



# Fishers of People

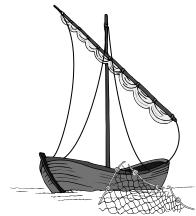
Luke 5:1-11

## Commission

- ❑ Luke 4:14-44 records some of the early events in Jesus' ministry.<sup>1</sup> Jesus taught with authority, drove out evil spirits, and healed the sick. Many praised him, but others rejected him. Many in Galilee heard about Jesus, and came to him. Some tried to keep Jesus from leaving them.
  - 📖 "But [Jesus] said, 'I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent'" (Luke 4:43, NIV).
- ❑ Preaching "the good news of the kingdom of God" was part of Jesus' commission (mission).<sup>2</sup> So he kept on preaching the word of God (4:44-5:1). Read Luke 5:1-11.

## Catch

- ❑ Jesus was preaching the word of God by the Lake of Gennesaret (Sea of Galilee). As the crowd surrounded him, he decided to use Simon's boat as a floating pulpit (place to preach). When Jesus finished speaking, he told Simon (Peter),<sup>3</sup> "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch" (5:4).
- ❑ Fishing was Peter's business, so he knew how to fish. He and his partners had worked hard all night, and failed to catch fish. It seemed very unlikely that Jesus' way could result in success.<sup>4</sup>
  1. Why do you think Jesus asks Peter to attempt this seemingly futile (ineffective) way of fishing after Peter (an expert fisherman) had failed all night?
- ❑ Though Peter did not see how Jesus' way could work, he said, "But because you say so, I will let down the nets" (5:5b). What happened? They caught so many fish that their nets began to break, and their boats began to sink! Simon and all his companions were astonished (amazed).<sup>5</sup>



## Confession

- 📖 "When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!'" (5:8, NIV).
- 2. Why do you think Peter responds in this way?<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This series skips over Luke 4:16-30, which is an important passage concerning Jesus' identity. On the ICF website, under the series 'What Did Jesus Say?', see Lesson 2, entitled 'About the Human Condition & His Mission.'

<sup>2</sup> The 'kingdom (*basileia*) of God' refers primarily to God's dynamic reign or kingly rule (God's kingship). Thus the kingdom is not necessarily a physically visible realm, though the Bible does promise a future, visible kingdom as the ultimate realization. This future kingdom will bring restoration of the harmony and purpose experienced in the Garden (Gen. 1:31), but it will be much better. It will last forever. Though not yet visible as a realm, the present kingdom (as 'the dynamic reign of God') can be realized in the hearts of those who submit their lives to the King. God sent his Son not only to 'proclaim the good news of the kingdom,' but to establish the kingdom through his death and resurrection.

<sup>3</sup> His given Greek name was Simon (*Heb.* Symeon), but Jesus gave him the name Peter (John 1:42; Matt. 16:17-18).

<sup>4</sup> These 'nets' (*diktya*) were used for deep water, nighttime fishing. Success during the daytime would not be expected.

<sup>5</sup> The astonished people included James and John, and likely Peter's brother Andrew, though he is not mentioned.

<sup>6</sup> Peter has already recognized Jesus' authority (5:5); but the miracle of the fish opens Peter's eyes even wider. The light of God's presence and power in Jesus reveals the darkness in Peter's heart. Peter knows that he has fallen short, and he experiences shame, unworthiness and fear in the presence of Jesus. A normally proud, self-confident man is humbled.

## Commission

- ❑ Jesus did not chastise (rebuke, scold) Peter. He calmed him by saying, “Don’t be afraid...” (5:10b).<sup>7</sup> Peter’s recognition of his own weakness and inadequacy, in contrast to the Lord’s power and sufficiency, prepared him for God’s service. So Jesus called Peter to join him in his mission. Jesus said, “From now on you will be catching people!” (5:10b, HSCB)
- ❑ Peter, a fisher of fish, would become a fisher of people. This is a figure of speech. Peter would not be catching people for eating! He would be “catching people alive”<sup>8</sup> and bringing them into the kingdom of God. Jesus is *the* Savior (*the* Fisher of people, including Peter), but he called Peter (and the others) to join him in his saving work.
- ❑ The miracle of the fish illustrates the authority and power of Jesus Christ working through his followers to accomplish God’s commission.



## Commitment

- ❑ “So they pulled their boats up on the shore, left everything and followed [Jesus]” (5:11). Peter, James, and John (and presumably Andrew) left their fishing business to enter full-time ministry with Jesus. They changed their jobs.

## Connection

- ❑ Jesus’ call of his first disciples was a unique event. In any case, in some ways their story applies to us. There is a connection between their story and the lives of all believers.<sup>9</sup>
  3. Is recognizing (admitting) one’s sinfulness, inadequacy and weakness a good thing for *anyone* who wants to follow Jesus? Explain.
  4. Are all believers supposed to be “fishers of people?” If not, why not? If so, in what way?
  5. Does Jesus require all his followers to “leave everything” or “give up everything?” If not, why not? If so, in what sense?<sup>10</sup>



## Reflection/Application

- Have you been “caught” by the Savior? If you are a believer, what is *your* part in Jesus’ “fishing business?” In what specific ways have you joined Jesus in his mission? Commit to follow him.

<sup>7</sup> Of course, Jesus would have to deal with Peter’s sinfulness, along with the sinfulness of all humankind. Jesus would later die for our sins, but be raised from the dead (1 Peter 3:18).

<sup>8</sup> *anthrōpous esē zōgrōn* – ‘men you will be catching live.’ The verb *zōgreō* means ‘to take alive’ or ‘to catch alive.’ In this verse, it takes a present active participle form. The ‘catching’ will be an ongoing, repeated action. I used to keep our goldfish in a shallow outdoor pond in our yard. Each fall, I would have to ‘catch them alive’ and bring them into our indoor aquarium. If I left them outside, they would freeze to death! Thus I saved them by catching them.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Disciple’ (*mathētēs* – lit. ‘learner’) – one who follows and learns from a teacher. The first disciples of Jesus *literally* followed him. They learned from Jesus as they accompanied him in his earthly ministry. However, the term ‘disciple’ was also used for believers who did not literally walk with Jesus (e.g., Acts 6:1-2, 7; 9:36; 11:26). Though the term ‘disciple’ is not used beyond the Gospels and Acts, it is reasonable to expect all true believers to be disciples. Of course, the ‘twelve disciples’ had a special role, and some of Jesus’ instructions were specifically directed to them. However, even in those passages, there may be principles that apply to all disciples, including believers today.

<sup>10</sup> Jesus said elsewhere, ‘those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples’ (Luke 14:33). This does not mean that every disciple must give away all his possessions and leave his job to become a ‘full-time’ minister. However, every believer is called to relinquish (give up) control of everything to God. Every believer should put God first, and be *willing* to give up possessions and position if that is what God clearly directs.