

## **CATCHING PEOPLE!**

They shouldn't have caught anything. They had already fished all night and caught nothing. But because of Who asked them, these professional fishermen let down their nets. God blessed them with a true fish story - that truly will transform your life, if you will but trust and obey Him.

**1- From now on, says Jesus!** In Luke 5:1-11, Peter knelt before Jesus in repentance and faith, calling Him Lord. Christ said, "*do not be afraid, from now on you will be catching men.*" He had just proved to be trustworthy about fish. Would they believe Him again?

"Catching men" in the original Greek has the sense of hunting or catching 'alive.' That's what you hope when you go fishing. It's not called catching, because often you just watch the water. Now Jesus says Peter's mission will be to "catch" - not just fish, but catch.

**2- You will have success!** Jeremiah 16:16-21 says fishers and hunters of men will call both Jews and Gentiles back from idols to God. In Matthew 13:47 the parable of the net of God's kingdom says every kind of fish will be gathered, and at the end of the age judgment, angels will sort the good from the bad, saving those who truly believe and respond to His call.

Because it is God at work through you. Ephesians 2:8-9 says "*for by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of your own doing, it is the gift of God, not a result of works.*" God's work, not yours. And in Acts:2:38 Peter knows what to preach when people are cut to the heart with the realization of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior: repent and believe.

**3- God gives the catch!** Peter experienced the good news in his own life, believing in Jesus with all his mind and heart and will. In Acts 2, on his solo run in his new vocation as a fisher of men, some three thousand souls responded and received new life in Christ. The book of Acts records several fulfillments of Jesus' promise, as He came to "*seek and save*" the lost.

That's why the apostle wrote in 1Peter 3:15 "*always be prepared*" to share the gospel. That's why the apostle Paul told Timothy to preach the Word "*in season and out of season*" because it's always God's season to catch people. Believers are called to be fishers of men and women, not keepers of the aquarium! Get out there and share the good news, because God promises!

**4- You must leave to live!** Believers in Jesus have the best and most successful vocation of all. God promises the catch, because His Spirit is at work and "*no one can come unless the Father draws Him*" (John 6:44). Leaving your old life is the start of gaining your new life. "*From now on,*" Jesus said, "*you will be catching people.*" How did Peter and his partners respond?

"*When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him*" (Luke 5:11). Everything? Matthew and Mark record the same thing. They left everything, their nets, boats, families, hired hands and business. After the most amazing catch of fish of their lives! They left it all for the new vocation that Jesus gave: to catch people with the Gospel.

**5- Because Jesus is your life!** Luke records the progression of faith in their lives. If you only believe intellectually, you wouldn't leave your boats. But Jesus calls for total commitment, heart, mind, will. Matthew 16:24, "*if anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?*"

Jesus says, "*Follow Me!*" It's the deepest inward commitment of heart, mind and will. It's what a soldier does, to lay down his life for the mission. Peter learned some hard life lessons. In John 13 he says he will follow to the death, then denies even knowing Jesus. This leads to a poignant scene in John 21 as the disciples wait in Galilee for the resurrected Christ. Peter goes fishing, and Jesus appears on the shore and tells him to let down his net, and he gets a great catch.

**6- Jesus says follow, fish, catch!** Again, Peter kneels before the Lord, who tells him, "*feed My sheep*" and "*follow Me*" and Peter understood. Jesus meant devote your life to Me to the death. Until He comes, believers are to be about His business, inviting people into His kingdom.

"Peter and his partners, standing in the boat overflowing with gasping fish, caught the point that His call applies to all who claim to be children of the King," says RK Hughes. "All are to devote their lives to catching men and women alive, as our perpetual vocation." To YOU, Jesus says, "*Follow Me*" and catch people for my kingdom! This is your new life, because I give you promises and purposes beyond what you imagine, if you will just trust and obey! ☐