



SESSION 1 of 4

# Jesus starts it all

## MEETING AIM

To make sense of why Jesus started to minister the way he did, and to explore the theme of training and beginning a life of ministry.

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Mark 1:1-15

## BACKGROUND

Here we see Jesus launching into public ministry in Galilee. Unlike Matthew and Luke, which start with Jesus' birth, the Gospel of Mark starts with his baptism. Mark famously focuses more on Jesus' actions than his words.

## 5 CIRCLE TIME

Invite the group to gather and share what has happened during the week. You may want to share refreshments. You can explain that you're going to start looking at the Gospel of Mark, starting with an account of Jesus beginning his ministry.

## 5 INTRO ACTIVITY

**You will need:** a large enough space to do warm-up routines in; music and the means to play it

Split the young people into small groups of about three or four. Ask them to prepare a two-minute warm-up routine for the rest of the group. Ask them to think about movements, motivational phrases they might shout out while they're warming up and a song to go with their warm-up. Encourage them to use their imaginations, and be available to help each group get into the activity!

Give them a small amount of time to go away and prepare their warm-ups, then come back and let each group take turns in leading the whole group in their routine.

## 15 BIBLE EXPLORATION

**You will need:** Bibles; large sheets paper; marker pens

Read the passage out together as a group. Then split the young people into smaller

groups and give each one a portion of the passage: verses 1-3, 4-8, 9-11, 12-13 and 14-15. Give out the paper and pens. Ask them to read over their portion of the passage and consider what kind of news this would have been to the people of Galilee.

Ask them to create the front page of a newspaper with headlines and an article about these events. Again, encourage them to be creative and funny! They can think about extra details, such as what they would call the newspaper, which adverts they might include and what pictures they might need to illustrate their story. Give the groups some time to design their front pages, then take some time showing and explaining to the rest of the group what they have done.

## 5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Bring the group back together and ask them to discuss ideas about the passage you have looked at together. Ask them the following questions:

- What was most important to Jesus as he started his ministry?
- What part did John the Baptist play in helping to launch Jesus' ministry?
- Why do you think Jesus got baptised at the start of his ministry? What did that mean?
- What part did the temptation in the wilderness play as Jesus prepared to begin his ministry?
- Jesus was 30 years old when he started his ministry. What do you think he did before then? What do you think it would have been like for the people who already knew him when he started his public ministry?

## 10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

**You will need:** large sheets of paper; marker pens

So far we've looked at what it meant for Jesus to prepare for his ministry. Christians understand that they are Jesus' disciples. This means we try to learn from him, living with his intentions, teachings and promises at the centre of how we live and what we do. This activity aims to help us prepare or 'warm up' our faith muscles to live for Jesus. To help the group think this through, you're going to make mind maps of what this might mean in your lives.

In the middle of a large sheet of paper write: "My training plan for being Jesus' disciple."

From this central theme create a mind map by drawing branches that lead to themes you think are important, such as 'loving others', 'learning about Jesus / God',

'prayer', 'developing my ministry skills', 'loving God', 'telling people about Jesus'. Spend some time with the group discussing what their themes would be.

Then from these branches ask the group to think about things they can do in their everyday lives to develop these ideas. These could be so many things, such as 'helping my parents with housework', 'reading my Bible with friends', 'taking the time to pray on my way to school', 'keeping fit', 'being kind to people at school', 'giving some of my money to charity', 'praying for my friends', or 'raising money to support work that helps people tell others about Jesus'. These are different kinds of 'warm-up' routines from the ones you did at the start of the session!

It would be really helpful if you could draw your own mind map of a training plan for your life of faith to demonstrate the idea, and to demonstrate the way you live out a practical faith as a disciple 2,000 years after this passage was written!

While the group members are writing out their training plans, give them space and time to discuss and ask questions if they'd like to.

## 5 PRAYER

**You will need:** training plans from 'Creative response'

Ask the group members to look at their training plans. Say a prayer to commission them for their warm-ups and training for a life of faith. You can say each line and then ask them to repeat it:

Jesus, 2,000 years ago you started something amazing.  
You gave us an example of how to live.  
Help us today to follow you.  
Help our faith muscles grow strong.  
Help our hearts to love the people you love.  
Help us to resist temptation.  
And stay close to us.  
Amen.

## BECCA DEAN

is a writer and PhD researcher in Durham. Her book, *Be Live Pray*, helps young people engage with prayer and spirituality in inclusive and creative ways. She blogs at [beccaislearning.com](http://beccaislearning.com).

For the rest of this month's sessions go to [youthandchildrens.work/together](http://youthandchildrens.work/together).



SESSION 2 of 4

# Jesus meets Levi

## MEETING AIM

To understand which friends and people Jesus wanted on his 'team', and in turn to begin to understand what kind of people Jesus wants us to be.

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Mark 2:13-17

## BACKGROUND

This session looks at Mark 2, where Jesus recruits Levi as one of his twelve disciples. He then goes on to share a meal with Levi and other "tax collectors and sinners", which shocks and offends the religious authorities. This is an early insight into the kind of teacher and friend Jesus is.

Understanding the story in this passage relies on us having a bit of background information. Tax collectors were especially hated in their communities because they often took more than their fair share of tax to make themselves rich. The scribes and Pharisees were the people who specialised in knowing the Jewish laws. They were the religious authorities that encouraged the community to make sure they were living by the rules recorded in scripture.

## 5 CIRCLE TIME

Invite the group to come together. Serve refreshments if that's what you usually do to welcome them. If you want to begin to talk about friendship you could ask them to discuss the ways their friends have influenced or shaped them.

## 5 INTRO ACTIVITY

**You will need:** plastic or paper cups; string; scissors; a table; small prizes

This is a team challenge, so all work together or divide the young people into teams. The challenge is to stack the cups into the highest possible tower in five minutes. The catch? They are not allowed to touch the cups; they can only touch the string! You could let the group work it out for themselves, but if they're struggling you can offer a hint about them holding lengths

of string across the table, and picking up the cups using the string's tension as a team.

At the end of the allotted time, give out prizes for the tallest tower, but also for the best teamwork.

## 15 BIBLE EXPLORATION

**You will need:** Bibles; paper and pens

Read the passage together. Split the young people into smaller groups and ask them to think of a way of retelling the story in their groups, but in a modern-day context. Who might the equivalent of the tax collectors and sinners be today? Or the Pharisees and scribes?

They could act it out, tell a story or write a poem...let their creative juices flow! Give them some time to prepare, then ask them to come back and share what they've come up with. It might be helpful to look out for groups that are struggling to come up with ideas or to work together. It's always better to keep things simple if this is the case!

## 5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Use this time to unpack the passage a bit more, asking the group to discuss the following questions:

- Why does it surprise us that Jesus chose these people?
- What does Jesus' decision to eat with Levi and the 'sinners' say about who Jesus is?
- Why do you think it offended the religious leaders so much?
- If you were assembling a team of disciples, who would you choose? How does following Jesus' example change who you might choose?
- How is the way Jesus saw the 'tax collectors and sinners' different from the way everybody else saw them? How do you think he saw them, and why did he see them differently from most people?
- Who do you think Jesus would choose to eat with today?
- How does Jesus teach us how to live?

## 10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

**You will need:** blank cards and envelopes; felt-tip pens (or other card craft materials); recipe books

Ask the group to plan a meal they could invite people to. Jesus invited people to eat with him and said that he came for the sick, not the well. Jesus wants us to meet those who have needs.

Ask the group to think about who from their community they could invite to join

them for a meal. You could think about local organisations that cook for homeless people and see if the group could help by baking for them. Or perhaps there are pastoral concerns in your community, where people would be helped by having a meal prepared for them. Are there older people who might enjoy the company and food, or people who have young children or new babies who might enjoy having a meal cooked for them (probably without the company!). Does the group have friends who are having a tough time that they would like to invite to a party? Or would their parents really appreciate having a meal cooked for them and having some quality time with them?

Encourage the group to plan something realistic and appropriate, and help them plan and facilitate this as a group. Think about dates in the diary, venues, what will be cooked and who will do what. Plan it together and make cards to invite people, explaining that they want to show their love for these people with a meal!

## 10 PRAYER

**You will need:** A4 paper; pens; craft materials such as stencils or stickers; a laminator and laminating sheets

It is quite traditional for Christians to say a grace at meal times, thanking God for their food and other blessings.

Ask the group to think about the things they have discussed today. Ask them to make a placemat with a grace or prayer inspired by these themes written on and decorated how they would like to!

Some young people might struggle to think of a grace, so you could bring a book of prayers and graces if you have access to one, or alternatively you could find some online and print them off to be copied or to inspire! Laminate the prayers to make the placemats more durable.

## BECCA DEAN

is a writer and PhD researcher in Durham. Her book, *Be Live Pray*, helps young people engage with prayer and spirituality in inclusive and creative ways. She blogs at [beccaislearning.com](http://beccaislearning.com).

For the rest of this month's sessions go to [youthandchildrens.work/together](http://youthandchildrens.work/together).



SESSION 3 of 4

# Jesus calms the water

## MEETING AIM

To see the story in its fullness; to try and feel more completely the danger of the storm and the relief and peace felt as Jesus calmed it.

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Mark 4:35-41

## BACKGROUND

The story of Jesus calming the storm is an amazing one, if not a little abstract as most of us are not skilled or experienced sailors! We know that some of the disciples were skilled sailors, and it was unlikely that they have unwittingly got caught in a storm. For them to feel out of control meant that the storm was unexpected and violent. This story reminds us that we are frail humans, and that we all need Jesus' help when our storms come!

## 5 CIRCLE TIME

Invite the group to gather. Welcome everyone by name and share out any refreshments you have brought with you. Chat about the week just gone and then ask the group to discuss the worst storm they have ever seen.

## 10 INTRO ACTIVITY

**You will need:** balloons; kitchen sponges; scissors; two lengths of plastic guttering  
Before the session, seal up the ends of both pieces of plastic guttering so they are watertight! If you can, use guttering ends. This activity is best done outside if possible. If not, make sure the guttering is secure and not easily knocked. Half fill the guttering with water so that it is deep enough for the boats to sail on.

Boats can be made by cutting a small slit in the sponge and pushing a balloon through it, so that the neck of the balloon goes underneath the sponge and the inflated part is above it, like a big, round sail. You can make the balloon sail by inflating the balloon and setting it loose on the water to push along as it releases air.

Ask each person to make their own

boat with a sponge, balloon and scissors. They could even cut the sponge into a boat shape. Then have a tournament of races using the two strips of guttering. The person whose balloon travels the furthest moves forward in the tournament to compete in the next round. Keep whittling down the competitors until there is a grand final between the last two!

## 5 BIBLE EXPLORATION

**You will need:** Bibles; storm sound effects (easily available online); 'boat-building' materials (see below)

Read the story to the group, but act it out on a pretend boat at the same time. Encourage the group to form a boat shape. Explain that they should do their best rocking about when the storm picks up! Have some storm noises to hand and play them at the right point, stopping when Jesus calms the storm. If you have the resources, you could build a boat out of chairs, or with cardboard. You could make a sail out of an old sheet or tablecloth. The more elaborate you are in your boat building the more fun it will be, and the more the group will get into it.

## 5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Use the questions to prompt discussion and explore the passage. You could stay in your boat formation if you think that would help the group stay engaged.

- How do you think the disciples felt during the storm?
- How do you think they felt after the storm?
- What does this story tell us about Jesus?
- What do you think this story tells us about faith?
- In which situations in our lives might remembering this story be helpful and encouraging?
- Have you had any moments that felt stormy, but you knew God was with you and was looking after you?

## 10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

**You will need:** straws; string; paper; glue; felt-tip pens; other banner-decorating resources

"Peace! Be still!" The three words Jesus used to calm the storm. These three words remind us of the power and peace he brings to scary situations. The creative response today is to make banners. The group can take them home and put them somewhere to remind them of who Jesus is when things feel stormy.

Make a banner by folding a piece of paper over a straw (cut off the bendy bit of the straw). Glue both sides of the paper together and cut a triangle shape at the bottom so that it looks like a flag pointing down. (It is worth making a prototype of this to show them.) To be able to hang the banner up, thread some string through and loop it round before tying it at the top, enabling them to hang it on the hoop.

Finish the banners by decorating them with the words "Peace! Be still!" Give the group felt-tip pens, or stamps and ink for the letters, and some decorative bits to stick on.

## 5 PRAYER

**You will need:** a copy of Rend Collective's 'My lighthouse' and the means to play it; copies of the lyrics for the group to read

Explain that we often encounter scary situations in our lives. We may feel as though we're in danger or there's no way out. We might feel powerless to bring about change. But we know that Jesus is still alive, and that he is with us, even if it seems as though he might be asleep! In these times we can remember the words that Jesus said to the storm: "Peace! Be still!"

The Rend Collective song, 'My lighthouse', talks about Jesus being the peace in our troubled sea. While you play the song, ask the group to think about the times when they feel scared, in the middle of a stormy sea and in need of peace, and call to mind the image of Jesus, who says "Peace! Be still!" to the stormy seas.

## BECCA DEAN

is a writer and PhD researcher in Durham. Her book, *Be Live Pray*, helps young people engage with prayer and spirituality in inclusive and creative ways. She blogs at [beccaislearning.com](http://beccaislearning.com).

For the rest of this month's sessions go to [youthandchildrens.work/together](http://youthandchildrens.work/together).



SESSION 4 of 4

## Jesus feeds a crowd

### MEETING AIM

To unpack the story and explore the impact it might have on us today as it calls us to greater faith, compassion and action.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Mark 6:30-44

### BACKGROUND

The feeding of the 5,000 is one of the most famous of Jesus' miracles. Mark's account tells us a story of Jesus and the disciples wanting to get away from the people because they were tired, but by the time they cross the lake in their boat a crowd has gone ahead and found them. Their faith and passion for Jesus is tangible, and Jesus has compassion on them and stays to teach them. When this crowd becomes hungry, Jesus performs a miracle.

This story demonstrates that Jesus' power and action was for the hungry. There is still much to learn from the story today: that Jesus is surprising, and that he has great power and compassion.

### 5 CIRCLE TIME

Welcome the group with refreshments. You could continue the fish theme in your snacks, for example fish-shaped crackers or sweets. Chat together about the week the young people have just had.

### 10 INTRO ACTIVITY

**You will need:** a pack of cards

Go Fish is a great go-to game with a youth group as it's quite easy and there is room for many players!

The object of the game is to win the most groups of cards. The dealer deals four cards to each player. The first person (left of the dealer) can ask any other player if they have any cards of a particular type (ie a nine or a queen). If the player has any of these cards they have to give the asker all of them, and then the asker gets another turn. If not, they reply: "Go fish!" At this point the asker has to take a new card from

the pack and the turn passes to the next person.

Once a player gets all four of a set they can put the group of cards down. The game ends when all the groups of cards have been collected and the player with the most groups wins!

### 10 BIBLE EXPLORATION

**You will need:** Bibles; pens and paper

Read the passage together, then break the group into smaller teams. Give each team one of the characters from the story. They should look at the story from that character's point of view and make notes if necessary. Each group then nominates a volunteer to be interviewed by the rest of the young people as their chosen character. Assign these characters to the groups: Jesus; an adult in the crowd; a child in the crowd; a disciple. Invite the rest of the group to ask them questions about the story as these characters to explore what it would have been like for each of them.

### 5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Bring the group back together and ask the following questions:

- Why were Jesus and the disciples heading off in a boat in the first place?
- Have you ever felt like you wanted to head away somewhere to escape all the demands on you?
- Why do you think the crowds were so desperate to hear what Jesus had to say?
- What do you think it means that the crowd were like sheep without a shepherd? What was it about this situation that made Jesus have compassion on them?
- How do you think you would have felt as one of the disciples if Jesus had asked you to take five loaves and two fish around the crowd?
- What does this story tell us about who Jesus is?
- Who do you think the 'sheep without a shepherd' are in our world today? Who are the crowds of people who are hungry for what Jesus can give them?

### 10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

**You will need:** a large piece of paper; marker pens

The passage tells us that Jesus had compassion on the followers who wanted more time with him and were hungry. Jesus and his disciples were tired, but he was still moved to action by the hungry crowd. The great miracle was that it only took five

loaves and two fish for Jesus to feed the crowd.

This is both an inspiration and a challenge to us today! Sometimes we feel as though we aren't enough, or that don't have enough to even begin to help a world full of need.

Ask the group to think about the people Jesus would have compassion for today. Write a list of the people they suggest on the left side of the paper, and leave space on the right side to write down ideas they come up with of ways to support them. As a group, suggest ideas and make some plans of ways that you might provide for people with needs as a group.

### 5 PRAYER

**You will need:** a basket; bread and fish shapes; pens; music and the means to play it (optional)

Jesus had compassion on the crowd. They were hungry in more ways than one, as they also wanted the words of life Jesus had to share.

As a group, you've discussed the kind of people Jesus would have compassion on today and ways to support them. As Christians, we believe that another way of supporting people in need is to pray for them, asking the God who could feed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fishes for help.

Remembering Jesus' power and compassion, ask the group to spend some time praying for the people who need Jesus' provision today. Give each person a pen and some paper loaves and fishes. Put a basket in the middle of the group and ask them to write down the names of people they want to pray for. You could play some music as they do this. Something like Graham Kendrick's 'Beauty for brokenness' would be a fitting worship song.

At the end of the prayer time offer up a prayer for all the people whose names have been written down and placed in the basket:

"Jesus, you were tired, but you saw a crowd in need and had compassion for them. They were hungry and you fed them. Jesus, there are still people who need you, and we pray that you would provide for them. Amen."

### BECCA DEAN

is a writer and PhD researcher in Durham. Her book, *Be Live Pray*, helps young people engage with prayer and spirituality in inclusive and creative ways. She blogs at [beccaislearning.com](http://beccaislearning.com).

For the rest of this month's sessions go to [youthandchildrens.work/together](http://youthandchildrens.work/together).