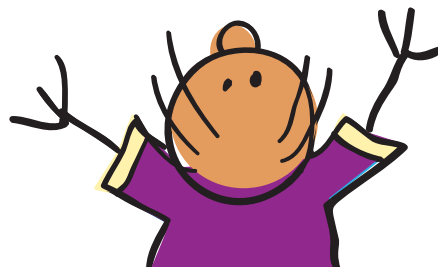




STORIES FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT

Series 1: **Jesus Comes to the World**

Bible Stories for All Ages



National Bible Reading Campaign

Have Fun Teaching Bible Histories for All Ages

Teaching the Bible should be a fun experience for both the teacher and students. The most effective teaching takes place when all those involved enjoy themselves. That is when the students learn best and when the teacher looks forward to teaching. The Bible Stories for All Ages have been prepared to help the teacher enjoy him or herself while teaching stories from Bible history and for the students to enjoy themselves while learning from them. These materials can be used with children of all ages as well as with youth and adults.

We recommend the following eleven steps for preparing and teaching these lessons:

Prepare to Teach

1. Carefully read the printed story, the questions and the memory verse.
2. Then, read the story in the Bible itself. Use a modern version that enables you to understand most clearly the details of the story.
3. Think carefully about the story and try to imagine that you were there in that situation and write all the unmentioned details that you imagine might have filled out the story.
4. On a sheet of paper, write the principle spiritual truths that you find in the story.

Teach

5. Give each student a copy of the lesson. (Please do not photocopy the lessons. In any case, they are less expensive in their published form)
6. Tell the group the name of the story and in a few words explain why the lesson is important to them.
7. (For groups with readers) Ask the members of the group to read aloud the printed story, each person, in turn, reading only one sentence. Ask that only those who wish to read do so.
8. Tell the story in the most dramatic manner possible. Use different voices for each person in the story and use gestures to dramatize the story.
9. Read aloud the questions and encourage the class to answer carefully and sincerely.
10. Help the class to memorize the memory verse, memorizing it at first by parts. Be patient in this activity and have students recite the verse individually as soon as they have learned it. Then, have the entire class give the verse together.
11. Lead the class to color the picture illustrating the story. The teacher should set the example in this. Chat with the class during this time talking about the important truths found in the lesson. Encourage young people and adults to color the pictures carefully and to save the stories so they can teach them to others as opportunities present themselves.



NATIONAL BIBLE READING CAMPAIGN

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Call Him Jesus

Great Bible Truths:

1. With God, nothing is impossible.
2. We are God's servants and he can use us to work for the good of others.

Luke 1:26-38

God sent the angel Gabriel to a town called Nazareth. Gabriel brought a message from God to a young woman named Mary. She was not married, but was engaged to marry a man named Joseph. The angel came to Mary and greeted her, saying, "Greetings, you who are highly favored by God. The Lord is with you." Mary was frightened and wanted to understand better why the angel had come to her.

The angel continued speaking, saying, "Do not be afraid, Mary". God looks on you with much favor. You will have a baby and you are to call him Jesus, which means "God Saves." He ancestor, and he will reign over the people of God forever. His kingdom will never end.

"How is this possible," asked Mary, "since I am a virgin and am not yet married?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit of God will do this. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."

Mary did not understand how all this could happen. So the angel continued speaking, saying, "Nothing is impossible for God." Then Mary answered, saying, "I am God's servant. May it be with me just as you have said." Then the angel left her.

Talk About the Story:

1. Your ideas: Why was Mary frightened when she first saw the angel?
2. What does the name "Jesus" mean?
3. Why do you think God wanted the child to be called "Jesus"?
4. The people would say that "Jesus is the S_____ of G_____"
5. Jesus will always be the king of what people?
6. What answer did Mary give the angel Gabriel?

What do you say?

Mary said that she was "God's servant." Do you want to be a servant of God? How could you serve God better?

***"I am the Lord's servant," said Mary:
May it happen to me as you have said."
Luke 1:38***



②

The Shepherds Find The New-Born Savior



Great Bible Truths:

1. The Lord sends us to the places where we can do what he wants of us.
2. We should always be ready to obey God's voice.

Luke 2:1-20

Mary was about to have her first baby, Jesus. This was not a good time for her to travel, but the emperor of Rome declared that everyone had to return to their own town to be counted. So Joseph and Mary travelled 150 kilometers from Nazareth to Bethlehem. When they finally got to Bethlehem, the town was full of travelers like them and there was no room for them in the little inn. The only place they found to stay was in the stable behind the inn. In that smelly stable the baby Jesus was born, the King of kings and the Savior of the world. This kept a promise in the Old Testament that the Savior God would send would be born in Bethlehem.

God wanted everyone in Bethlehem to know that His Son had been born. So He sent an angel to give the message to some shepherds who were sitting with their sheep on a cold hillside outside of Bethlehem. A great light filled the eyes of the shepherds, and the angel of God told them not to be afraid. He said that he brought them wonderful news: In Bethlehem, the town where King David had been born in many many years before, the Savior had now been born. He was the promised Lord, given by God Himself. They were to go find a baby wrapped in cloth, lying in a manger.

Suddenly, a great choir of angels came to the shepherds and sang, "Glory to God in heaven and on earth peace to men whom God would bless." The shepherds ran to the town and found the baby with Mary and Joseph in the stable, just as they had been told. After seeing the baby Jesus, they went all over the little town telling people what they had seen, and everyone was amazed. Then the shepherds went back to their sheep, praising God for everything they had seen.

Talk About the Story:

1. Why did Mary and Joseph have to travel so far just when Mary was about to have a baby?
2. Opinions: Why do you think God let His Son be born in a stable?
 - ☐ God couldn't find him a better place
 - ☐ God was willing for His Son to be poor, so everyone would know how much God loves us.
3. How would you have felt if you were a shepherd and the angels came to you?
4. Opinions: Why do you think God sent the message about Jesus to shepherds?
 - ☐ God wanted people to know that Jesus came to be everybody's savior, including the poor.
 - ☐ God may have been thinking about David, who had been a shepherd boy on the same hill
 - ☐ God believed that the shepherds would be good to tell others about the Savior.
 - ☐ God couldn't find anyone else to whom He could give the news.
5. What did the shepherds do when the angels left them?
6. What is the best part of this story for you?

Personal:

Do you believe that Jesus came to be your Savior? Why or why not?

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Every Community on Earth Deserves a New Testament Church

This very day in David's town your Savior was born - Christ the Lord.
Luke 2:11



③

Jesus Is Presented In The Temple



Great Bible Truths:

1. God reveals his will to those who seek him.
2. We should tell others what we know about God.

Luke 2:22-38

Following Jewish custom, about 40 days after his birth, Joseph and Mary brought the baby Jesus to the Great Temple in Jerusalem to be dedicated to God. Mary, as mother, brought a sacrifice offering of two pigeons, which was the offering poor mothers were commanded to give to God. Joseph and Mary and the baby came into the Temple, looking like the poor family they were. Probably, nobody paid any attention to them as they entered.

However, a great man of God named Simeon had come at that very moment to the Temple. Simeon dreamed that one day he would see with his own eyes the coming Messiah. Now, the Holy Spirit let Simeon know that the Messiah was coming to the Temple. When Simeon saw the baby Jesus carried into the Temple by his parents, he grew very excited. He rushed to Jesus' parents and took the baby into his arms. A crowd of people gathered around them, since Simeon was a very famous man and they could all see how excited he was.

Simeon praised God, saying, "Master, you will now let your servant die in peace, because my own eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared so everybody could see. This child is a light for the understanding of the whole world and for the glory of your people Israel." Everybody was surprised to hear this, especially Joseph and Mary. Simeon then blessed them and told Mary, "This child will cause the rising and falling of many in Israel. He will be a God's sign that many will oppose, showing their real feelings. And a sword will pierce your own soul as well as his."

As Simeon spoke, a very old woman, a prophetess of God named Anna, came and began to praise God and talk about the child. She announced that the baby Jesus was the answer for all those who were looking for the salvation of God's people.

Talk About the Story:

Why did Joseph and Mary bring the baby Jesus to the Temple? What sacrifice offering did Mary bring? Who was Simeon and why was he excited when he saw the baby Jesus? What did he say about Jesus? Who was Anna? Did she agree or disagree with Simeon?

What do you say?

How do you think Joseph and Mary felt when the famous man of God, Simeon, rushed to them and excitedly took Jesus into his arms? What would you have thought if you were there and heard what Simeon and Anna said about Jesus?



***My eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the
presence of all peoples.
Luke 2:30***

④

The Wise Men Find the Christ



Great Bible Truths:

1. Our lives are the best gift we can give God.
2. We can be the light to guide others to Christ

Matthew 2:1-12

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem, wise men came from the east to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

When the wicked King Herod heard this he became very disturbed. He called together the chief priests and scholars, asking where the promised Christ should be born. They all told him that, according to the prophecies of the Old Testament, the Christ (God's anointed one) would be born in the town of Bethlehem, which was only a short distance from Jerusalem.

Then, the king secretly met with the wise men and asked them when they first saw the star. He sent them to Bethlehem to look for the child. "As soon as you find him, come back and tell me where he is so I can also go and worship him." His secret plan was to kill the Christ child as soon as they left.

The wise men left the king, and the star led them on to Bethlehem and came to rest above the place where the child was. They were very happy to have found the child and his mother, and, when they came into the house where they were now living, the wise men bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented the child with gifts of gold and incense and myrrh. That night, as they slept, they had a dream which warned them not to return to the evil king and to tell him what they had discovered. Instead, they returned to their country by a different route.

Talk about the story:

1. What does the word "worship" mean? When the wise men worshipped the Christ child, did they act as if Jesus was much more than a baby boy?
2. Why do you think that evil king Herod was upset to hear the "the king of the Jews" had recently been born? Why would he want to kill Jesus?
3. Where do the ancient prophecies say that the Christ child would be born? Where was this place?
4. Why do you think the wise men were so happy to have found the Christ child at last?
5. What were the gifts they brought to the child?
6. Why did the wise men not return to tell the king all they knew?

Personal questions:

What have you wondered about the Christ? Have you tried to find out more about him? How can you find out more about him? What would you like to give him?

***They went into the house, and when they say the child with
his mother Mary, they knelt down and worshiped him.***

Matthew 2:11



Great Bible Truths:

1. When we obey God we are saved from many dangers and troubles
2. God gives parents to protect their children from danger and troubles.

Matthew 2:13-23

The night after the visit of the wise men, an angel came and spoke to Joseph in a dream,. "Get up and take the child Jesus and his mother, Mary, and escape quickly to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to try to kill Jesus tomorrow." So Joseph got up immediately, and he and Mary dressed and prepared Jesus for the trip, leaving almost immediately. Before the sun rose over Bethlehem, a woman and child on a donkey, led by a man, quietly left the sleeping town, headed for the land of Egypt.

When the wise men told king Herod that they had come to find the child who had been born to be the king of Israel, Herod decided to kill the child as soon as possible. The wise men did not come back to see the king after finding the little child. When the king realized that he had been outwitted by the wise men, he grew furious. He called for his soldiers and ordered them to go at once to the town of Bethlehem and kill all the boys who were less than two years old. That night, there was weeping all over the town of Bethlehem because of the terrible thing that had happened.

Meanwhile, Joseph, Mary and Jesus made their way across a great desert land, hurrying on to the land of Egypt. It was terribly hot under the sun and very cold at night. After several days, the little family arrived in Egypt. Joseph was thankful for the gifts the wise men had given, because they made it possible for them to live as strangers in a foreign land.

After some time, the angel appeared again in a dream to Joseph and told him that the wicked king had died. But instead of returning to Bethlehem, Joseph was to take his little family to the town of Nazareth, where Joseph and Mary had first met. In this way, another ancient promise was kept, because the Christ was to be called a Nazarene.

Talk About the Story:

Why do you believe the evil king wanted to kill the baby Jesus? What was Joseph told to do to save Jesus from the king's soldiers? Did he pay attention to God's command? How do you think Mary felt when she and Joseph and Jesus hurried across the desert to Egypt? What gifts helped Jesus' family to be able to live in a foreign country? When Jesus was growing up, do you think Mary and Joseph and Mary told him about how God saved him from the wicked king? Who was proved to be strongest in this story: the king and his soldiers or God and the family that obeyed him.

Personal questions:

Have you ever been saved from great danger? If so, what happened? How were you saved? Can you remember some special way that God helped you or your family?

***An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream.
"Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt."***

Matthew 2:13



⑥

The Boy Jesus Goes to the Great Temple



Great Bible Truths:

1. Families are wise to always go to church together.
2. Children and young people are at an ideal age to know God.

Luke 2:41-52

When Jesus was still very small, Joseph and Mary went back to Nazareth to live there. It was the custom of almost all the people to make a trip at least once a year to the great festival of the Passover. This was celebrated at the great Temple of in Jerusalem. Something very special happened the year that Jesus was twelve years old. As usual, Joseph and Mary took Jesus and his little brothers and sisters to Jerusalem, along with all their relatives and neighbors. They all walked together, and it took three or four days to get to Jerusalem.

When the festival was over, everyone got together and started back to their home towns. Mary and Joseph did not see Jesus, but thought he was walking with some friends. At night, when everyone stopped to eat and spend the night in little tents, Mary and Joseph became very much afraid when they learned that Jesus was not with the group. So they hurried back to Jerusalem the next day and looked for Jesus for three days, without finding him anywhere.

At last, they found Jesus in the Temple itself, surrounded by men who were teachers of the Bible and of the way of God. Jesus was asking these men questions, and they were all amazed at Jesus' great wisdom and understanding. Joseph and Mary rushed up to Jesus and asked, "Son, why have you treated us this way? We have been so worried about you and couldn't find you anywhere."

Jesus answered them, "Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know that I would be in my Father's house?" Mary and Joseph didn't understand him, but they took him home and thought many times about what had happened. Jesus grew taller and stronger, understanding more and more about God, His Father, and about people and how to live with them.

Talk About the Story:

Imagine whole towns walking together for days on their way to Jerusalem. Was this a hard time, an exciting time, or an unhappy time? Explain why you feel as you do? Opinions: Who did the older children walk with? Who did the parents walk with? Why do you think Jesus had so many questions to ask of the wise men in the Temple? What do you think these men thought about Jesus? Were Joseph and Mary right in being worried about Jesus when they could not find him? How would you have felt if you were one of them? Why did Jesus call the Temple "my Father's house"? Why was this such a special time for Jesus? What things did Jesus have to learn like any other boy?

Personal questions:

Do you sometimes have trouble understanding members of your family? Do they sometimes have trouble understanding you? How can you learn more about God?

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Every Community on Earth Deserves a New Testament Church

***Jesus grew both in body and in wisdom,
gaining favor with God and men.
Luke 2:52***



Great Bible Truths:

1. We can all become messengers of Christ.
2. If we really believe in Christ we will live as he wants.

Matthew 3:1-12

When Jesus had become a man, and before he began to preach to and help the people, God sent a messenger to announce Jesus' coming. The messenger was John, who came to be known as John the Baptist. He came to the desert area of Judea preaching and telling people to turn away from their sins because the Kingdom of God was drawing near. He said that he was the man that Isaiah had prophesied about 700 years earlier when he said, "Someone is shouting in the desert, Make a road for the Lord; prepare a straight path for him to travel."

John the Baptist looked every bit like a prophet of God. He wore rough clothes made of camel's hair, had a leather belt and ate locusts and wild honey. People came from all around to the river Jordan where John was preaching and baptizing. Those that confessed their sins and decided to make their lives right with God were baptized by John in the river.

When John saw the Jewish religious leaders had come to hear him, he said, "You bunch of snakes, who has warned you to escape God's punishment that is coming? Make your lives right with God and turn from your sins. Don't think you will escape punishment just because you are descendants of Abraham." He told the people, "I baptize you in water as a sign that you are turning away from your sins. But one is soon coming who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. He is much greater than I am, and I am not even worthy to carry his sandals. When he comes, he will gather the good wheat into his barn, but will burn the chaff with a fire that never goes out."

Talk About the Story:

1. How did the prophet Isaiah describe John the Baptist, 700 years earlier?
2. Why do you think so many people recognized John the Baptist to be a real prophet from God?
3. What did John the Baptist call the Jewish religious leaders? Why do you think he called them this?
4. John said that he baptized people in water as a sign of what important decision made by them?
5. How did John compare himself with Jesus, who was soon to appear among them?
6. How did John describe the Judgment and the separation of God's people from all others?

What do you say?

Is there a need today for preachers from God to tell the people to turn away from their sins and turn back to God? Why do you think so? What are some of our worst sins?

***I am the voice of someone shouting in the desert:
"Make a straight path for the Lord to travel!"***

John 1:23



⑧

John the Baptist Tells Who He Is



Great Bible Truths:

1. Jesus can use us to bring many others to him and his way.
2. True servants of God set a good example and urge others to live for God

John 1:19-28

John the Baptist came preaching and baptizing all those who said they would turn away from their sinful ways. The people recognized that he was a great man of God and some thought he might be the Messiah. The Jewish religious leaders were worried, because they saw that John the Baptist was very popular and that the people were more interested in following him than them. So they sent some men to question John and, if possible, to get him to say something that would get him in trouble.

"Who are you?" they asked, thinking that he might claim to be the Messiah. "I am not the Messiah," he plainly told them. "Are you Elijah come back to earth?" they asked. "No, I am not," he answered them. "Then, are you the prophet God promised would come?" "No," he said. "All right, then, tell us who you really are so we can give an answer to those who sent us."

John the Baptist said, "I am the voice of one who calls out in the desert, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah had said."

"If you are not the Messiah, or Elijah, or the promised prophet, what authority do you have to baptize?" John answered, "I only baptize with water. A man you do not know is already here and is coming after me. I am not even worthy to untie his sandals."

In this way, John the Baptist let both the priests and the people know that the Savior, the Messiah, was coming right away and that John was only there to get the people ready for him.

Talk About the Story:

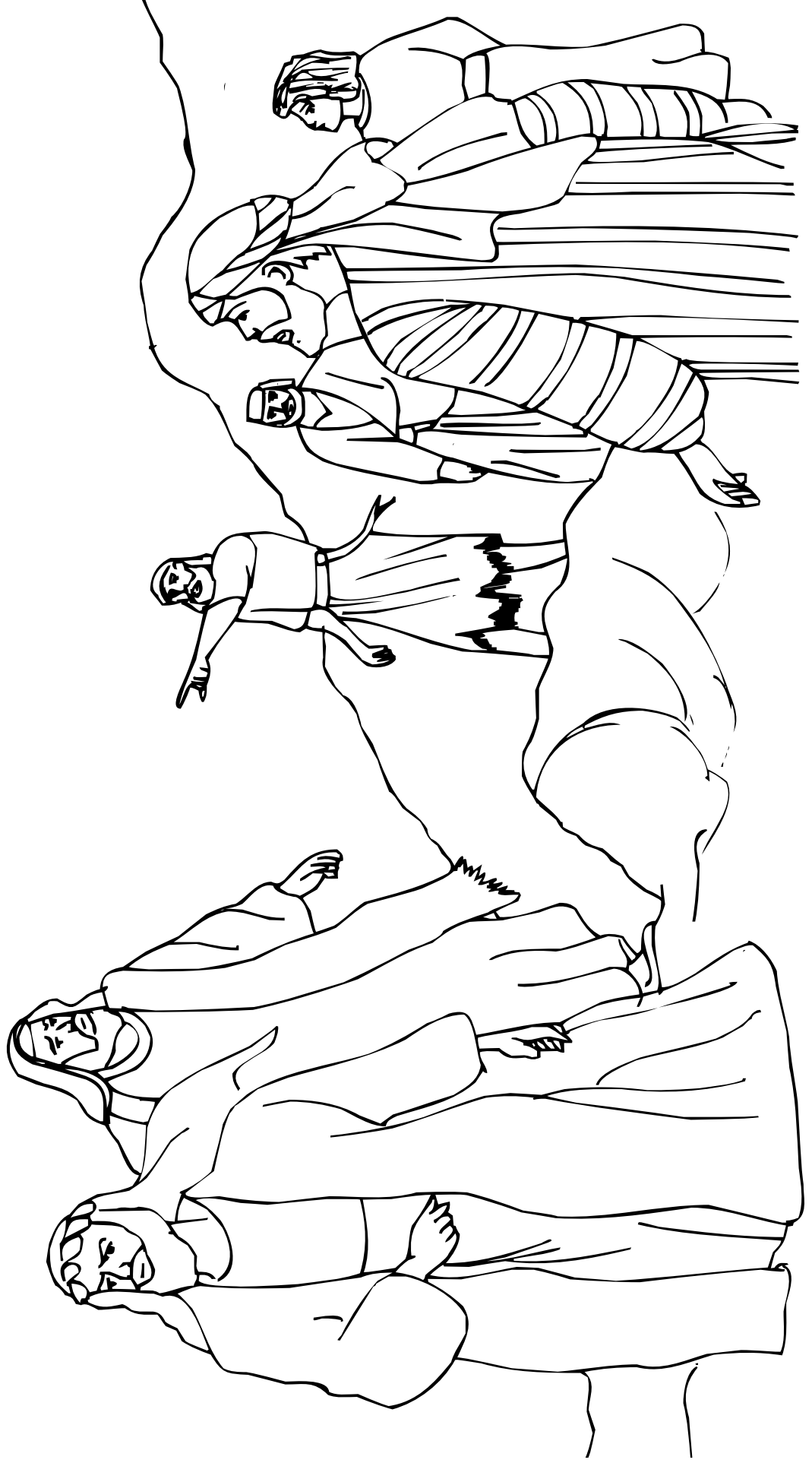
What did John require of the people before he baptized them? How did the religious leaders feel about John? What did they ask John? Who did John say he was not? How did John describe himself? How did he describe Jesus, who was about to show up?

What do you say?

Why do you think the people paid such close attention to John? Why do you think many of them wanted to be baptized by John? Why do you think the Jewish religious leaders wanted to embarrass John? How do you think they might have felt when John said the Messiah was about to show up?

***"The one who is coming after me;
I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.***

John 1:27



Great Bible Truths:

1. Jesus was baptized in obedience to God's will.
2. Jesus is the Son of God and the "Lamb" of God who takes away the sins of those who believe in him.

John 1:29-34, Matthew 3:3-17

Suddenly, one day when John the Baptist was preaching and baptizing by the river Jordan, Jesus came to him. John said in a loud voice, "This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" John was very surprised when Jesus asked him to baptize him. John said "no" because Jesus was much greater than John. "I should be baptized by you," said John, "and yet you come to be baptized by me!" Jesus answered him saying, "Do this now because this is what God wants". So John agreed to baptize him.

John dipped Jesus into the waters of the Jordan river and then lifted him up out of the water. The moment Jesus came out of the water, the heavens opened up to him and he and John saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove and lighting on Jesus. Then, a voice was heard from heaven, saying, "This is my own dear son. I am well pleased with him. John the Baptist then cried, "I have seen it, and I tell you all, this is the Son of God."

Talk About the Story:

1. What did John the Baptist look like?
2. Why do you believe that John the Baptist called Jesus "the Lamb of God?" What did he say that Jesus would do with the sins of the world?
3. How would you have felt if you were John, and Jesus asked you to baptize him?
4. Why did Jesus say that John should baptize him?
5. What did Jesus and John see the moment that Jesus arose from the water?
6. What did God say about Jesus?
7. What did John say about Jesus?

What do you say?

Why do you believe Jesus insisted on being baptized? Have you ever chosen to be baptized? If so, how it happened.



***Then a voice said from heaven,
"This is my own Dear Son, with whom I am pleased".
Matthew 3:17***

Great Bible Truths:

1. Jesus, as God's Son, deserves our sincere worship and faithful service
2. When we stay close to God, he enables us to overcome any temptation the devil may present to us.

Luke 4:1-13

Jesus left the Jordan river and John the Baptist after his baptism. He was full of the Holy Spirit, who directed his steps to go into the desert away from the people. For forty days he ate nothing. When he was very hungry, the devil came to him and tempted him, saying, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become a hot loaf of bread." The devil was trying to make Jesus prove who he was and to get him to use miraculous gifts for his own benefit. But Jesus answered, "The Bible says, Man does not live on bread alone".

Then the devil took Jesus to a high place and showed him all the kingdoms of the world. He told Jesus, "If you will worship me, I will give you all these kingdoms with all their wealth and glory." But Jesus answered, "The Bible says: Worship the Lord your God and only serve him."

The devil then took Jesus to Jerusalem and put him on the highest part of the great Temple. He told Jesus, "If you are really the Son of God, jump off the Temple because the Bible says "He will command his angels to take care of you. They will lift you up in their hands so that your foot will not strike a stone." The devil wanted Jesus to doubt that he was the Son of God and to try to show off his power. But Jesus answered, "The Bible says: Do not put your God to the test".

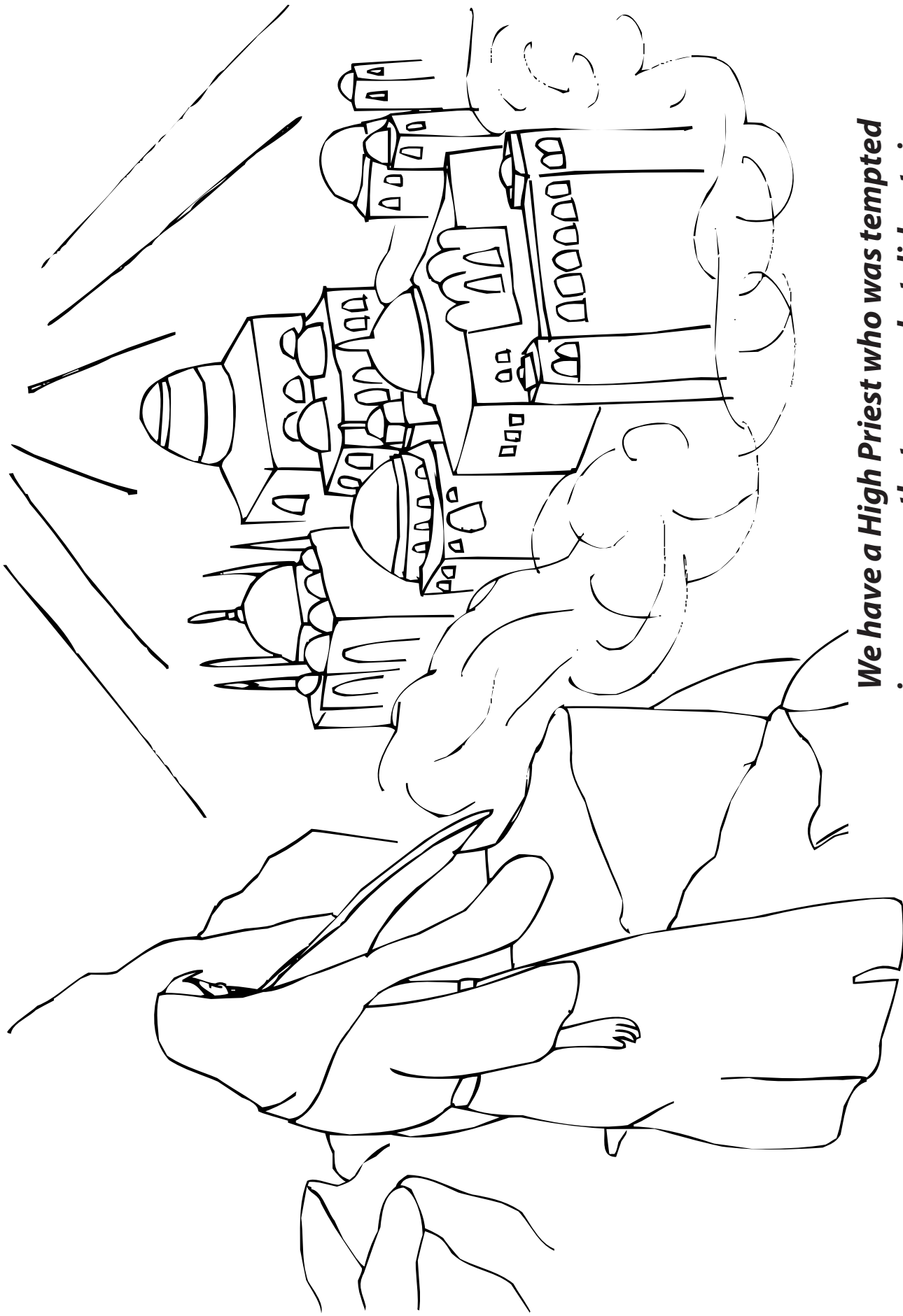
After this, the devil left Jesus alone for a while. After 40 days in the desert, Jesus returned to Galilee and was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. News about him spread everywhere and people listened to his preaching and praised him wherever he went.

Talk About the Story:

1. How does this story show that Jesus was truly a man even though he was the Son of God?
2. Why do you think Jesus refused to turn rocks into delicious bread when he was so hungry?
3. Opinions: If Jesus had worshipped the devil, could he ever have saved us from our sins?
4. Why do you think Jesus refused to show off, jumping off the top of the Temple?
5. Underline the different verses of the Bible (the Old Testament) that Jesus used to answer the devil.

What do you say?

How does the devil tempt us today? What happens when we sin? Are we stronger against the devil when we know the Bible well?



***We have a High Priest who was tempted
in every way that we are, but did not sin.***

Hebrews 4:15

11

The First Men to Follow Jesus



Great Bible Truths:

1. The Lord calls us to follow and obey him.
2. To give ourselves to Jesus is the best thing anyone of us can do.

John 1:35-51

John the Baptist stood one day with two of his followers, Andrew and his cousin, John. John the Baptist pointed to Jesus who was passing by and said, "Look, there is the Lamb of God." The two men immediately decided to follow after Jesus. After a while, Jesus turned around and asked, "What are you looking for?" They answered, "Teacher, where are you staying?" "Come and see," he answered them.

They stayed and talked with him almost all day long. At about 4:00 in the afternoon, Andrew excused himself and ran to find his brother, Simon. When he found him, Andrew shouted, "Simon, we have found the Messiah!" Simon hurried back with him and met Jesus who said to him, "You are Simon. You will be called Peter (which means 'a stone.')

The next day, Jesus walked on to the province of Galilee where he found Philip and said, "Follow me." Philip followed Jesus, and as soon as he could, he ran to his friend Nathanael and said that he and the others had found the one promised by Moses and the prophets. At first, Nathanael did not believe him. But when he got to where Jesus was, Jesus said, "Here comes a true man of Israel who is completely honest." "How do you know me?" asked Nathanael. "I saw you under the fig tree, before Philip called you," said Jesus. Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Lion of God, the King of Israel!"

Jesus answered, "You believe so easily? I tell you, you will see much greater things than this. You will see heaven opened and the angels of God gathered around the Son of Man."

Talk About the Story:

Why were Andrew and John near John the Baptist when he called Jesus "the Lamb of God"? How did they get to talk with Jesus? Who did Andrew go and bring to Jesus? What new name did Jesus give to Simon? What friend did Philip bring to Jesus?

What Do You Think?

Why do you think Andrew and Philip went to bring others to meet Jesus? Have you talked to others about Jesus and what Jesus means to you? Why do you suspect Jesus gave Simon the new name which means "stone?" Do you think the lives of these men would change much because they followed Jesus? Do you think Jesus will change your life?



He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah."

John 1:41

Great Bible Truths:

1. Jesus has called us to reach others for him
2. Our faith in Christ can bring great miracles in our lives and in the lives of others

Luke 5: 1-11

Jesus began to look for men who he could teach and who would become teachers themselves. This is the way Jesus' message of salvation would spread all over the world. But where would Jesus find the kind of men he needed? Perhaps in the great Temple in Jerusalem or in the synagogues where religious Jews met every week? No, Jesus found his special men out in the world. He said, one time, "The field is the world."

One day, Jesus walked along the shores of the great lake which was called the Sea of Galilee. There he saw two fishermen brothers who had been followers of John the Baptist and whom Jesus had talked to before. He asked Simon and Andrew to move out from shore a little bit, and he taught the people on shore from their boat. When he finished, he told Simon, "Go out into deeper water and let your nets down for a catch of fish." Simon answered, "We have already worked hard all night but haven't caught anything. Even so, we will do what you ask." When the two brothers dropped their nets into the water, they were immediately filled with fish. They called their cousins to come with their boat and help them bring in the great catch.

When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he said, "Go away from me, Lord, because I am a sinful man." But Jesus said to him, his brother Andrew, and his cousins James and John. "Don't be afraid. You will become fishers of men." The four fishermen laid down their nets and followed Jesus from that day on.

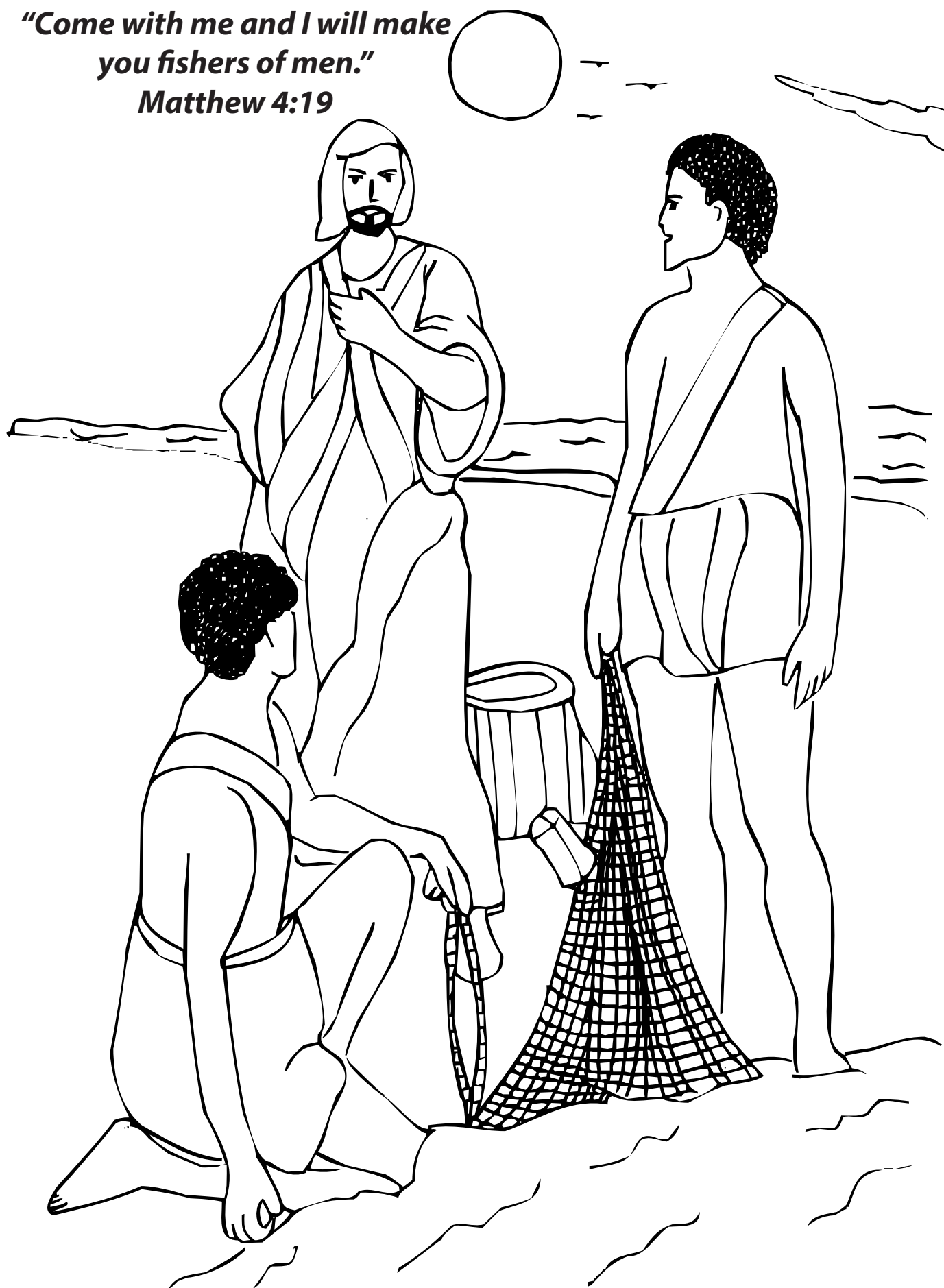
Talk About the Story:

1. Why was it so important to Jesus to find men who would follow him?
2. Where did Jesus look for his special men?
3. Did Jesus' order to go out and fish some more make much sense to Simon Peter?
4. How did Peter and Andrew learn about Jesus' great power?
5. Opinions: Do you believe that the four fishermen knew yet that Jesus was the Son of God?
6. How did the men prove that they had a lot of confidence in Jesus

What do you say?

Do you notice anything special about the faith of the four fishermen? What kind of people is Jesus looking for today to follow him? Is Jesus still looking for people who will become teachers of others about the good news of God? Where will he find them? Are you one of them?

***"Come with me and I will make
you fishers of men."
Matthew 4:19***





Jesus Calls an Outcast



Great Bible Truths:

1. Jesus calls each one of us to follow him.
2. Just as with Matthew, we must also leave the wrong things in our lives to follow Jesus faithfully.

Matthew 9:9-13

One by one, Jesus called men who were to follow him and learn from him and become his special helpers in preaching to the people. He would call these men "Apostles" which means "sent ones." They were men he would train and send to teach the good news about salvation. One of the last men Jesus would invite to follow him was Matthew Levi, the same man who wrote the first book of the New Testament, the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew worked at a place where he collected taxes. It was a job in which he earned much money. But he was hated by the people because they didn't like to pay taxes, and especially to pay them for the Roman armies that had conquered their country.

One day, Jesus came walking by the place where Matthew was collecting money from the people. Jesus surprised everyone, and especially Matthew, when he looked straight at him and said, "Follow me." Then Matthew surprised everyone when he simply got up, left his tax money behind, and followed Jesus.

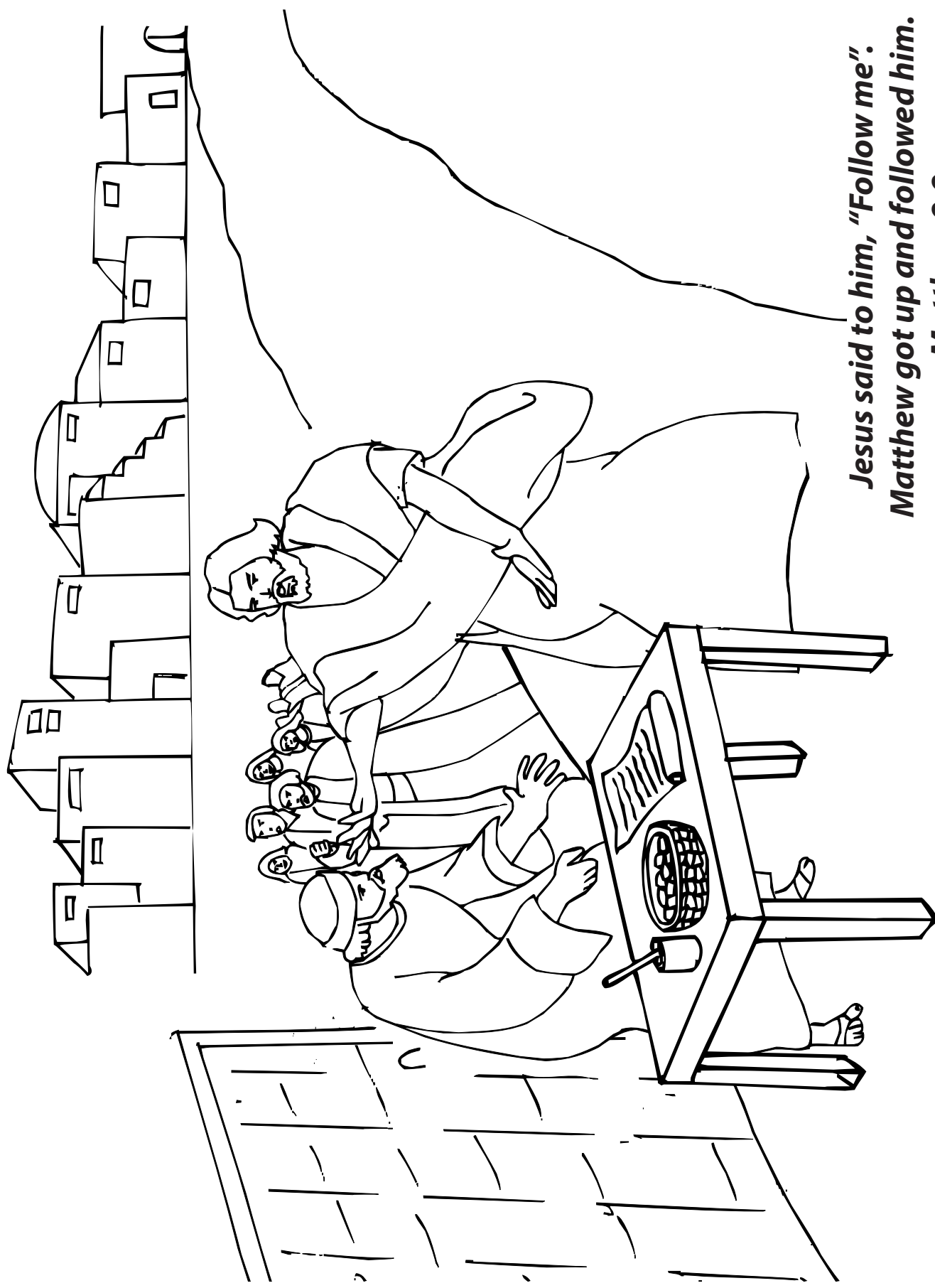
That same night, Matthew invited all his fellow tax collectors to come to a big dinner with which he celebrated his decision to leave his job and follow Jesus. All his friends came, and there was Jesus, as well, with his other followers. Some strict religious leaders saw this and became very angry. "Why does your master eat with bad people like these?" They asked. Jesus heard them and answered, "People who are well do not need a doctor, but sick people do. Go and learn what the Bible means when God says it is kindness I want and not religious sacrifices." I have come to call sinners and not respectable people like you.

Talk About the Story:

1. Why was everyone surprised when Jesus invited Matthew to follow him?
2. What did Matthew do that showed he was a man of great faith?
3. Opinions: What do you think attracted Jesus to Matthew?
4. What do you think Matthew's friends thought when he said he was leaving his job to follow Jesus?
5. Why were the religious leaders so angry?
6. What was Jesus' answer to them?

What do you say?

Do you think Jesus did well in choosing Matthew? Why? What would you do if Jesus asked you to leave everything and follow him? Is it possible that he is calling you?



***Jesus said to him, "Follow me".
Matthew got up and followed him.
Matthew 9:9***