prepared.*



When we pray for opportunities to talk with friends about Jesus, God will give us opportunities.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]

ASK:

- *Read Matthew 16:13-16. Why do you think Jesus asked his disciples who people said that he was?*
- *What are some questions you could ask a friend that might open the door to talking about why you follow Jesus or how your life is different because of your friendship with Jesus? [NOTE: Examples might include “What do you think about Jesus?” “Do you think God cares about the stuff you go through?” or “Do you think heaven really exists?”]*
- *When your friend answers, you’ll probably get one of three “colors” of responses: red, yellow, green. A “red” response would mean stop—this friend doesn’t want to talk about anything spiritual or anything related to God. A “yellow” response would mean your friend is open but cautious about talking about spiritual topics. A “green” response would mean your friend is open and willing to have these kinds of conversations. What are some possible “red” responses you might hear? “yellow” responses? “green” responses?*
- *If you feel comfortable, tell us about a spiritual conversation you had with a friend who doesn’t know Jesus.*

APPLICATION

Ask each student to find a partner for these questions.

ASK:

- *What are some good ways you can “fish” for Jesus this week?*
- *Do you have any fears about asking or talking with your friends about Jesus, or about truly listening to what they say? How can I pray for you about these fears?*



Encourage your students to pray in their pairs that God would provide opportunities to ask and listen to friends' perspectives this coming week.

SUMMARY



LEADER
TIP

End your small group lesson here. Provide your teenagers with a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) the content of this lesson, (2) the dialogue that took place during the lesson, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.



LEADER
TIP

FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]

Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the verse below.

Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" (Matthew 4:19).

