



Luke 5:1-11

“WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A DISCIPLE”

(Sermon Plus Study And Application Questions)

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“Following Christ at City Center!”

I. LUKE 5:1-11 (RSV)
(As the text appears in your modern Bibles)

While the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennes'aret. And he saw two boats by the lake; but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he had ceased speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." And when they had done this, they enclosed a great shoal of fish; and as their nets were breaking, they beckoned 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. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zeb'edee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men." And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

II. SCRIPTURE SHEET AND SERMON
(As the text was heard by ancient hearers)

1) vv.1-11 THE MIRACULOUS CATCH, CALL OF SIMON & OTHERS (Luke 4:31-36, Jn. 2:1-14).

Preceded By Exorcism, Healing Of Peter's Mother In Law, Many Healings/Exorcisms, 4:31-44

a) vv.1-3 Introduction: Fishermen And Their Boats Claimed By Jesus.

Work Setting, Jesus Preached The Kingdom, Did Mighty Deeds In Demonstration

1 Religion While the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, Tremendous Following From Mighty Deeds
he (Jesus) was standing by the lake of Genessaret (i.e. Sea of Galilee) **COMMISSIONING STORY FORM:**

2 Work And he saw **two boats** by the lake; **INTRODUCTION: 1**
but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. At Work, Early Morning

3 Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, Simon As Fishing/Business Leader, **CONFRONTATION: 2**
he asked to be put out a little from **the land**. Significant Demand, Initial Obedience
And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. Public Teaching: Picture Of The Church

b) vv.4-5 Dialog Between Jesus And Simon: Reluctant Obedience. Gift Of Knowledge

4 And when he had ceased speaking, he said to Simon, In Luke, Mighty Works Can Be A Basis For Discipleship
"Put out into the deep Time To Quit! **INITIAL COMMISSIONING: 3**
and let down your nets for a catch." Word Of Knowledge! Unusual Command, Fish See Nets In Daylight
Use Of A Trammel/Veranda Net: 4 Fishermen

5 And Simon answered, **PROTEST: 4**
"MASTER (Boss), we toiled all night and took nothing. Initial Resistance, The Fisherman Speaks
But at your word I will let down the nets." Obedience After Hearing, Nets Already Cleaned, Faith Speaks
"At your word" Based On Previous Works Of Power, 4:31-36

c) vv.6-7 Miraculous Catch Of Fish. Peter Has Prior Knowledge Of Jesus

6 And when he had done this, they enclosed a great shoal of fish, Linen Not Dried Properly Will Rot Quickly
7 and as their nets were breaking, Financial Blessing
they beckoned to their partners in the other boats to come and help them. They Had All Obeyed The Command
And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. Jesus Still In The Boat!
Teamwork From Start!
Theophany: Day, Great Shoal, Breaking Nets, 2 Boats Sinking

b') vv.8-10 Dialog Between Simon And Jesus: Simon Is Called.

8 But when Simon saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, What Is The It Simon Saw? Jesus' Identity?
REACTION: 5

9 "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O LORD." Awe, Resistance to Theophany: //4:34, Is. 6:5
Shame, Fear Of Exposure, "Get out of my life!" Lk. 8:37
10 (For he was astonished, and all that were with him, vv.9-10a Is A Explanatory Footnote
at the catch of fish which they had taken; Peter In Lead, Effects Them All
and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, Awareness Of A Personal Miracle
who were partners with Simon.) Jesus Paid Peter For The Inconvenience Of Using His Boat!
Estimated At 3/4 Of A Ton: 2 Weeks Work!

And Jesus said to Simon, **REASSURANCE: 6**
"Do not be afraid, //Mk. 1:17, **COMMISSIONING PROPER: 7**
henceforth (from now on) you will be catching men." Fear As No. 1 Enemy, New Destiny, Life Changed
Jesus Needs Help Rescuing People //Eph. 4:11-12

a') v.11 Conclusion: Fishermen Claimed By Jesus And Boats Left Behind.

11 And when they had brought **their boats** to **land**, Their Old Life Is Now Over!//5:27-28, First Use Of Follow In Lk.
New Work they left *everything* and followed him. **CONCLUSION: 8**

Personal Sacrifice: Left The Blessing For The Blessor!
New Identity As Disciples, Set Up To Be Overwhelmed By Jesus!
First The Call To Serve, Then The Surprise, Then The Conviction, Then The Call To Follow, Then The Obedience, Then The New Life
In NT, Central Component Of God Is Not Power But Grace Balanced By Moral Considerations
Story Is A Formal Commissioning Narrative And Call Story Combined
Disciple From The Beginning Qualified As Apostle: Eyewitness Of Jesus' Ministry, Acts 1:21-22
We Have Success In Evangelism On Through The Power Of Jesus, Acts 2:1ff On Pentecost
The Church Still Casts And Draws Nets Today! Fish Where He Tells Us To Fish! Receptivity!

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A DISCIPLE

“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord”

We want to turn off the light when sin is exposed.

L U K E 5 : 8 b

One snowy morning at 5:00am, a missionary candidate rang the bell at the door of the agency to which he was applying. Ushered in, he sat three hours past his appointment time before anyone spoke to him again.

At 8:00am a retired missionary appeared and began the interview, “Can you spell?” Mystified, the candidate answered, “Yes, sir.”

“All right, spell *baker*.”

“B-A-K-E-R.”

“Fine, do you know anything about numbers?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Please add two plus two.”

“Four,” the would-be missionary replied.

“That’s fine,” said the examiner. “You’ve passed. I’ll tell the board tomorrow.”

At the board meeting, the examiner explained his method:

“First, I tested him on self-denial, making him arrive at 5:00am. He left a warm bed on a snowy morning without complaint. Then I tested him on promptness. He was on time. Then patience. He waited three hours to see me. Next, I tested his temper, and he failed to show any anger or aggravation. I finally tried his humility by asking questions a child could answer. The candidate meets the requirements. He will make a fine missionary.”¹

So with our friend Simon Peter. He was being tested and tried, examined and exposed in ways he would only later understand. Would he serve when exhausted? Would he obey when it went against common sense and long experience? What would he do when Jesus exposed the worst that was in him and called him to abandon the only life he’d ever known?

¹ Michael Green, editor, *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1989), 354.

Would he choose a financial blessing, or would he choose the source of all blessing? Would he take the goods and run, or would he leave the goods and follow? It began as another night's work; it dawned with a new destiny- the day of his conversion and call. For a fisherman like Peter, the image is *catching people in God's nets*, for bankers *building capital for God*, for an auto parts manager it's *increasing God's market share*; for a physician it's *making men and women whole instead of just well*, and for a lawyer it's *arguing God's case* before a skeptical world. Whatever your job and history, Jesus can use it as a bridge to a new life as one of his followers. He will use what you know to teach you what you could never learn any other way. He's still calling apprentices, learners, and disciples.

Teaching By The Shore (vv.1-3)

One sign of an awakening is that people are willing to interrupt sleep, pleasures and work to receive biblical teaching. They get up early read their Bibles and pray. But when people complain about coming to church more than once in a week, and when the fidgets set in if the service goes a minute past noon, you know the church is in a state of spiritual slumber and diminished appetite. Spiritual narcolepsy and starvation are setting in.

It's shortly after sunrise. Such a crowd has gathered that they are pressing Jesus back into the Sea of Galilee.² He opens the Scriptures in the power of the Spirit and in the light of his Father's kingdom. Jesus was a worker of mighty deeds, but first he was a teacher, and his deeds of power are like the relationship of a science lab to a classroom lecture. It was not *show and tell* but most often the reverse, first tell *and then* show. First teach, then forgive, heal, and deliver. A truth encounter with God's Word and a power encounter with God's person, both mediated by the Holy Spirit. Just prior to our scene, Luke presents an exorcism in the Capernaum synagogue, the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, and a summary of many healings in Peter's courtyard.³ Peter and his partners knew about Jesus before he showed up early one morning at their work place.⁴

Think about it. Jesus and Peter had different experiences the previous night. Jesus snoozed as a guest; Peter sweated in his boat with zero results. Jesus let go of the day's labor; Peter embraced it. Jesus blew out an oil lamp; Peter worked by torch-light. Jesus

² David Bivin, "The Miraculous Catch," *Jerusalem Perspective*, March/April 1992, 8.

³ Luke 4:31-44.

⁴ On the analysis of 5:1-11 see Charles Talbert, *Reading Luke*, revised edition (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 61-64.

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worked first and second shift, Peter was on graveyard. Not until transparent nylon nets were introduced in the 50's could fishing be done during the day in the Sea of Galilee. In daylight the water's too clear; fish spot the linen trammel nets and swim away.⁵

No fish. Not a single fish. What an odd night of wasted labor. Before he could go home and report the frustration to *Mrs. Peter* and get some sleep, there was more to do. Linen nets rot if not washed and hung to dry in the breezes off the lake. Little did Peter know that behind the failure was the providence of God. Someone was hiding the fish! Peter was after fish, but God was after Peter! This is what's behind the first two verses:

“While the people pressed upon Jesus to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Genessaret. And he saw two boats by the lake; but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets.”

“Hey, Peter, I need a pulpit. These people are about to drown me!” A tired Peter obeyed, likely with the help of three others to keep the boat still and steady.

We all know it's easier to serve when well rested and harder when you're tired and discouraged. Calls to serve when we are tired may be unreasonable demands from petty people; they may also be tests from the Lord. Only prayer and discernment know the difference. You have to ask, “Lord, do I serve you best in this case by sleeping or by serving?” If you always choose service, it's a sign you're hooked on approval. And if you always sleep, you aren't following Christ but your own body. The art is to listen and to learn to discern his voice in the midst of many demands. Peter was exhausted. His head bobbed and nodded to fight off the cobwebs. His mind was on other things: the mortgage, the fish-mongers who'd be disappointed, mouths to feed, local politics, his aching back, the same stuff you think about during church, but there he stood, waist deep in water and listening.

The Center Of The Story (vv.4-10)

There are times when emotions support our faith and carry us along in a great surge. There are also times when faith is obedience against the grain of our emotions and contrary to our inclinations. This was Peter who passed the first character test Then came test number two.

“Peter,” said Jesus as the people were leaving, “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” Jesus the builder-turned-preacher is now telling Peter the professional fisherman about his own business. Men don't like that! Peter knows the shores around Capernaum as well as some of you know the coves of Lake Greenwood. But Jesus is

⁵ Bivin, *Miraculous Catch*, 9.

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operating with information Peter doesn't have. With an invisible eye he sees a tight school of fish waiting to be caught. Jesus has a *word of knowledge* from above.

Remember- when you read the Four Gospels- that Jesus is always carrying on two conversations: a vertical one with the Father, a horizontal one with the people around him. What we don't have often recorded is the hidden conversation the Son has with the Father through the agency of Spirit.⁶ Jesus acted in faith by hearing from the Father and speaking to Peter; Peter acted in faith by obeying- though he complained at first, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing. But *at your word* I will let down the nets." Peter had seen the power of Jesus. He obeyed *in spite of* his feelings based on prior evidence. That's faith!

The word of knowledge is a spiritual gift we all need to understand. It's form of divine revelation in which you know something because God told you. It's an alert God wants to do something, either for you or for a person you are with. At first it seems dramatic, but after a while you understand it's standard equipment. Plumbers have wrenches; dentists have drills; believers have spiritual gifts. Paul deals with them extensively in I Corinthians 12 thru 14. My experience is that the word of knowledge may come as an intruding idea that disrupts my train of thought, "Where did *that* come from?" Or, it may come as a holy hunch, "I wonder if..." Even as a picture on the screen of my our mind's eye so I wonder, "What is that?" It's often subtle and easy to miss. God rarely shouts and often whispers.

It is easy to pray with confidence after you hear such a word. The presence of the overshadowing Holy Spirit is felt. The mercy of God becomes tangible. Some of my best stories are about the word of knowledge. But remember, it's not about being a spiritual *hot shot*; it's about the mercy of God for the person in front of you. We can all hear from God. Peter needed to know Jesus could provide for his family if they hit the road together. And because Jesus saw it and spoke it before it happened, Jesus is seen as a true prophet.

We all have the capacity for intuition, for a sixth or seventh sense. We were created for more information than five physical senses provide. And when that capacity is used by the Evil One we call it the psychic hotline and seances and tarot and Ouija and trance mediumship- the devil's stuff;⁷ but when intuition is enlivened by the Holy Spirit we call it the word of knowledge and prophecy- God's living word in line with Scripture. Every Christian needs to be acquainted with the gifts of the Spirit. They are the power tools to get kingdom work done. Without them, not much happens.

⁶ John 5:19-30 is a key text for this spiritual dynamic of mimicry and obedience.

⁷ See Appendix II at the end of this sermon, "An Occult Inventory."

I believe such experiences offer an analogy. We receive an occasional word even with the noisy static of our sin and ignorance, but Jesus had a pure flow. It's how he operated in partnership as the visible member of the Trinity. What he heard the Father say, he then said. What he saw the Father doing, he then did, just as with Peter and the fish. He was never willful in the sense of pursuing an independent path. "Thy will be done" was not just the prayer of Gethsemane but a daily reality. And when we learn to listen, things start to happen; and the more I listen, the more that happens. And when I run off on my own projects, guess what happens? Not much! "Put out into the deeps of Greenwood, Phil, and let down your nets for a catch." Jesus knew what was ahead and invited Peter into an event that would fill his boat, buckle his knees, and set him on a new trajectory. Could that be us?

Perhaps Jesus heard something like this from the Father, "I'm about to pay Peter back for the borrowed boat. We're going to catch more than fish this morning. There's a fatigued fisherman who needs to do some business with me. Tell him what I told you, 'Launch out into the deep for a catch.'" This is how Jesus lived, moment-by-moment walking into the unfolding of what he heard and saw. It's only psychotic if God is not actually speaking! So if you hear voices others don't and see things they don't, and if they give you medicine and it goes away, it's not God but mental illness. I believe in spiritual gifts; I also have to ask some of the saints from time to time, "Have you taken your medicine today?" And, "When is the last time you saw your doctor? They are God's healing friends."

Those who reduce this event to a purely natural occurrence where Jesus was a little higher than Peter and saw the shoal of fish miss the point. This is not a clever sleight-of-hand but a moment of divine revelation- a theophany of God acting within history. Jesus heard from above and spoke to Peter. Peter- after a mild complaint- obeyed. He'd seen Jesus cast out a demon in the synagogue. He'd watched his mother in law be healed, then fix lunch. His own courtyard became a waiting room for evening appointments with Dr. Jesus.⁸ Peter's church, family, and village had all been touched by the Master's hand, but here was an area Jesus had not yet disrupted, and that is the area most men guard the fiercest, their work and their workplace. What's a carpenter know about fishing anyway?

Picture the sights and sounds at the center of the story. Peter and his buddies put the nets back in the boats and row past the shallows to where the water goes from sky blue to blue black, *the deep*. Nets are cast. Then- as if by an unseen hand- the boats stop dead in the water as the nets fill. Linen sinews stretch and begin to pop. Muscles strain to haul in the catch. Jesus grins. Two eighteen foot boats fill to the gunnels with shining, flopping fish.⁹

⁸ Luke 4:31-44.

⁹ On *the Jesus boat*, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sea_of_Galilee_Boat.

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How many miracles have been missed because some believer refused to obey an illogical command? No fishing during daylight: that was Peter’s professional judgment. But when he moved beyond limited experience into the realm of trust and risk, something amazing happened. Peter learned to trust Jesus’ commands. Faith went beyond logic to receive the promises of God. Jesus knows more about your job than you do! He’s a better engineer or personnel manager or mechanic than you are!

If you’ve ever seen the movie *Forest Gump* or eaten *Bubba Gump* shrimp, you need to know it’s packed in Bayou-le-Batery, Alabama at a company that used to be owned by my friend Dayton Graham with whom I worked in Kazakhstan. Dayton once owned fifteen trawlers that plied the Gulf from Cuba to the Yucatan till high interest rates and Chinese imports in the early 80's drove him into bankruptcy, sort of like Greenwood textiles. I’d love for Wal-Mart to create a special *Made in America* section so I could shop there first. Pay a bit more to keep jobs at home. How about it?

Dayton told me the dream of every shrimper is metal on the deck. I didn’t understand, so he told of a friend who once dumped seven thousand sixteenth century Spanish silver coins on the deck of his trawler. Jesus did not give Peter silver coins; he gave him fish to be sold for cash. Mendel Nun, an expert on Galilee fisheries, estimates it was two week’s work in one haul.¹⁰ Adrenaline surges; fatigue evaporates. The one who is Lord over demons and disease is also Lord over nature which bends to his touch. The Lord pays the bills he authorizes, and Peter is more than paid for Jesus’ boat rental. Miracles can be a catalyst to faith, but miracles do not coerce faith.¹¹ Miracles are a knock on the door of unbelief.¹²

Where is Jesus? In the boat with Peter and the flopping fish. I love it. It lets me know he’s as comfortable in the banker’s vault, in the farmer’s field, in the machinist’s shop, in the surgeon’s suite, and in the teacher’s classroom as he is in the synagogue and alone at prayer. Jesus comes to claim the whole of life. He’s not just a Sunday but a Monday Jesus who claims every day that ends with a *Y*. Jesus knows your business better than you do, and if you let him become the senior partner, life will change. It may mean great blessing, as here, or it may mean he leads you to a life of spiritual significance instead of worldly wealth. Either way, you’re better off. I love a Jesus who smells like sweat and fish, not this blow-

¹⁰ Bivin, 10.

¹¹ See Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 61-64 for a discussion of this issue.

¹² For an accessible treatment, see Jim Garlow, *Miracles Are For Real: What Happens When Heaven Touches Earth* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2011); for a technical treatment, Craig Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility Of The New Testament Accounts, 2 Volumes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011).

dry-Mary-Kay-smelling Jesus that passes as sappy Christian art. I think he was laughing out loud. Fish everywhere, Peter about to have a mid-life career change. How many good men and women work faithfully but never discover their destiny? They live for the weekend and dream of retirement, when all the while Jesus is walking into their workplace offering a new deal. For some it means a new job, for others a fresh view on the old vocation.

Henry III, King of Bavaria, died in 1056. Having grown weary of his kingly duties, Henry journeyed to the local monastery and presented himself to the prior, determined to live the rest of his life as a contemplative.

The prior inquired, “Your majesty, do you understand this is about obedience? Whatever I tell you under authority, you must do.”

Henry answered, “Yes father, I understand.”

“Then, your majesty, in obedience, go home. Serve in the place God put you as ruler.” And that is what he did, with a new sense of holy calling.¹³

Where you now are is your post til new orders arrive. Destiny starts with taking seriously your present location. Peter was a fisherman, and that’s where Jesus started.

Not all are called to follow Christ the same way. There are some jobs than can never become a calling because they are simply not good for people in the first place. If you are in one of those, ask God for a move. It may be your job is an honorable one but your ministry is somewhere else, so when someone asks, “What do you do?” you can answer, “My calling is youth ministry or music ministry or witnessing or church administration or teaching, but I earn a living at Fuji Film or Eaton.” The call to follow Christ is at the same time a call to participate in his ministry. Do you know what your part is? If not, why not?

We preachers sometimes give altar calls and invite people to come kneel and pray. That’s OK. It’s letting down the nets to see what comes in. But the best calls are not a hymn and the pleadings of a preacher. They come as the risen Jesus himself pushes someone to their knees under with the weight of his mercy. One day Peter was a seasoned fisherman selling all he caught and the next a man in agony of soul. It’s who he was all along, he just didn’t see it till an inner light dawned. Peter now saw himself for who he was, “Depart from me, O Lord, *for I am a sinful man.*” A scoundrel on multiple accounts. That was a true statement, wrung out of his heart not by an overwhelming goodness. He had just complained to One who was about to sink his boat with blessings. All his big and little sins flooded to mind and overwhelmed him with shame. The dark depths of a heart are being dredged. A man is being remade in front of our eyes. This is work Jesus reserves for himself.

Jesus is simply the most attractive and frightening person who ever lived. His happy

¹³ C. Weaver, *A Cloud of Witnesses* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 1993), 48.

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holiness is terrifying and magnetic at the same time. To see him is to see what I am not. No one tried to make Peter *feel guilty; he was guilty*, and now he knew it by divine revelation. The searchlight of the Spirit turned on within. To do business with Jesus is to be utterly exposed. Knee deep in flopping fish, Peter sees himself accurately for the first time, and it is intensely painful. He begs Jesus to get out of his life, “Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man. Go away. We don’t belong in the same boat.” Jesus crawled inside Peter’s defenses. Remember, it is not sin that disqualifies us from being a disciple, only its denial. Peter saw and told the truth about himself. It was a breakthrough.

The same thing once happened to a man who once read his obituary in the Stockholm morning news. The paper reported the death of the wrong man. The caption read “Dynamite King dies.” This baron of industry read along til he was taken aback by the description of himself as a *merchant of death*. As the inventor of dynamite, he amassed a great fortune from weapons of destruction. But did he really want to be remembered as a *merchant of death*? At that moment a power greater than dynamite came over him. From that point on, he devoted his energy and money to works of peace and human betterment. Today he’s best remembered, not as a merchant of death, but as the founder of the Nobel Prizes: Alfred Nobel.¹⁴ Such moments are potential life changers, and our response truly matters. What if you took time this week to face your death and ask, “What will I be remembered for?”

To a man in agony of soul and to a big-man-grown-small, Jesus said, “Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be *netting people*.”¹⁵ Sin is easily dealt with; the deeper issues are fear and a new vocation. Jesus’ early ministry has been a success and helpers were now needed. Peter, his brother Andrew, and their colleagues James and John are the first four called. Though Peter is featured, we assume something similar happened to each of them.

The Cost Of Discipleship (v.11)

Our story ends on a note of sacrifice and adventure, and remember that the two always go together, verse 11, “And when they had brought their boats to land, they *left everything* (that’s risk) *and followed him* (that’s the adventure).” High cost, high privilege. For the farmer it would be a tractor left at the end of a row, for the business leader a briefcase closed for the last time, for the sportsman a tennis racket set aside, and for a military man his sidearm holstered one last time. The nurse would leave a blood pressure cuff and a teacher their grade book, and none of these are bad things, just secondary things when the call comes.

¹⁴ Brian Cavanaugh, *The Sower’s Seeds* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1990), 44-45.

¹⁵ Luke Johnson’s felicitous and inclusive translation in *Luke: Sacra Pagina* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 88.

Is there anything you must empty your hands of to receive the destiny to which you've been called? What fears keep you from being a Christ follower? Name it, and get rid of it!

Jesus now has four helpers for three years of on-the-job training; soon there will be twelve as a living symbol of Israel restored. Peter went fishing and got hooked. Went to work one evening and found new work the next morning. This was his *before* and *after*.

Don't say No to the call of Jesus Christ. There are young people here God is calling to church vocations and lives of missionary service. There are mid-lifers God is calling to change vocations. There are younger retirees God is calling to local and foreign missions. There are older persons God is calling to give ten or twenty hours a week in the volunteer ministries of this church. We need you! I don't preach this stuff to entertain you; I preach it to change your life, and mine as well. Someone recently came to me and said, "People are saying you're so serious." I am. Time is getting short.

Conclusion

A mother lost her soldier son. The news came in dispatches from the war. He'd fallen fighting at the head of his regiment. She was inconsolable.

"Oh that I might see him again," she prayed, "if only for five minutes- but to see him."

An angel answered her prayer. "For five minutes," said the angel, "you will see him, but remember, he was a grown man. There are thirty years to choose from. How would you like to see him?" The mother paused and wondered.

"Would you like to see him," said the angel, "as a soldier dying heroically at his post? Would you see him again as on that day he stepped to the platform to receive the highest honor a boy could have?" The mother's eyes lit up. "Or would you like to see him," asked the angel, "as an infant at your breast?"

Slowly the mother said, "No, I would have him for five minutes as he was one day when he ran in from the garden to ask my forgiveness for being naughty. He was so small, and so unhappy, and he flew into my arms with such force that he hurt me."¹⁶

That mother knew God's heart. It was the heart of a Savior who received Peter's confession of sin and invited him to a new life. Our sin hurt him badly, especially one Friday morning outside Jerusalem. Do not run away from the Lord with your sin and fear and shame and guilt and wasted years; run towards him and find your destiny. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man," was a prayer Jesus chose not to answer. And the rest is history, a history that extends to today where Jesus continues to issue the invitation, "Follow me."

¹⁶ James Feehan, *Story Power* (San Jose, CA: Resource Publications, 1994), 88.

**Appendix I:
Contrasting Biblical Discipleship And Modern Church (Club) Membership (Thrailkill, et. al.)**

Ancient Christian Discipleship	American Church (Club) Membership
Risky, High Cost	Safe, Low Cost
Contributor & Stakeholder	Consumer & Observer
<i>In The World As A Clear Alternative Community</i>	<i>Of The World With A Few Moral Variations</i>
Total Self Involvement	Segmented Self (Sunday Faith) “Come a little bit, do a little bit, give a little bit, and say a whole lot.”
Obey In Behavior	Assent In Beliefs/ Doctrine
Active, Involved	Passive, Observers
Always Serious, High Adventure	Mostly Casual, Low Demand, Minimal Adventure
High Supernatural Exposure: Miracles Expected	Rare Exposure To Supernatural: Skepticism Is The Norm
Always On The Move	Rarely On The Move
At The Vital Center Of Life	Around The Edge Of Life As A Possible Option
High Challenge	High Comfort
Group Orientation: <i>We First</i>	Individual Orientation: <i>Me First</i>
Allegiance: Tight Bond, Severance Required	Affiliation: Loose Bond, Easily Abandoned
Home As Hospitality, Place Of Teaching	Home As Refuge, Hiding Place, Entertainment
Offer Life And Substance	Pay Club Dues
High Expectation For Transformation	Low Expectation For Transformation
Intense Training, Change Expected	Observing/ Critique Expected
Largely Outdoors	Largely Indoors
Organic Bond: Shared Life	Institutional Bond: Shared Space In Buildings
Follow Jesus, Learn His Ways, Share His Ministry	Admire Jesus, Worship Him, Pay Others To Do Work
Jesus As Leader, Model And Mentor	Jesus As Savior From Sins Worst Consequences
Confrontive And Blunt: Being True!	Convivial And Affable: Being Nice!
High Accountability	Low Accountability
Intense Fellowship: 24/7 + Conflict	Occasional Fellowship: Coffee/Cookies + Avoidance
Disciples Often Look Bad, Goofy, Incompetent	Members Focus On Image-Management, Looking Good
Location: Front Lines	Location: Behind the Lines
Ministry By Amateurs (for the love of it)	Ministry By Professionals (career clergy)
All Are Spiritually Gifted Ministers	Pay The Professionals (Clergy + Staff) To Do It For Us
Jesus And His Kingdom Mission Draw Resources	Institutional Maintenance Draws Large Resources
Holy Spirit As Creative, Disruptive Presence	Low Tolerance For The Unexpected

Appendix II:

A Checklist of Possible Spiritual Openings For Evil (See Ephesians 4:27, 6:10-18; 1 Peter 5:8-9.)

As you read through the lists, ask the Holy Spirit to recall to your mind every involvement you have had. Keep in mind that many of these activities are clearly of the occult; others may not be as apparent. Please mark any and all activities, even if there is a question in your mind as to their occult nature, so that you are confident that you renounce all *possible* influences of evil in your life (see below the first United Methodist baptismal vow in *The U.M. Hymnal*, page 34). Place a check beside each item in which you have participated, whether “just for fun,” out of curiosity or in earnest. If there are issues that go beyond simple confession of sin and forgiveness (e.g. long term family involvement, a deep fascination, any unwanted phenomena), you may wish to call the pastor for counsel and prayer to break any bondages in your life associated with these activities which are clearly forbidden to Christians in Scripture. For a fuller treatment of these issues see Cindy Jacobs, *Deliver Us From Evil* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2001).

Soothsayers/Fortune-tellers: See Deuteronomy 18:9-16; Isaiah 2:6; Daniel 2:26-28; Acts 16:16.

1. Ever had your fortune told by tea leaves, palm reading, a crystal ball, a fortune-teller or any other means?
2. Have you ever read or followed horoscopes, or had a chart made for yourself to predict your future? Have you every read any other type(s) of birth signs?

Necromancy, Spiritualism: See Leviticus 19:31, 20:6; 1 Samuel 28:7-11; 2 Kings 21:6; Isaiah 8:19-22.

3. Have you every attended a seance or spiritualist meeting?
4. Do you believe in reincarnation? Have you ever had a reincarnation reading?
5. Have you every played with a Ouija board, crystal balls, or occult games?
6. Have you ever had a tarot card reading or practiced cartomancy (using playing cards for fortune-telling or other magical purposes)?
7. Have you ever played games of an occult nature, using ESP, telepathy, etc?
8. Have you every consulted a medium, spiritualist or numerologist? Have you every acted as a medium? Have you every practiced channeling?
9. Have you every sought healing through magic spells or charms or through a spiritualist? Have you ever used a charm or amulet of any kind for protection or “good luck?” Are you superstitious?
10. Have you every practiced table lifting, levitation of objects, pendulum swinging, lifting of bodies, automatic writing, astral travel or soul travel?
11. Are you a member of any secret society, fraternity or sorority, that involves oaths and curses?

Occult Books, “Contact” Objects and Other Media: See Exodus 19:25-20:6; Deuteronomy 5:8-10, 7:25-26; 2 Kings 23:1-25; Psalm 97:7; Isaiah 42:17; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5.

12. Do you have anything in your home that was given to you by someone in the occult? Do you have anything in your home of an occult nature? Have you followed the writings of Edgar Cayce, Jean Dixon or a New Age author? Do you own or like to view demonic types of books or movies?

Sorcery or Magic: See 2 Kings 17:17, 21:6; Malachi 3:5; Acts 8:11, 13:4-12, 19:19-20.

13. Have you every practiced sorcery or magic?
14. Have you every practiced mind control over any person or animal, cast a magic spell or sought a psychic in person or through a psychic hotline?

Sins of the Flesh, Sins of the Eyes: See Matthew 5:28; Romans 6:12-14, 8:13-14; 1 Corinthians 6:13, 18-20; Galatians 5:16-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8; James 1:14-15; 1 Peter 2:11; 1 John 2:16.

15. Have you ever used LSD, marijuana, cocaine, crack-cocaine or any mind-expanding or mind-altering drugs? Have you ever abused prescription drugs? Have you ever had a problem with alcohol?
16. Have you ever exposed yourself to pornography. Is it a habit?
17. Have you ever been involved in sexual deviation?
18. Have you ever had sexual relations with a person who was not your legal spouse? Been to prostitutes?
19. Have you had an abortion? Have you fathered a child who was aborted? Have you been involved in abortion in any way (viewed/witnessed one, assisted in one, performed one, encouraged a friend to have one)?

Devil Worship: See 2 Chronicles 11:15; Psalm 106:37; 1 Corinthians 10:20-22; Revelation 9:20-21, 13:4.

20. Have you ever made a pact with Satan or been involved in or witnessed Satan worship or black magic?

Witchcraft: See 1 Samuel 15:23, 28:7; 2 Kings 9:22, 23:24; Isaiah 8:19, 19:3, 29:4; Micah 5:12.

21. Have you ever attended witchcraft or voodoo activities?

Death: See Exodus 20:13; Job 3:20-23; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

22. Have you every planned or attempted to take your own life?
23. Have you ever planned or attempted to take someone else’s life?

“On behalf of the whole church, I ask you:
Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin?” **I do**

III. STUDY QUESTIONS

15:1-3

1. Take out a map and locate the Sea of Galilee. Find Capernaum where Peter lived.
2. Note how spiritual hunger and physical hunger are juxtaposed in these verses. Why is that?
3. How is v.3 a test for Peter and the others? How tired were they at this time?

15:4-5

4. Where did Jesus get the command of v.4? How might it have come to him?
5. How is v.5 a wonderful confession of both human frailty and the obedience of faith?

5:6-7

6. Describe these verses in your own words. What would it be like to be in Peter's boat?
7. What about so-called *nature miracles* where creation bends to the Creator's touch?
8. Why was it important that Peter knew Jesus understood his fishing work even better than he did?

5:8-10

9. Why did a miracle of abundance call forth a confession of sin from Peter?
10. When was the last time God astonished you and *blew your socks off*?
11. How is the command of v.10, "Do not be afraid..." a form of forgiveness and absolution?
12. What does it mean to *catch* or *net* men and women? What are they being drawn into?

5:11

13. How does our *much stuff* make it harder to be a follower? How might we simplify?
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IV. WHAT NOW? POSSIBLE ACTION STEPS

1. Mediate your way through the story as if you were Peter. Name your emotions at each step.
2. What is it about your work that you feel is an extension of God's work in our world?
3. Google an article on the Sea of Galilee. What do you learn?
4. Does v.5 mean it's OK to complain to Jesus, as long as you obey him anyway?
5. How does v.10 speak both to your past and to your future?
6. What stuff or relationships or habits would you have to leave behind to follow Jesus?
7. Who is Jesus using you to fish for today? How's the fishing? Any nibbles?

V. A PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.** Let us pray:

**Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
yours is the right and power to interrupt every life and all our plans.
Yours is the election and the call,
and unless you sound our names, we do not know where to turn.
We thank you for the call of Simon Peter and the first disciples
who heard the challenge of Jesus and obeyed.
We thank you that such a life is still available today.
Send your Holy Spirit to illumine the Scriptures and set the words on fire,
that in the reading and in the preaching and in the hearing
we may find ourselves address by the same voice who first said,
"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."
Unstop our ears,
soften our hearts,
and give us courage to say Yes to the new life and mission you offer.
Speak to us now, O Lord, as we wait before you in silence.
Amen. (All listen for the voice of the Lord.)**
