



Adult Bible Study Lesson Summary for January 10, 2021

Released on Monday, January 4, 2021

"Called to Follow"

Lesson Text: Luke 5:1-11

Background Scripture: Luke 5:1-11

Devotional Reading: Luke 9:57-62

Bible Maps: Log in at <https://www.jesusisall.com> see Set 17, Map 108, "The Ministry of Jesus around the Sea of Galilee."

Luke 5:1-11 (KJV)

1 And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret,

2 And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.

3 And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

4 Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

5 And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

6 And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.

7 And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

8 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 was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken:

10 And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

11 And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

LESSON AIMS

Learning Fact: To know that Jesus expects obedience before blessings.

Biblical Principle: To explain the nature of Jesus' calling of the fishermen.

Daily Application: To be re-inspired to obey and follow Jesus.

HOW TO SAY IT

Gennesaret Geh-*ness*-uh-ret (*G* as in *get*).

LESSON CONTEXT

Luke 5:1–11 is part of the third of six major sections of Luke’s Gospel. These sections present themselves as follows:

- I: Jesus’ human relationships (1:5–2:52)
- II: Jesus’ baptism and testing (3:1–4:13)
- III: Jesus’ ministry in Galilee (4:14–9:50)
- IV: Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem (9:51–19:44)
- V: Jesus’ rejection and sacrifice (19:45–23:46)
- VI: Jesus’ resurrection and ascension (24:1–53)

The third section covers Jesus’ time and energy spent teaching, preaching, and performing miracles (Log in at <https://www.jesusisall.com> see Bible Maps, Set 17, Map 108, “The Ministry of Jesus around the Sea of Galilee”). All activities served as demonstrations of the good news, all were essential to Jesus’ mission, and all called for response. That is certainly the case in Luke 5:1–11, the current lesson text.

In this lesson, we study one of the passages in which Jesus called men to follow Him when they did not know fully what that meant. Allow it to renew and re-inspire your sense that Jesus Christ has called you to something eternally significant.

Shallow Water Teaching: Luke 5:1-3

1. What was the setting for Jesus’ ministering in Luke 5? (Luke 5:1)

In Luke 4 we see Jesus teaching and preaching in synagogues; now we see Him ministering out in the open for the first time in this Gospel. *The lake of Gennesaret* also known as the Sea of Galilee was named for the fertile region on the northwest side of the lake (compare Matthew 14:34; Mark 6:53); the word *Gennesaret* means “garden of riches” (see Bible Maps, Set 17, Map 108). In Jesus’ day, it was abundant with fish. At 13 miles long and 7 miles wide, this picturesque lake served as the backdrop for much of Jesus’ ministry.

Jesus had just healed many people at Capernaum (Luke 4:31–41), located on the northwest shore of the lake. Reports about Jesus and His amazing deeds “went out into every place of the country round about” (4:37). The result was that *the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God* (compare 4:42).

What Do You Think?

What plan can you create to identify and eliminate distractions that work against your hearing the Word of God?

Digging Deeper

Would it help to categorize the distractions in terms of “from the world” (example: 1 John 2:15-17) and “from within oneself” (example: James 1:14)?

2. What did Jesus do when the crowds grew by the lake to hear Him teach God's word? (Luke 5:2, 3)

Note Jesus "stood" (indicating He was first seated, in a teaching position). Jesus saw two ships (boats) by the lake, and the fishermen were washing their nets. Jesus climbed into Simon Peter's boat and asked him to push the boat out a little from the land. Boarding the boat solved the problem of the crowd's pressing on Jesus, allowing Him to still be seen and heard. From Peter's boat, Jesus taught the multitudes who stood on the shore. Jesus then *sat down*, the normal position for teaching (example: Luke 4:20, 21). This would not be the only time that Jesus taught from a boat (see Mark 3:9; 4:1).

Side note: The 1986 discovery of "the Kinneret boat," dated to the first or second century A.D., offers insight into what these *two ships* may have looked like. Constructed mostly of cedar and oak, the boat measures about 27 feet long, 7 feet wide, and 4 feet deep. It could have supported about a ton of weight—either about 15 passengers or 5 crew members and their catch of fish. (Luke 8:22 may indicate at least 13 people in a boat.)

Fishermen of the era often used a large dragnet, which required two or more men to deploy, or else a smaller and circular casting net. After returning from fishing, they needed to wash and stretch *their nets* to prepare them for the next outing.

Deep-Water Miracle: Luke 5:4-7

3. What directions did Jesus give Simon Peter after speaking to the multitudes? (Luke 5:4, 5)

Although Jesus addressed *Simon* in verse three, the instructions Jesus gave here included Simon's partners: as the word *they* is used in verse 6.

When Jesus had done teaching, He told Simon to launch out into the deep. Jesus' directions would have seemed absurd to a professional fisherman because Simon and his partners had *toiled all the night* (worked hard all night) without catching anything! (verse 5). Fishing was a demanding trade. The men fished at night and sold or salted their catch and dried or mended nets during the day.

But Simon had already witnessed the power of Jesus in miracles and teaching (see observations on Luke 4:38-41) and obeyed Jesus. Those undoubtedly stood behind Simon's addressing Jesus as *Master*, an acknowledgment of His authority to direct Simon (compare 8:45; 9:33). And so, the expert fisherman yielded to the *word* of the carpenter. This is foundational to Simon's future faithfulness in leadership (examples: Acts 2:14-40; 10:23b-48; 15:7-11).

4. What unexpected blessing resulted from the fishermen's obedience to Jesus' command? (Luke 5:6, 7)

Despite the apparent foolishness of casting nets after having "toiled all the night" (worked hard all night) and catching nothing (previous verse), *a great multitude of fishes* were caught! If Simon and his fellow fishermen had followed conventional wisdom instead of Jesus, they would not have experienced this miraculous catch. Jesus did not tell the men to cast their net to catch a paltry or even ordinary haul of fish: the abundance was such that *their net brake*. This is also the case in the lives of believers today. Though the blessings we will experience because of our faithfulness are not always obvious or even what we desired at a given time, our God is a God who delights in giving generously to His people.

His giving is not only in terms of quantity but also of quality (John 2:10; 10:10b; James 1:17-18). Simon's *partners* ... in the other boat were James and John (see Luke 5:10a). The blessing

of the fish was so overwhelming that *both* the boats together were barely able to handle the catch! This further emphasizes the nature of the miracle that Luke 5:6 describes.

What Do You Think?

In what ways can you help your church see evangelism as best achieved through partnerships rather than by lone rangers?

Digging Deeper

What cultural lone-ranger mores (customs) might you have to overcome personally in the process?

Simon's Epiphany: Luke 5:8-10a

5. What was Peter's response to the miraculous catch of fish? (Luke 5:8-10a)

Following the miraculous catch of fish, and the breaking nets and sinking boats that result, we come to the third focus of Luke's narrative. Simon Peter's response, in word and behavior, was rightly characterized by awe and respect.

When Peter said, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord," he was actually saying, *A sinner such as I am is not fit to be in your company* (Compare Isaiah 6:5).

Jesus, however, did not intend to get rid of Simon Peter. He was going to use him, and this applies to us also. All we have to do is recognize that we don't know it all – recognize our failures and be willing to depend on Him. This is an encouraging truth!

Not only was Peter astonished, but all that were with him at the catch of fish they had taken, and so was also *James and John, the sons of Zebedee*, which were *partners* with Simon, which are mentioned by name for the first time in Luke's Gospel. Jesus would soon choose all three men to be counted among the "twelve ... apostles" (Luke 6:12–16; see 9:28–36). But for now, the focus is on Simon Peter as these others are mentioned only in passing.

What Do You Think?

What kind of crisis would have to happen for you to react to Jesus as Simon Peter did?

Digging Deeper

Did you answer that question more in terms of a crisis of unexpected blessing (Peter's situation) or in terms of an unexpected loss or potential loss (example: Matthew 9:18)? Why might this distinction be important?

Jesus' Call: Luke 5:10b-11

6. What did Jesus announce to the fishermen? (Luke 5:10b-c)

Though *Jesus* addressed *Simon* directly, it seems safe to assume that James and John could hear the comforting words of Jesus, *fear not*.

Jesus' words *from henceforth* reveal that this moment was a turning point (compare Luke 1:48; Acts 18:6). A dramatic break with the past is at hand, and Jesus' announcement of Simon's career shift was a masterful play on words and concepts. Unlike fish, which are killed when caught, the individuals Simon Peter would *catch* would be brought from death to life (Ephesians 2:1–6).

Simon Peter did catch men. Remember how well he did on the Day of Pentecost – the Lord's answer to Peter is certainly significant. Three thousand souls came to Christ after his first sermon! Peter was fishing according to God's instructions. Rather than using tools like boats and nets, Peter and his two companions would be empowered by the Spirit (Acts 1:8; 2:1–4; etc.).

What Do You Think?

What can you do to help your church evaluate and improve the effectiveness of its evangelistic methods?

Digging Deeper

How would you word a prayer for the Lord's help in this regard?

7. How did the fishermen respond to Jesus and the calling to ministry? (Luke 5:11)

The word *they* indicates that James and John took Jesus' words of calling Simon Peter to include them as well. Peter and his two companions left everything there on the beach—including the great catch of fish—and followed Jesus. All that had been important to them before was now willingly set aside. In the fulfillment found in relationship with Jesus Christ, all of life truly was becoming new.

In addition to the obvious economic ramifications, forsaking everything brought fundamental social consequences to the men. Their daily routine and their sense of identity would be forever changed. The three had entered a relationship with Jesus, thereby becoming key figures in the community beginning to form around Him.

An essential purpose of the lesson passage is to convey to Luke's audience the proper response to Jesus and His calls to ministry.

What Do You Think?

What life changes have you made and will make to "forsake all" in following Jesus?

Digging Deeper

Categorize your response in terms of thoughts, behaviors, and speech patterns.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Reports about Jesus and His amazing deeds caused people to flock to Him (Luke 5:1-3).
2. Peter had witnessed the power of Jesus in miracles and teachings, and the expert fishermen yielded to His directions (vs. 4, 5).
3. Blessings may not always be obvious or even what we desire, but God delights in giving generously to His people (vs. 6, 7).
4. Everything Jesus does is amazing! (vs. 8-10a).
5. Jesus calls us and empower us by the Spirit to participate in His mission and gather people into God's kingdom (vs. 10b-11; Matthew 28:18-20). Forsake all and follow Jesus.

CONCLUSION

What's My Line of Work?

Do you realize that *you also* have another line of work? Everyone who responds to Jesus' call to follow Him shares a common job title and description (see Matthew 28:19, 20). The way in which we live out that calling varies greatly. But the key component is that we further God's plan of extending His kingdom, which is based and built on the good news of His Son, Jesus.

Simon Peter, James, and John did indeed pull up stakes to travel with Jesus. That fact may serve as an example-call to follow today as Christians relocate to the other side of the globe as missionaries. But strong argument can be made that although Luke 5:1-11 depicts the fishermen's call to full-time, vocational ministry, that text does not thereby serve as a directive

that all followers of Jesus must do exactly likewise. Think of the man who wanted to go with Jesus after Jesus delivered him from demonization: Jesus told him to return home and share with the people there what God had done for him (Luke 8:26–39).

Jesus used the disciples' occupation as fishermen as an analogy of what He was calling them to do in ministry for Him. How could you do likewise regarding your job? For example, if you are a farmer, what would it look like for you to be a "farmer of people"? Whether your calling is to full-time vocational ministry or to Christian witness in the secular workplace or to serve your family as a homemaker, how can you state your calling as a purpose statement for your life in Christ's kingdom?

PRAYER

Thank You, Father, for the privilege of responding to Your Son's call! Help us fulfill our calls to fish for people. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Followers of Jesus fish for people. Start fishing!

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

Next week's lesson is "Called in Authority" and we will compare and contrast the differing perspectives of those present at the account of a paralyzed man who was made whole in body and spirit. Study Mark 2:1-12.

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY

Deputy Editor Renee Little

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