



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Invitation to Become What We Are Not

Bible Reading: John 1:35-42; Luke 5:1-11 ESV

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Simon-Peter is Introduced to Jesus

35 The next day again John [the Baptist] was standing with two of his disciples, 36 and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” 37 The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. 38 Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, “What are you seeking?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” 39 Jesus said to them, “Come and you will see.”

So

they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. 40 One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. 41 He first

found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). 42 He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter). (John 1:35-42 ESV)

Notes: Jn. 1:41 “The terms Messiah (Hb.) & Christ (Gk.) both mean “anointed” (usually by God). In the NT & early Judaism,

“Messiah” is a summary term that gathers up many strands of OT expectations about a coming “anointed one” who would

lead and teach & save God’s people, especially the great King & Savior in the line of David whom the OT promised.” [ESV]

Jn. 1:42 “Cephas is an Aramaic word meaning “rock” (cf. Mt. 16:16–18). In Bible times, God frequently changed people’s

names to indicate their special calling...e.g. Abram (Abraham) & Jacob (Israel). [ESV]

Jesus Calls Simon-Peter and Others (Luke 5:1-11)

“On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, Jesus was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, 2 and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing

their nets. 3 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. 4 And when he had finished speaking, Jesus said to

Simon, “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” 5 And Simon answered, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.” 6 And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. 7 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. 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.” 9 For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, 10 and so also were James and John, sons

of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.” 11 And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

Notes: ‘men’ (Lk. 5:10) “The Greek word *anthropoi* refers here to both men and women” [ESV]

Lk. 5:4-5 “let down your nets...’...Master, we toiled all night & took nothing.” Simon’s reply to Jesus’ command should not

be seen as one of disrespect, in light of his addressing him as “Master” (Lk. 5:5) & then immediately adding, “But at your

word I will let down the nets.” [ESV]

Lk. 5:8-9 “Simon’s reaction is appropriate...when God himself appears to someone: he fell down at Jesus’ knees (in the midst

of the fish!), asking the Lord to depart from him, lest he be judged as a sinful man. Peter was astonished by the miracle as a

demonstration of the presence of God, which was the first step in understanding who Jesus is. At this point Peter simply

understands that God works through Jesus, though he will come to a much deeper understanding, as this unfolds only over

a period of time. But it is only after the resurrection that Peter & the disciples fully understand who Jesus is” [ESV]

SUMMARY:

In Luke 5:1–11, Jesus calls ordinary people to follow Him and become what they could never be on their own. Though Rabbis chose only the exceptional, Jesus invites humble fishermen—showing that God cares for everyone. After the miraculous catch of fish, Peter realizes his unworthiness, yet Jesus calls him to a new purpose:

to ‘fish’ for people. Like Peter, we can choose the Giver over the gifts and respond to Jesus’ invitation through repentance, baptism, and a transformed life. Following Jesus is a lifelong process, begun when we admit our need for Him and accept His call to become His disciples.

Historical Context:

One of the names Jesus was called during His life was ‘Rabbi.’ A Rabbi was—and still is—a highly respected position in Jewish life, and some Rabbis were part of the Jewish elite. To become a Rabbi, you had to be exceptional in intelligence, social ability, and your understanding of the Tanakh (Old Testament).

A Rabbi starting out would travel as much as possible, hoping to receive the honor of reading the Tanakh [OT] in synagogues and to make disciples. An invitation from a Rabbi to become a disciple was a great honor, granted only to a few.

As a disciple of a Rabbi, you were expected to leave your job, your family, and your way of life. Following a Rabbi

was an honor, but it came with great demands. A disciple would not simply listen to the Rabbi’s teaching and then go home to try to live it out; he would listen and begin practicing it alongside his Rabbi.

This is very important to understand—not only to grasp the passage, but also to understand what it means for us as followers of Jesus.

God cares for everyone

What we see in this passage [Lk. 5:1-11]—and in every other story about Jesus—is that He cares about everyone.

If we look at the previous chapter, we see that Jesus had been traveling alone, healing many people, delivering them from demons, and preaching in synagogues. He was beginning to be recognized as a Rabbi. By the time He

reached the Sea of Galilee, crowds were following Him to hear Him speak.

Jesus loved spending time with ordinary people, teaching them the Word of God. During this period in Israel’s

history, people were hungry to hear about God. Seating in the synagogue were arranged so that the most respected or wealthy individuals sat in the front rows, while everyone else scrambled for a spot where they might hear the speaker. This meant that many common people rarely had the chance to hear God's Word preached. That's why they were willing to follow Jesus—because He cared about everyone.

Choose the blessing or the one who blesses us?

After a long night of catching nothing, Jesus tells a group of fishermen –Simon-Peter & Co.– to try again. They catch so many fish that their nets begin to break and their boats start sinking. I'm not a fisherman, nor experts on the cost of fish in Jesus' time, say that a catch like this would have been life-changing. It would be equivalent to being gifted a down payment for a house in Toronto!

At this point, Peter could have simply thanked Jesus for the blessing and gone on to live a very comfortable life. But instead, we see that Jesus calls Peter to follow Him. If Peter had chosen the fish—the blessing—instead of Jesus, he would have become just another unnamed person in the New Testament. By choosing to follow Jesus, however, (without knowing it) he became one of the most important men in the New Testament and in history.

We don't often experience miracles like Peter did, but if we look back over our lives, I believe we would see many

miracles that God has done for us. It might be getting a job, receiving healing, finding a spouse, or being able to pay the rent. Many times, we chase the blessing and forget that the miracles are meant to draw us closer to the One who blesses us.

Miracles are Important in Luke's Gospel

Bible scholars tell us that Luke rearranged the sequence of events to emphasize the role of Jesus' miracles. John

Reumann writes: "Luke has delayed the story of the call of the first disciples until after he recounts the miracles from 'a day in the life of Jesus' [in Capernaum] (Luke 4:31-44, which parallels Mark 1:21-29); in this way he makes more explicable the 'unhesitating response' of the disciples to Jesus' call (5:1-11)." [John Reumann, "...Problems in Pericope Reform," in ERW. Schultz (ed.) Vita Laudanda, p.]

James McConnell observes that "Overall, miracles in Luke...are more significant than in Matthew & Mark, & serve as a basis for belief & discipleship." [James R. McConnell, Topos of Divine Testimony in Luke-Acts, p. 14] Kenneth Woodward says, "Unlike Mark, Luke treats the miracles of Jesus as evidence that Jesus is the one anointed by God's Spirit...to carry out a divine mission...Luke repeatedly emphasizes the people's reaction to the

miracles they have witnessed...For example, in Luke's Gospel, Jesus does not call His disciples to... follow Him until after they have witnessed a miracle [the great catch of fish (Lk. 5:4-11)]. This...miracle...is not in Mark, and it typifies Luke's emphasis on the power of miracles to produce belief." [Kenneth L. Woodward, Book of Miracles, p. 127]

He also writes in Lk. 5:4-11, "we notice that the men's call to become disciples comes as a result of their seeing and being amazed by the miraculous power of Jesus. Simon...immediately understands that he's in the presence

of a prophet & declares his unworthiness. In Luke, therefore, the disciples...are not lacking in faith as in Mark, nor are they as obtuse [dull] as in Matthew." [Kenneth L. Woodward, Op. cit., p. 127]

Luke gives the 'Back-Story' to Mark's Account

In Mark's "Gospel Jesus calls disciples to him immediately after having been tempted in the wilderness...calling Peter, 'Follow me & I'll make you fish for people' (Mk. 1:17). In Mark's version, Jesus calls 4 fishermen to follow him & the reader is told, 'Immediately they left their nets & followed him' [Jesus]' (1:18). But why would they have been willing to do such a thing? Is there a back-story to this episode that helps explain the disciples' unusual willingness more fully? ..."

"In [Luke's] retelling of the story, the calling of the fishermen to be Jesus' disciples is preceded by two very important moments that reveal...Jesus' incredible power. So, Jesus' statement to Peter, 'from now on you will be catching people' (Lk. 5:10) is preceded by Jesus' healing Peter's mother-in-law (Lk. 4:38-40) – an episode that, in Mark..., follows after Jesus called Peter to follow Him (Mk. 1:29-31)."

"In addition...Luke adds other episodes... Jesus' many healings & exorcisms in Lk. 4:40-41 prior to the calling of his disciples in Lk. 5:10. He also elaborates the calling episode itself, infusing it with a back-story throughout Lk. 5:1-11...The fishermen have tried valiantly to catch fish, but to no avail; upon Jesus' command... their nets are filled to overflowing... If Mark's plot leaves the reader wondering why a fisherman would leave his livelihood to follow Jesus who seems simply to appear on the scene, Luke's plot addresses that perplexity by filling

narrative gaps, leaving a more satisfying... cause-&-effect relationship..." [Bruce W. Longenecker, Hearing the Silence, pp. 4-5]

God invites the unworthy

Throughout the entire Bible, we see God inviting ordinary people —those who were not considered special— to follow Him and become what they could never be on their own. From Abraham to Moses, Joshua, David, and Peter, God calls unworthy people to follow Him, and He makes them into what they could not become by themselves.

When Jesus extends this invitation, Peter has already had a few incredible interactions with Him. In Luke chapter 4, Jesus heals many in Peter's hometown. He comes to Peter's house, eats there, and heals his mother-in-law. However, John's Gospel includes an earlier interaction. In John 1:35–42 (prior to these events in Luke), Jesus tells Simon that he will be called Cephas (Peter). So when we read in Luke that Peter leaves everything to follow Jesus (Lk. 5:11), we need to remember that Peter's leaving all to follow Jesus was not instantaneous, it was the result of a process that took time, perhaps an extended period. Many times, we think that, when Jesus called Peter, he randomly performed a miracle —providing a great catch of fish— and Peter immediately gave up everything out of 'blind faith.' But, just like Peter, for us choosing to follow Jesus takes time—it is a process. After the miracle, Peter realizes who is standing before him and says, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Notice that Jesus doesn't respond with, "You're not that bad" or "I love you so much it doesn't matter." Jesus knows Peter is unworthy of Him. Instead, He says, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men (people)." In Matthew 4, Jesus says, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men (people)." Peter chose to accept the invitation and it would change him forever.

Where do I start?

Following Jesus might sound appealing but we might ask what does it mean or look like to follow Jesus today. Our path to choosing to follow Jesus will look different. For some of us it started when we were children and we choose to follow Jesus; for others it might be while they are in the 70's after years of not wanting to choose. If it is as a kid or as an adult following Jesus starts the same way.

Starting to follow Jesus begins like Peter with understanding that we are unworthy. In Romans 3 Paul says "None are righteous no not one." In Romans 5 Paul says that "while we were still sinners Christ died for us" We are all unworthy but He calls us to come to Him and repent and be made worthy. We cannot make our selves worthy, but we can follow the One who can.

After repentance, all of us are called to be baptised. We are told in Mark 16, Matthew 28, and Acts 2:38 to get baptised. Romans 6 tell us that through baptism we 'die with Christ and rise with him' and we get newness of life. By following Jesus we are transformed to what God wants us to be.

After this we follow and live this 'newness of life' where ever we are and in what ever we do. If it's at home, school, church, work, or anywhere we go. We live out this new way of life of following our Lord.

The question is: Will we accept Jesus' invitation to follow Him?