

WEEK ONE: INTRODUCTION
YOUTH SUNDAY SCHOOL
LEADER'S GUIDE
Jesus Calls Levi (Matthew)

THEME: True Happiness is found in walking with Jesus.

ICEBREAKER: *Each discussion begins with a question that allows the group to share from their own personal experiences and opinions.*

ASK: Where would you go on vacation if you had to walk there?

Additional Questions:

- How long would it take you to walk there? (Ask Google, Siri, or Alexa)
- What would you need for your journey?

SAY: It is a journey of self-discovery, where we come to terms with who we are: prideful, arrogant, and self-absorbed. Yet, it is also a song of grace and acceptance: we discover how to humble ourselves and be invited daily into the journey of surrender, as we calm our hearts, quiet our souls, hope in the Lord, and trust now and always.

OPENING PRAYER:

We are about to embark on a six-week journey through Psalm 131. During our times on Sunday Morning we will look at different stories of Jesus that relate to the week's theme. On Wednesday nights we will explore this theme more. *Each class we will start and end with Psalm 131 as our prayer for calm, quiet, hope, and trust.*

Prayer: Psalm 131 (NLT)

Lord, my heart is not proud; my eyes are not haughty. I don't concern myself with matters too great or too awesome for me to grasp. Instead, I have calmed and quieted myself, like a weaned child who no longer cries for its mother's milk. Yes, like a weaned child is my soul within me. Put your hope in the Lord— now and always. Amen.

THE JESUS TRAIL

INTRODUCTION: Have you ever heard of the Jesus Trail?

The Jesus Trail is a 65-kilometer hiking trail in the Galilee region of Israel which connects important sites from the life of Jesus as well as other historical and religious sites. The Jesus Trail offers an alternative for travelers and pilgrims to experience the steps of Jesus in a way that is authentic, adventurous and educational by hiking through the rugged and beautiful landscape of the Galilee in Israel. It takes on average four days to journey this trail. (jesustrail.org)

VIDEO (if possible): Watch this introduction to the Jesus Trail. www.youtube.com/watch?v=56LZGdalgus

DISCUSS:

- Why do you think people hike the Jesus trail?
- How could this hike strengthen a person's faith?
- How could this experience bring new life to the stories of Jesus in the New Testament?
- Do you think you would want to hike the Jesus Trail? Why or why not?

JESUS CALLS LEVI:

SAY: Along his journey, Jesus called people to leave their old life and follow him. They would then walk from town to town, learning from Jesus seeing him do amazing things. Jesus invited unexpected people to join him, from smelly fishermen to political radicals (Simon the Zealot). Perhaps one of the most controversial would be Levi (or Matthew) the tax collector.

ASK: Why would Jesus inviting a tax collector to be a disciple be controversial?

DID YOU KNOW: Tax collectors were considered traitors to the Jewish people. They would collect money for the oppressive Roman government, and even extra for themselves.

ASK: Why do you think a person would become a tax collector? How are they expecting to find happiness in life?

READ MATTHEW 9: 9-13

9 As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow me and be my disciple," Jesus said to him. So, Matthew got up and followed him.

10 Later, Matthew invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. 11 But when the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with such scum?"

12 When Jesus heard this, he said, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do." 13 Then he added, "Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: 'I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.' For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners."

DISCUSS:

- Before Jesus called Matthew, do you think he was happy? Why or why not?
- Why do you think Matthew leaves everything behind to follow Jesus?
- Who are the people that Matthew invites to a party? Did that seem strange?
- Why were people so offended that Jesus was spending time with Matthew and his friends?
- What is Jesus response to the opposition? Why?
- How does Matthew's journey with Jesus provide him purpose and meaning?

VIDEO: Matthew the Taxman

Watch this video ([youtube.com/watch?v=SKlpNLRadAo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKlpNLRadAo))

DISCUSS:

- Did this video provide any insight in the heart of Matthew?
- How does his job as the Taxman not provide happiness for his soul?
- Why is Matthew amazed that Jesus wants him to be a disciple?

READ PSALM 128:1-2 (from the Message)

All you who fear God, how blessed you are! How happily you walk on his smooth straight road! You worked hard and deserve all you've got coming. Enjoy the blessing! Revel in the goodness!

DISCUSS:

- How did walking with Jesus bring Matthew happiness? How did it bless his life?
- How does walking with Jesus bring us happiness and blessing? How is that different than happiness and blessing that the world offers?

MAKE IT PERSONAL: Are you happy?

- What things are you leaning on to make yourself happy?
- How do those things only provide limited happiness?
- How can a life walking with Jesus bring happiness, even during difficult times?

CLOSING TIME:**QUOTE: Eugene Peterson**

"The road we travel in the well-traveled road of discipleship. It is not a way of boredom or despair or confusion. It is not a miserable groping but a way of blessing."²²

SAY: For the next six weeks we are embarking on a pilgrimage through Psalm 131. This Psalm teaches us how to find true happiness. It is a journey of discovering who we are (prideful and arrogant), who God is calling us to be (humble and content), and how to live out our faith (full of hope and trust in God). It invites us into the daily journey of surrender as we calm our hearts, quiet our souls, hope in the lord, and trust now and always.

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²² Peterson, Eugene. A Long obedience in the Same Direction. Pg. 113