

Jesus' Fishing Lesson

Luke 5:1-11; Mt. 4:18-22

After Christ was rejected at Nazareth, He went to Capernaum (4:31-32). Jesus spent most of His earthly ministry in Capernaum and around the Sea of Galilee (20 months). Most of Christ's disciples came from here.

Peter, Andrew, and John were already following Christ (John 1). However, it appears that while they were following Jesus, they still continued their fishing business.

➡4:31-32, 42-5:1—What a blessing when a crowd gathers to “*hear the word of God.*” The crowd was so big, they backed Christ up to the shore.

I. **The REQUEST** (vs. 2-3).

➡ Jesus asked Peter if He might use his boat as a pulpit to speak to the people. J. Vernon McGee said, “Every pulpit is a fishing boat, a place to give out the Word of God and attempt to catch fish.”

- The **shore** was the pew.
- The **ship** was the pulpit.
- The **Savior** was the preacher! Jesus didn't just preach in the synagogues. He preached wherever people wanted to hear.

A. An **inconvenient** request.

1. Peter had worked all night (v. 5). He was tired, frustrated, and probably not in a good mood. The nets were washed.
2. Yet Peter still granted Christ His request.
3. We should serve the Lord even when we do not feel like it or it is inconvenient.
 - Attend church activities (Sunday night / Life Group)
 - Visit someone (G.R.O.W.)
 - Teach a S.S. class
 - Come to choir practice
 - Lawn and grounds maintenance
 - Clean the church

African missionary David Livingstone received a letter from a young man who wanted to join him on the mission field. He

asked Livingstone, “Can you tell me an easy way to get to where you are?” Livingstone wrote back, “I don’t need someone who is looking for an easy way—I need a man who will make his own way!”

B. An **important** request.

1. The use of Peter’s boat would allow more people to hear Christ speak. What a blessing to have one of our possessions put to use so people can hear God’s Word.
2. We need to do whatever we can to get Christ’s message to as many people as we can, by any means that we can.

C. An **instructive** request. How Jesus works through people.

1. Why did Jesus ask Peter to take Him out? Couldn’t He just walk out on the water to speak? Jesus asked Peter to take Him out for the same reason He calls people to teach Sunday school, clean the church, work in the sound booth, and prepare videos for others to see. God works through people!
2. Does the Lord need to use us? No. But we need to be used by Him in order that we might be in a position to hear from Him and grow in Him.

II. **The REQUIREMENT** (vs. 4-5).

A. **Illogical command.**

1. It was probably noontime. Not the best time for fishing.
2. These were professional fisherman. They must have thought, “We’ve just washed our nets. Why get them dirty again for nothing!”

B. **Incomplete compliance** (v. 5).

1. Jesus was thinking BIGGER than Peter was BELIEVING. God always has more in store for us than we believe Him for.
 - ➡ God does “*exceeding, abundantly, above that we ask or think*” (Eph. 3:20).

2. We set the degree and extent of our own blessings! God's blessings are determined by the capacity of your faith to receive His blessings.
- Two blind men came to Jesus. *"Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, **According to your faith** [not your love, nor holiness, nor service], be it unto you. And their eyes were opened"* (Mt. 9:28-30).
 - ILLUS: Arrows of deliverance (2 Kings 13:14-19). Elisha told King Joash, *"The arrow of the LORD'S deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them. And he said, Take the arrows. And he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed. And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice."* It was King Joash's lack of faith that determined the extent of Israel's victory over the Syrians.
- ➔ Often the “big ones” get away because we aren’t completely following the Lord’s instructions in how to use NET(S).

III. The REWARD (vs. 6-9). God will be no man’s debtor. Jesus blessed Peter’s loan of his boat with the miraculous draught of fishes. Whatever you give to the Lord, He will reward you for!

- A. The **compassion** of God’s grace. Even though Peter did not completely obey Christ’s instructions, He gave him fish.
- B. The **cost** of incomplete obedience— *“...their net brake.”* There is a price to pay for incomplete obedience.
- C. The **cooperation** of others in the work (v. 7). The bigger the catch, the more helpers that are needed. Much of the catch would have been lost if others didn’t come to help.

- D. The **confession** of Peter's failure (v. 8). Jesus hadn't said a word about sin. Peter was convicted in his heart because of his sinful condition. He realized the draught of fish came from Jesus, in spite of his little faith. Yet, still, Jesus blessed him. The goodness of God leads to repentance.
1. Repentance is more than feeling sorry for what you did—It is sorrow for what you ARE. *"Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."* When a person realizes he is in the presence Jesus, he immediately takes a *negative* view of himself.
 2. Job said, *"I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes"* (Job 42:6). Isaiah confessed, *"Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips"* (Isa. 6:5).

IV. The RESULTS (vs. 10-11).

- A. **Comfort** (v. 10). *"Fear not..."* Yes, Peter, you sinned. But I still want to use you.
- B. **Call** (v. 10-11). Not a request, or a command—Simply a statement of fact.
 1. *"Fishers of men."* Why that analogy? Because we are all like fish under a literal body of water between the second and third heaven (Gen. 1:6-8; Job 26:5-13; Ps. 148:1-4). Therefore, sinners are likened to fish in Scripture (Eccl. 9:12; Mt. 13:47-48; Hab. 1:14—*"makest men as the fishes of the sea"*).
 2. Peter did catch men. He caught 3,000 on the Day of Pentecost.
 3. Fish can be caught individually (on a hook), or in mass (in a net).
 4. The question is not *how many* fish are you catching. The question is: ARE YOU FISHING? The key to catching fish is TO FISH. You will never catch a fish, if you don't go fishing!

➡ FISHING TIPS

- You must go where the fish are.
- Fish run in schools. Usually where you can catch one, others will follow. (Mike Todd and I fishing holes in the river)

- Different baits / lures attract different fish.
- Requires patience.
- Some fish put up a greater fight than others.

I watched an old Vermonter trout fishing. He was pulling them in one after another. “You’re really having good luck today,” I said. Then he said, “It’s not luck. It’s knowing the three secrets of trout fishing.” “What are they?” I asked. He answered: “FIRST, Keep yourself out of sight. SECOND, keep yourself way out of sight. THIRD, keep yourself still farther out of sight.”

C. **Consecration** (v. 11).

SUMMATION: Can you imagine what Peter’s testimony might have been if he attended a church testimony service after that fishing episode?

“I’ll never forget it! Andrew and I were washing our nets on the beach. We didn’t catch a single fish after fishing all night. I must confess I was frustrated and discouraged.

I noticed a large crowd of people were coming our way. Jesus was with them. He stopped near us to speak to the crowd. But the crowd was so large they were backing Him up to the edge of the water.

Jesus turned to me and asked if I would take Him in my boat little from shore so He could teach the people. Although I was tired, I agreed to loan Him my boat. Little did I know that the greatest lesson Jesus would teach from my boat was not to the crowd on the shore, but TO ME!

When He finished speaking to the people, He told me, “*Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.*” It seemed ridiculous to me since we had already fished all night and caught nothing. Our nets were already washed. It didn’t make sense to get them dirty again. So I decided to humor Jesus and let down just one of my nets.

I was shocked as a multitude of fish began swimming into our net. Andrew and I began tugging on the net to draw them into the boat, but there were so many our net was beginning to tear. I yelled to our partners, James and John in a nearby boat, to come help. Our boat was beginning to sink and we needed to get to shore or all would be lost.

Once we were back on land, I felt so ashamed that I didn't fully obey Jesus when He told me to let down my nets, and I only let down one net. I just wanted Jesus to leave because I felt so sinful and unworthy.

Then Jesus smiled and told me not to fear. He called me to be a fisher of men. I couldn't resist! Andrew and I decided right then to liquidate our fishing business and follow Jesus the rest of our life."

➡ What was a *night of failure* (v. 5), became a *morning of faith* (v. 5), and a *day of fullness* (v. 6), and lead to a *lifetime of fellowship* (v. 11).

➡ **Lessons to be learned:**

1. Jesus wants to use ordinary people and their possessions.
2. Jesus expects us to serve Him when it is not convenient.
3. Jesus may ask us to do what seems illogical. We must do it by faith.
4. Jesus generously repays those to give to Him.
5. God's blessings is limited by our faith and our complete obedience.
 - Have you decided to follow Jesus and become a fisher of men?
 - You are not following Jesus if you are not fishing for men (Mt. 4:19).