



THE GOSPEL OF
Luke

SESSION OBJECTIVE: LUKE 5:1-11

To understand how Jesus called His first disciples to follow Him.

When Two Professions Collide

In the summer of 2020, amid all of the chaos the world faced, my wife and I decided it would be a good time to remodel our kitchen. We hired an excellent contractor, and away we went, designing the kitchen we had always wanted. In the midst of the job, however, complications arose (as they always do), and our contractor had to figure out how to overcome these newly discovered obstacles. Of course, being at home (the shutdown was in full effect), we were there to offer our less-than-professional advice to him. I think it was the humanness of us that just wanted to help, but I realized quickly that our construction advice was less than helpful to a professional who knew the trade far better than we did. My wife and I are professionals in other categories; kitchen remodeling isn't one of them.

In Luke chapter 5, the professional rabbi (I use that term loosely here) Jesus climbs in a boat and begins to teach a large crowd from the water. At some point in his talk, however, he turns to the local fishermen who had already stopped working for the day, and calls them to come back in the water and put out their nets. As professional fishermen, I'm sure they were at least a little annoyed. Fishermen don't fish during the day because the fish can see the nets! It had to have irked them that a person who was not a professional fisherman was giving them advice to do something at the worst time of day when they had just done the same thing with no success during the best time of day. Nevertheless, they acquiesce Jesus' command and put the nets in the water, and to their amazement, they brought in what was likely their biggest haul ever. The story is a shocking example of the authority Jesus possessed. He was not a professional rabbi nor a professional

fishermen. He is God in the flesh, the Maker of all things, and has authority over all of it. It's in this context, that He calls His first followers and begins the hard work of discipleship.

Setting the Context

Chapter 5 begins where chapter 4 left off. Jesus has been preaching all over Judea, and has garnered quite the population as an authoritative and powerful preacher and worker of miracles. In verse 1, we are told that He was, however, not in the synagogue, but “was standing by the lake of Gennesaret.” People had followed Him and were “pressing in on Him to hear the word of God” (Lk. 5:1). This reference to the word of God should not be understood necessarily as the Bible. The Greek construction is in the subjective genitive, and so it would be better understood as, “a word from God.” It's perhaps a game of semantics since the Scripture is literally words from God, but the way in which we understood Scripture in the 21st century is vastly different than the context of Luke 5, namely in that the New Testament hadn't been written, and there wasn't yet a collection of the different manuscripts bound into one book in the same way that our Bibles are.

As Jesus is teaching, He sees two boats that were empty. The fishermen to which these two boats belonged were “had gone out of them and were washing their nets” (Lk. 5:2). Jesus proceeds to get into one of them and subsequently asks one of the fishermen, a man named Simon (who we know later as Peter), to push Him out a little from the land. Jesus then sits down in the boat, not too far off from the land, while a large crowd of people gather on the shoreline to listen to the rabbi teach. It's in this context that Jesus calls Peter and the first disciples to Himself.

Never a Wasted Moment

Having finished teaching the crowds, Jesus wastes no time at all. Verse 4 says, “And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.’” This is quite out of character for a rabbi. Jesus is an expert in teaching and possesses an unmatched amount of authority in the way He delivered truth. But likewise, Simon and his cohort of fishermen were experts in their respective field as well, and so to be given direction from someone who is not an expert fisherman was strange. Yet, likely because of the reputation Jesus had garnered as both a teacher and a miracle worker, Peter respectfully answered: “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets” (Lk. 5:5). It's subtle, but his defense is there in his answer to Jesus. In other words, he was saying, “We have already done what you are asking us to do when it was the ideal time to do it, and now you are asking us to do it again in a worse time and expecting better results? Ok, but only because we know your reputation.”

Verses 6 and 7 capture the outcome: “And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.” The haul was so big it not only almost broke the nets but the weight of the catch was so heavy it started to sink their boats! They were “astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken” (Lk. 5:9). It's at this moment we are introduced to the other two disciples who are called along with Simon: “James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon” (Lk. 5:10). These men will form what will later be known by scholars as, “the inner three.” They are privy to some of the most epic moments with Jesus such as the Transfiguration (Lk. 9:28-36). The catch demonstrates Jesus' command not only over Scripture, but over the elements as well. And Jesus connects this command over catching fish to what He will actually call them to do: “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men” (Lk. 5:10). Thus, the discipleship process begins.

The Right Response

There are two responses of these new disciples in this passage. Below is a breakdown of each of them.

PETER'S RESPONSE

One of the most interesting parts of this passage is the way in which Peter responds to this miracle in verse 8: "But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.'" This response echoes the response of others in the Old Testament when they find themselves in the presence of God. Isaiah, for example, when standing in the presence of God in the Temple in Isaiah 6:5 says, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" His response is an immediate confession of sin. Likewise, Peter responds by confessing his sinfulness. The presence of a holy God forces the issue of sin into the light and demands it be dealt with. Fortunately, God deals with our sin on our behalf because we cannot.

THE DISCIPLES' RESPONSE

Verse 11 shows the second, and ultimate response of the disciples which sets up the expectation for how all disciples should respond to Jesus: "...they left everything, and they followed Him." Ultimately, this reflects what Jesus will later say: "'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me'" (Lk. 9:23). To follow Jesus is to prioritize Him above everything else in your life including your job, your loved ones, and even your own life: "For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it" (Lk. 9:24). Radical followership is what Jesus calls us to, and nothing less.

What About Now?

One major takeaway is the need for confession of sin in light of our fellowship with God. Whenever the Lord calls us to Himself, we must confess, and not just once, but on a continual basis (Ja. 5:16). Another takeaway is that Jesus early on in His ministry saw the need for training and equipping others to continue the work of the ministry after He had left. This indicates that Jesus' plan was calculated from the beginning; nothing took Him by surprise, not even His death (Jn. 10:17-18).

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Luke 5:1-2. What was Jesus standing next to? What did he see by the lake? Where had the fishermen gone who owned the boats?

2. Read Luke 5:3. What did Jesus do next? What did He ask Simon to do?

Day Two

1. Read Luke 5:4. What did he say to Peter after he finished teaching? Why was this an odd thing to say?

2. Read Luke 5:5. How did Peter respond to Jesus?
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Day Three

1. Read Luke 5:6-7. What was the result of letting down the nets? What happened to their nets? What happened to both of the boats?
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2. Read Luke 5:8. How did Peter respond to Jesus? What is this similar to? (Hint: See above notes)
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Day Four

1. Read Luke 5:9-10. What was the reaction of the fishermen to this catch? Who were the other two listed that were partners of Simon Peter?
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2. Read Luke 5:11. How did the disciples ultimately respond to Jesus?
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Week 16 Discussion: A New Priority

The ultimate response of Simon, James, and John was to leave behind everything they had, including what was likely a fairly profitable fishing trade, and follow Jesus. This wasn't just a risk; it was unheard of. Yet, the power they witness of Jesus even over the elements was enough for them to feel like it was the only reasonable choice. A decision to follow Jesus means a radical re-shifting of priorities. Talk as a group about what you've had to give up in order to follow Jesus.

1. Icebreaker: What's the most difficult thing you've had to give up in order to faithfully follow and serve Jesus Christ?
2. Why do you think Jesus calls us to give up all of our own desires in order to follow Him?
3. What is something you are still wrestling with giving up for Jesus?
4. Does your life reflect this idea of re-prioritizing everything? Why or why not?
5. Is discipleship important in your life?
6. How can the church better train and equip disciple makers?

Takeaways:

1. Jesus taught from a boat on the lake of Gennesaret and then supernaturally made Simon and his fishermen friend's catch so big it almost sank their boats and broke their nets.
2. Jesus called Simon, James, and John to follow Him, and they gave up everything to do so.