

SERIES: WHAT'S YOUR STORY
LESSON 2—MATTHEW

Bible Reference: Matthew 9:9-13

Key Verse: Revelation 12:11—They overcame him because of the Lamb's blood, and because of the word of their testimony. They didn't love their life, even to death.

OVERVIEW

- Opening Activity
- Key Verse
- Bible Story
- Small Group Activities

ITEMS NEEDED:

- Signs that say: *Fear, Power, Love, Self-Control*
- Items for your choice of the craft activities.

OPENING ACTIVITY:

Explain to your students that you are going to play a game to help you get to know them better. Have your group stand up and tell them the following. Keep this fast-paced:

Which had you rather...

- (1) If you had rather play checkers go to the wall on my left.
If you had rather play cards go to the wall on the right.
- (2) If you had rather have a red shirt go to the wall on my left.
If you had rather buy a blue shirt to the wall on the right.
- (3) If you had rather clothes go to the wall on my left.
If you had rather food go to the wall on the right.
- (4) If you had rather have chips and dip go to the wall on my left.
If you had rather have ice cream go to the wall on the right.
- (5) If you had rather eat an apple go to the wall on my left.
If you had rather eat applesauce go to the wall on the right.
- (6) If you had rather have a picture with your friends go to the wall on my left.
If you had rather have a poster of a sport's hero go to the wall on the right.
- (7) If you had rather buy a game go to the wall on my left.
If you had rather buy a book go to the all on the right.
- (8) If you had rather be in Sunday School today go to the wall on my left.
If you had rather be neck deep in a vat full of sumo wrestler sweat go to the wall on the right.

SAY: Everybody freeze. Now on the count of three, as fast as you can, come sit down. 1-2-3, go!

ASK: **What is your favorite dessert?** (Let every student answer.)

ASK: **What is your favorite flavor of ice cream?** (On the count of three, ask all the students to call theirs out at the same time. Then take a few volunteers. After each ask them to raise their hands if they like that ice cream flavor too.)

Review

ASK: **Who can tell me what we talked about last week?** (Zaccheus and how Jesus can change a person's life. We also talked about your salvation story.)

ASK: **What is a salvation testimony or salvation story?** (The story about how a person came to Christ.)

ASK: **Can you share a "testimony" that is not about salvation?** (Yes, giving a testimony simply means that you are sharing something you've experienced. You could share a testimony on how God provided for you or how God protected you or what church means to you, etc. That's why we are calling it your "salvation" testimony because this is your story about how you gave your life to Jesus.)

SAY: If you don't have a salvation story yet, that's okay. We don't want you to feel bad and no one is going to embarrass you but we do want you to think about what might be keeping you from giving your life to Christ.

STORY: There was an 11-year old who attended children's camp. During a conversation over lunch, one of her leaders asked her about when she gave her life to Christ. She replied that she hadn't. He was surprised because she attended church all that time and knew that she knew the Gospel. He asked her why she thought she hadn't been saved yet and she said that she was waiting for the right time. "What do you mean?" he asked. She continued to say that she was waiting for the right signal. "Isn't it supposed to be some great experience like fireworks or with flashing lights or that you hear God's voice or something," she said. He explained that giving your life to Christ is the greatest experience in the world but that it wasn't always something so dramatic. Many times it was simply the decision that you want your life to belong to Christ. You see, this girl was waiting for the wrong thing. She was waiting for some incredible feeling or emotion. After she understood better, she made the decision that day to give her life to Jesus and at that moment God saved her.

SAY: If you've never given your life to Jesus, we want you to think about what you might be waiting for. And if you have any questions about how you can give your life to Jesus, just let us know.

KEY VERSE

ASK: Who remembers our verse from last week?

Call up four volunteers to review it.

Give the first one the sign that says, FEAR.

SAY: The Bible says in 2 Timothy 1:7-8—“For God didn’t give us a spirit of fear...”

Ask the volunteer to tear the FEAR sign into as many pieces as he can in 10 seconds...ready, go!

Choose two more volunteers to join the first volunteer

SAY: The Bible says in 2 Timothy 1:7-8—“For God didn’t give us a spirit of fear, but of power [*give the POWER sign to one of the volunteers*], love [*give the LOVE sign to one of the volunteers*], and self-control [*give the SELF-CONTROL sign to the last volunteer*]. Therefore don’t be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord...”

REPEAT after me: Power...Love...Self-Control!

SAY: God didn’t give us a spirit of fear but of power and love and self-control. Because of this...did you hear what it said...”don’t be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord.” Never be afraid to share the good things that God has done in your life and to live for Jesus every day.

SAY: Your testimony is very powerful but before we get to today’s key verse, I have a question...

ASK: Would someone else like to share their salvation testimony about how they came to Christ? (Take only one or two volunteers. If no one volunteers, that’s okay too. As a leader, feel free to share your salvation story if you haven’t shared it with your students yet in this series.)

ASK: Last week we asked you that if you want to share your salvation story with someone, what would you start with? (Start at the beginning of the story...What started you thinking about getting saved? What caused you to realize your need for Jesus?)

SAY: When you want to share your salvation story with someone else, begin with how you saw your need for Jesus...what started you thinking about giving your life to Him? Was it something you heard someone say? Was it something that happened at church? Was it something that happened in your family? What started this story?

ASK: What would you share next?

SAY: Share what comes next in the story...When you realized your need for Jesus, what did you do? Did you talk to someone like your parents or a Sunday School teacher? Did you go talk to someone during an “invitation.” How did you find out about Jesus? Who explained to you how you could be saved?

Use some of the testimonies that have been shared in your class to point this out to your students...You can even use your own salvation story for this (even if they’ve already heard

it.) Share what started you thinking about giving your life to Christ and then share with them what you did about it.

KEY: If you have given your life to Jesus and are saved, then you have a great story to share. Your testimony is powerful, so don't ever be afraid to share it.

SAY: I'm going to share with you today's key verse. Then I want you to explain it to me:

READ Revelation 12:11—"They overcame him because of the Lamb's blood, and because of the word of their testimony. They didn't love their life, even to death."

Questions

-Who do you think "They" refers to? (The specific believers that this part of the book of Revelation is talking about. These are saved people and events that have not yet happened.)

-Who do you think "him" refers to? (The devil)

-Who is the "Lamb"? (Jesus—By his blood, we are saved.)

-What else helped them to overcome Satan? (the word of their testimony)

-Do you think these believers were ashamed of Jesus? Did they hide their testimony? (No.)

-What else do we know about them? (They didn't love their life, even to death. This isn't saying that they didn't care for themselves but that they cared more for following Jesus than staying alive. They were willing to follow Him, even if it meant dying.)

KEY: If you have given your life to Jesus and are saved, then you have a great story to share. Your testimony is powerful, so don't ever be afraid to share it.

BIBLE LESSON

(Based on Matthew 9:9-13)

SAY: Today we're going to look at a Bible character who, according to history, was also willing to follow Jesus, even if it meant that he would die. But today we get to see when this man first meets Jesus and to introduce him, I'm going to give you hints and I want to see if you can guess his name.

HINTS—Who Am I?

- I am a character in the New Testament.
- Some people know me by the name of Levi.
- There is a book in the Bible named after me.
- I was a tax collector (kind of like Zaccheus).
- I was collecting taxes when Jesus called me to follow Him.
- I became one of Jesus' disciples.
- I wrote one of the Gospels.

SAY: Today we're talking about Matthew, who wrote the first book of the New Testament, the Gospel of Matthew.

READ Matthew 9:9-13 from your Bible.

Choose four volunteers.

-Introduce one of the volunteers as MATTHEW. Have him sit in a chair.

ASK: **When the story begins, what is Matthew doing?** (He is sitting at the tax collector's booth. These were usually set up at gates for people to pay taxes as they entered.)

-Introduce another of the volunteers as an ISRAELITE (or JEWISH) PERSON.

ASK: **How did the people feel about tax collectors?** (They hated them. Tax collectors in Jesus's day were bad men because they were Jews who worked for the Romans who had taken over Israel. They were considered to be traitors who had turned against their own people. Then Romans told the tax collectors to collect a certain amount of money but whatever they took above that, they could keep. So the tax collectors took far beyond what they were told and became very rich. For this reason, they were greatly hated.)

Position the ISRAELITE to look mad at Matthew.

-Introduce another of the volunteers as a RELIGIOUS LEADER.

ASK: **How did the religious leaders feel about tax collectors?** (The religious leaders said that God hated tax collectors. Some religious leaders refused even to look at them because they were so "evil." It was even common that they would spit in their direction as a sign of their hate.)

Position the RELIGIOUS LEADER to look away from Matthew.

-Introduce the final volunteers as JESUS.

ASK: **How did Jesus feel about tax collectors? How did Jesus treat Zaccheus last week?** (By the way, the situation with Matthew happened long before Jesus met Zaccheus. In fact,

when Jesus met Zaccheus, Matthew would have been one of the disciples traveling with Him. Can you imagine the common bond those two men might have shared?)

SAY: Jesus loves everyone. It doesn't matter how bad they've been, there's nothing Jesus can't forgive and He is willing to save anyone who comes and gives his life to Him.

ASK: **What did Jesus say to Matthew?** ("Follow me.")

ASK: **What did Matthew do?** (He left everything and followed Jesus.)

ASK: **What can we learn from this story?** (How Jesus loves everyone; How someone can follow Christ, no matter what; that God has plans for everyone; etc.)

ASK: **If you were going to hear Matthew share his story with someone else, how do you think he might share it?**

SAY: Do you think it might sound something like this:

"I had heard about Jesus but one day while I was sitting at the tax booth, He came over to me. He didn't look away like so many of the other religious leaders did. Instead he spoke to me—two simple words. "Follow me," he said. So I got up, left everything and followed Him."

SAY: Matthew became one of Jesus' twelve disciples but after Jesus' resurrection the Bible doesn't tell us the rest of Matthew's story. History, however, gives us some hints of what happened. It is said that in Matthew wrote his Gospel about thirty to forty years after Jesus' resurrection and that at the end of his life Matthew traveled to Ethiopia in Africa to share the Gospel where he was killed with a lance for preaching about Christ. He was not afraid to share the story of Christ and he lived for Jesus to the end of his days.

CHALLENGE REPORT: Last week I challenged you to share your testimony with someone in your family. Does anyone want to share about what they did or with whom they shared?

CHALLENGE: This week I challenge you to ask someone in your family to share their salvation story with you. You might already know it, but ask them to share it with you anyway. And if they don't have a salvation story because they've never been saved, feel free to tell them how you know for sure that you're going to Heaven.

Dismiss to Small Groups

SAY: Right now it is time for our small groups, so I'm going to dismiss you one row at a time.

Dismiss rows of chairs to the tables in the rooms. Give them specific directions where to go.

SMALL GROUPS

Craft – Tissue Paper Fun Cross

SAY: Use the following steps to make a fun cross to remind us to never be ashamed of our stories about Jesus:

- Cut out a cross from cardstock paper (see the last page of this lesson for a sample).
- Poke holes in the cross.
- Push tissue paper into the holes to create a flower-kind of effect.
- Continue this until only the tissue paper is seen and the cardstock cross is hidden.
- Attached a ribbon to the back and hang your craft in a visible place at home. When you look at it, remember that you can share with others stories of what God can do.



Activity - Telling Stories

(NOTE: These activities were in last week's lesson as well but can easily be adapted to be done again. Be sure to use these activities to continually remind your students that the story of how they were saved is the greatest story of their lives.)

Option #1:

Since we're starting series today on sharing your salvation story, let's do an activity with storytelling. In a group of 5 to 8, let each leader begin a story. You can use some of the beginning lines below. Then, moving to the person to the leader's right, the next person can add one more sentence to the story, the next person can add another sentence, etc. As a group you will create what is many times a very funny story because anybody can make anything happen in their one sentence.

Suggestions for opening sentences:

"I went to the zoo and you'll never believe what I saw!"

"I got in the car and my mom started driving to the airport."

"I woke up yesterday and there was a gift at the foot of my bed."

"I ate three hamburgers yesterday and then my stomach started to rumble."

"I was so scared, I ran for my life!"

Have fun by creating your own opening lines...

Option #2:

As a class, let your students choose four numbers below. Then let your group write or create a story that uses these items. Challenge them to create a story that in some way could share something about God. (Our salvation stories share a personal story about God but other stories can teach something about Him too.)

1-Stinky feet

2-A big, red ball

3-A fuzzy bunny

4-A prickly pickle

5-A yellow fog

6-A mighty train

7-Purple goo

8-Old tomatoes

9-A new shirt

10-A little bitty ship

Additional Activity—Follow the Leader

When Jesus called, Matthew followed Him. Play *Follow the Leader* with your class to find out how well they can follow.

Choose a volunteer to be the leader. Change leaders every 30 seconds. You'll want to keep this moving fast. Depending on the size of your class, you will either need to tell them that everyone will get to be the leader or that only a few will get to do it.

For Variation: Play the game in one big, long line.
Then split them into teams and play the game in smaller groups.

DISCUSSION

SAY: Just like the game, when you follow someone you do what they do and you say what they say. When you follow Jesus, you do what He did and say things that agree with what He said.

Discussion Questions

Below are questions that you can discuss with your students before, after or while participating in today's activity:

- How do you think Matthew felt when Jesus spoke to him?
- Why do you think Matthew immediately followed Jesus?
- How would Matthew's life have been different if he had not followed Jesus?
- How did Jesus' actions challenge the actions of the religious leaders?
- We didn't talk a lot about this today but at the end of the story of Matthew, who remembers what Jesus said when the Pharisees (a group of religious leaders) complained that that Jesus was eating with tax collectors and sinners? ("It is not the healthy that need a doctor but the sick...I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.") What does this mean?

Prayer—Take prayer requests and pray with your students.



Pattern for the Tissue Paper Fun Cross Craft