

Unit II: Jesus and Calls in His Ministry

The Ultimate Fish Story

DEVOTIONAL READING: Luke 9:57-62
BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Luke 5:1-11
PRINT PASSAGE: Luke 5:1-11

Key Verse—Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.
(Luke 5:10b, KJV)

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Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.”
(Luke 5:10b, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Contemplate the story of the miraculous catch of fish.
- Reflect on Simon’s changing attitude toward Jesus as the story progresses.
- Hear Jesus’ instructions and eagerly obey them.

*Key Terms

Answering (verse 5)—Greek: *apokrinomai* (ap-ok-ree'-nom-ah-ee): to answer, reply, take up the conversation; “answered” (NIV).

Astonished (verse 9)—Greek: *thambeó* (tham-beh'-o): to be astonished, amazed; amazement.

Hear (verse 1)—Greek: *akouó* (ak-oo'-o): to hear, learn; “listening” (NIV).

Multitude (verse 6)—Greek: *pléthos* (play'-thos): a great number; “large number” (NIV).

Taught (verse 3)—Greek: *didaskó* (did-as'-ko): was taught, directed, admonished.

Was standing (verse 1)—Greek: *histémi* (his'-tay-mee): was made to stand; “stood” (KJV).

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

Introduction

Many children dream of being firefighters, teachers, police officers, athletes, doctors, or lawyers. When they are old enough to make a serious career choice, some feel pressure to follow in their parents’ professional footsteps, or take their place in the family business. Many people are motivated by a desire to do work that they and others see as important. Many seek significant and meaningful work that will honor and make a difference for their family, friends, community, and possibly even the world. In the legacies of such persons as the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Ms. Cicely Tyson, Mr. Lebron James, and Ms. Oprah Winfrey, we see excellence displayed in many paths and professions coupled with a



The Biblical Context

John recounts a second miraculous catch event after the Resurrection (see John 21:4-6). When Peter saw Jesus on the shore, he jumped off the fishing boat and swam to Jesus. Peter had denied Jesus, but on that day, Jesus fully restored him. Jesus' response to Peter teaches that everyone who returns to Him with a right heart receives restoration. Even if you grow weak or weary along the way, there is always hope of restoration. Jesus will not write you off because of your mistakes.

In both miraculous-catch scenarios, the expert fishermen experienced a fruitless night of fishing. At Jesus' word, however, they were suddenly able to bring in a great catch of fish, proving that Jesus is the master over everything, even the matters of your own personal "expertise." Jesus used the familiar setting of a fishing boat to demonstrate His power over nature during the storm on the Sea of Galilee (see Mark 4:35-41), and again when He walked on water (see Matthew 14:22-31; Mark 6:45-52). Jesus travelled through Galilee preaching the message of God's kingdom (see Luke 4:42-43). While in Galilee, Jesus preached in the synagogues (see Luke 4:44) and demonstrated the mighty power of God through miracles and signs (see Luke 5-6). Luke emphasized that Jesus' teaching ministry was often accompanied by notable miracles. The purpose of Jesus' miracles was never to entertain or impress, but to meet needs and stir the faith of those who saw and experienced them. Through the Gospel narratives—the record of Jesus' miracles, conversations, and parables—we find many reasons to answer Jesus' call to discipleship.

deep care for the community. In some small way, many people desire to be like them, because of sheer admiration for their commitment to their craft and to humanity. The world pushes idol worship, especially in the entertainment industry. There is even a popular television series called *American Idol*. Sadly, the trend of making idols and celebrities of Christian leaders is spreading within many Christian circles. Singers, preachers, and other Christians have begun to imitate the fads and fashions of their favorite "celebrity" preacher or gospel artist. It is Jesus who called disciples with varying unique traits that were beneficial to the work of the kingdom. This is true even today. While we should inspire each other to do good works that glorify God, however, we should not draw attention to ourselves. In the spirit of John the Baptist, we must decrease, and the Lord must increase (see John 3:30). God's image and glory must always be greater than our own. The Lord does not seek spiritual superstars, nor does He need any imitations of any of the great spiritual leaders of our times. God simply wants you, the original you, the authentic you that He created. He wants individuals that are true to themselves, true to their calling, and, above all, true to Him. God is looking for those who will adore and idolize Him alone.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Called to See (Luke 5:1-3)

KJV

AND IT came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to *hear* the word of God, he *stood* by the lake of Gennesaret,

2 And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.

3 And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and *taught* the people out of the ship.

NIV

ONE DAY as Jesus *was standing* by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and *listening* to the word of God.

2 He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets.
3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and *taught* the people from the boat.

Chapter 5 opens with Jesus in Galilee teaching a crowd of people on the shores of Lake of Genesaret (**verse 1**). The crowd followed Jesus while He was teaching, healing, and casting out demons (see 4:41-44). The large crowd had literally pressed against Jesus, giving Him little room to navigate and deliver His message. Jesus saw two empty ships docked by the lake. The workers were nearby, cleaning their nets (**verse 2**). Cleaning nets was a necessary part of the regular work routine on the morning after a night of fishing. Jesus entered the boat belonging to Simon Peter and asked him to move the boat a little bit into the sea (**verse 3a**). Simon was likely pleased to offer His boat to Jesus. Along with the crowd, he listened attentively as Jesus sat down to teach (**verse 3b**). There was no fancy building, no music; the people had gathered to experience Jesus' presence and hear His words. What about you? Are you following the crowd or looking for an encounter with Jesus and His Word?

? **What Do You Think?** What are some other reasons for why believers gather together if not to hear the Word of the Lord? What can we do to help?

Called to Search (Luke 5:4-7)

KJV

4 Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

5 And Simon *answering* said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

6 And when they had this done, they enclosed a great *multitude* of fishes: and their net brake.

7 And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

NIV

4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."

5 Simon *answered*, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

6 When they had done so, they caught such a *large number* of fish that their nets began to break.

7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

When Jesus finished teaching the people, He directed Simon Peter to launch the boat further out, into the deeper waters, and to let down the fishing nets for a catch (**verse 4**). Jesus' command includes a hint of expectation—those who expect a great catch do not remain in shallow waters. Jesus gives specific instructions to go farther out and cast the net to retrieve the fish. Whenever we go in the service of the Lord, we should expect to reap for His glory. When we serve in His name, we must

do so with great expectation of success. When Jesus called Simon to search for fish in deeper waters, Simon responded with the explanation that he and his team had worked all night and not caught a single fish, but “at thy word”—that is, because Jesus said so—Peter agreed to do it (**verse 5**). Imagine where our ministries and lives would be if we moved as swiftly as Simon at the Word of God. **Verse 6** describes a catch so great that it began to break the fishing nets! The blessing was so huge that the men had to call other boats to come and help them so that their boat would not sink from the weight of the enormous amount of fish (**verse 7**). It certainly pays to obey the Lord.

? What Do You Think? Name some thoughts and hindrances that keep us from trusting God’s Word. How can we grow in obedience and trust?

Called to Significance (Luke 5:8-11)

KJV

8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

9 For he was *astonished*, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken:

10 And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

11 And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

NIV

8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!”

9 For he and all his companions were *astonished* at the catch of fish they had taken,

10 and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon’s partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.”

11 So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Seeing the amazing catch of fish, Simon Peter demonstrated the perfect response to one of God’s miracles—he fell and worshipped Jesus (**verse 8a**). As a master fisherman, Peter understood the impossibility of what had occurred. It is one thing to catch a few fish, but to catch literal boatloads of fish in a single casting of the net was a miracle! When Peter began to grasp the magnitude of who was in his presence, he immediately announced that he was a sinner unworthy of Jesus’ presence. He then asked Jesus to leave (**verse 8b**). **Verse 9** indicates that Peter was not the only one amazed at what Jesus had done. **Verse 10a** explained that James and John, Simon’s fishing partners, were also astonished (as would anyone be) at what they had witnessed. Jesus told Simon Peter not to be afraid and called him to follow His ministry and become a fisher of men (**verse 10b**). Jesus was inviting Peter to drop the nets of ministry, in search not for fish but for souls for the kingdom of God. According to **verse 11**, the fishermen took their boats to the shore, left everything, and followed Jesus. They had just caught several boatloads of fish, but, according to the text, they left it all behind and followed Jesus. We should be so committed to God’s purpose and call that we are willing to leave some things behind.