

GOING FISHING ?

Imagine being a professional fisherman, and some tourist tries to tell you how to fish. Simon Peter and his partners have stories like that. It's in Luke 5:1-11, while Christ Jesus has been healing and preaching. Then He got in Peter's boat to teach the people pressing on shore.

The Sea of Galilee, three times bigger than the Iowa Great Lakes, was home to a thriving fishing industry. Jesus adjusts to the pressure of the people. Picture a clamoring crowd, shining sun, waves lapping on shore, fishermen mending their nets. Then Jesus makes waves.

1- Jesus calls His followers. Fishing was hard work, long nights, low pay. Typical blue collar. They took pride in their work. Jesus says, "*go out to the deep and let down your nets for a catch.*" They used 25-foot nets with lead weights, or 100-foot dragnets. They had just toiled all night, caught nothing, and finished cleaning the nets. Does Jesus know what he asks?

Fishermen are eternal optimists. Peter answers, "*Master, at Your word, I will let down the nets.*" Maybe this was for an object lesson. This is the "obedience of faith" to Jesus' command. Peter and Andrew, brothers, had been with this rabbi since His baptism. Their business likely helped fund Jesus' ministry. Jesus had just healed his mother-in-law. They did as He asked.

Amazingly, their nets soon filled with fish. They needed another boat! These 8x28-foot boats rode low in the water, ideal for cargo. Each could hold 12-15 people, and lots of fish. Peter and Andrew, and their partners James and John had quite the fish story to tell. But it wasn't due to their knowledge or skill. It was the same divine power that healed from demons and disease.

2- Following begins on your knees. "We are meant to learn the blessing of unhesitating obedience to every plain command of Christ," observes JC Ryle. "The path of duty may seem hard or disagreeable. The wisdom of the course may not seem apparent to the world. We walk by faith, not by sight." How did Peter respond? He fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "depart from me for I am a sinful man, Lord." He and all with him were astonished at the catch.

Whether they believed Jesus or not, they had obeyed, and He rewards their obedience. He was "master-teacher" before but now He is "lord-master." Peter kneels before Him, right in the boat with all the fish. "Peter was brought personally into the sphere of Jesus' mighty kingdom power and authority," notes RK Hughes. Jesus ministered in his personal world of boats and nets and sea. "Peter didn't yet fully understand Jesus as the Christ, but he did understand the divine presence in Him, as all the significance of Lord came to him as never before."

We're seeing the steps of Jesus calling His disciples. It occurs over many months or even years, as God's providence brings you to repentance and faith. Peter experienced knowing Jesus with his mind, heart and will. Saving faith is intellectual and experiential and volitional.

3- Following Jesus is your new vocation. "Faced with Christ's authority and power, Peter's soul flooded with a sense of his own evil and hollowness, with trembling realization of the personal consequences of his own sin," adds Hughes. We see this in Isaiah 6:5, Job 42:6, Ezekiel 1:18, Revelation 1:17, as the repentant person kneels before the Holy God.

So each of us must bow to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, in the "*obedience of faith*" (Romans 1:5, 16:25, Acts 6:7). They were all astonished at the catch of fish, but perhaps more so at Jesus' next words: "*Do not be afraid, from now on you will be catching men.*" The person making these promises had proved trustworthy. Faith is not about who believes and acts on them, but faith is always about Jesus Christ, the One in whom we trust.

4- Jesus' followers live out His promises. "O that all would understand the grace, mercy, and compassion of that man of holiness who says to uncomfortable people, 'Fear not, peace be with you'," notes RC Sproul. In John 15 Jesus says, "*you did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit*" and "*whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is who bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.*" Peter caught all those fish because of Jesus. So it will be in Christ's power that he will catch men and women for Him.

Jesus says "*no one can come to Me unless He who sent Me draws him*" (John 6) and "*My sheep hear My voice and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and no one will ever snatch them out of My hand*" (John 10). Promises! for a fruitful life! Trust and obey Him! ☐