

Called to Follow

“Why are we doing this, again?” grunted Britany. The two women were bringing work out equipment into the gymnasium. Jasmine had asked the pastor of the large congregation to use the church’s gymnasium. Jasmine and Britany’s small church did not have one.

There were two things that the 32 year old was passionate about—Jesus and fitness. Jasmine found that several of her African-American girlfriends struggled with health and weight-related issues. Jasmine, who had battled weight issues in her teens, had become a fitness and nutrition expert.

Jasmine realized her mission was to use her knowledge of fitness and exercise to show the love of Christ and touch souls. Thus, Worship and Workout was created. She began in a circle with 10 minutes of prayer requests and prayer. A 45-minute cardio and strength-training session followed. The session concluded back in a circle for five minutes of praise reports. The cost was \$1 per session and was open to everyone.

Jasmine and Britany visited with many of the women after the class. One young woman, whom Jasmine was talking to, wanted to re-establish her relationship with Christ.

“Now I see why it’s important to come early and stay late,” said Britany, as the two women made it to their SUV. “All this work is worth it, to see just one person come to the Lord.”

“Yes it is, Britany. Yes it is!”

1. *How would you describe a mission, and how does it affect your actions?*

2. *How did Jesus’ mission affect His daily routine while here on earth?*

3. *Why is Jesus’ mission important and necessary for all mankind?*

LESSON FOCUS: Participate in Jesus’ mission.

Setting Out with Doubt

Luke 5:1-5, 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.

Luke 5:1-5, NIV

¹One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. ²He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. ³He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

⁴When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."

⁵Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

Once again, Jesus taught the people—although this time, instead of from inside of a synagogue, He preached in the open air, at the shores of the Lake of Gennesaret (the Sea of Galilee). And once again, the crowds were eagerly “listening to the word of God” (vs. 1). The location may also be an indication that Jesus’ ministry had already become too large for a synagogue to hold. The crowd was so large that Jesus needed to get onto one of the nearby fishing boats in order to effectively preach to them. He spied two boats near the water’s edge, “left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets” (vs. 2). These men had spent the entire

evening fishing and were now cleaning up their equipment, ready to head home. But Jesus had other plans for them.

He climbed into the boat belonging to Simon (Peter), “and asked him to put out a little from shore” (vs. 3) so He could preach to the crowds. Simon and his crew—who included the sons of Zebedee, James and John, who owned the other boat (vs. 10); and Simon’s brother Andrew (Matt. 4:18)—were no doubt tired but agreed, honored to have this popular Teacher on their boat. Jesus then sat down in the boat—the normal stance for teaching in those days—and taught the people from there.

After He had finished teaching, Jesus turned His attention to the fishermen. Instead of asking to go back to shore, He told Simon, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch” (vs. 4). At this point, Simon betrayed a bit of his exhaustion: “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything.” Clearly Simon thought it would be a waste of time to try fishing again, especially since it was late in the morning by this time, and he knew that the best fishing in the lake was at night. Also, they had just cleaned their nets, stretching them out to dry so they wouldn’t rot.

But Simon addressed Jesus as “Master”—a term found only in Luke—and obeyed this teacher who had managed to commandeer his boat: “But because you say so, I will let down the nets” (vs. 5).

The Lord at times may lead us to go somewhere or do something that does not make sense to us. Logic often fails to see the supernatural dimension. God does not always ask us to understand what He wants us to do, however. He simply asks us to obey.

4. *What did Jesus need to do because of the crowd?*

5. *How did Simon respond to Jesus’ request “to put out a little from shore” (vs. 3)?*

6. *How did Simon respond to Jesus’ request to go fishing again?*

Responding without Hesitation

Luke 5:6-11, KJV

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.

Luke 5:6-11, NIV

⁶When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. ⁷So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

⁸When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" ⁹For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, ¹⁰and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people."

¹¹So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Simon didn't want to go back out to sea to fish—and he certainly didn't expect what happened next: "When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break" (vs. 6). Simon signaled James and John, in the other boat, to come help, and together they filled both boats with fish—to the point that both boats were close to sinking. After their previous night of futility, Simon knew such a thing should not be happening.

At this point—if the healing of his mother-in-law hadn't

already done so (Luke 4:38-39)—Simon began to more fully grasp who this Teacher really was. As he saw the fish, he and his crew were unable to catch on His own now threaten to capsize their boats, he fell on his knees before Jesus and pleaded, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” (vs. 8). In addition to marveling at Jesus and “at the catch of fish they had taken” (vs. 9), Simon had become acutely aware of who he was (let alone in comparison to Jesus): “a sinful man!” This is also the first time that Luke refers to Simon as Peter, likely signifying the spiritual change already taking place in Simon.

Jesus calmed Simon’s fears, and then, just as calmly, redirected the entire trajectory of his life: “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people” (vs. 10). Simon and his companions would no longer be fishermen but apostles, entrusted with helping to establish Jesus’ kingdom on earth. If catching loads of fish was a great miracle, catching innumerable amounts of people for Jesus was a miracle Simon couldn’t even fathom. And yet, because it was Jesus who said it, it was believable.

Therefore, the response of these men is immediate: “they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him” (vs. 11). Even after the largest catch they had probably ever made, the business these men had been so engaged in no longer mattered. They were now ready and willing, at all costs, to participate in Jesus’ mission.

Peter’s simple act of obedience proved to be a turning point in his life. He was transformed from one who caught fish to one who caught people.

7. *What happened after Simon and his crew fished again?*

8. *How does Simon react—especially to Jesus?*

9. *What does Jesus tell Simon? How do Simon and his crew respond?*

God Uses Ordinary People

Cathy, who dropped out of high school, came from a dysfunctional home. Like most young people, she sought for love in all the wrong places. Cathy always worked hard to provide for herself and her elderly mother.

One day her employer asked, "Cathy, do you have a personal relationship with God?" Cathy looked bewildered. She hadn't grown up attending church and really never thought about God. Her employer continued by sharing with Cathy how she could have a personal relationship with Jesus. Cathy didn't understand it all, but a few days later, Cathy prayed to accept Christ in her bedroom.

She eventually found a church that helped her grow in her faith. Cathy married, had children, and continued to seek God's face in everything she did. But the greatest experience in her life was learning how to listen to the Holy Spirit in sharing God's love in her small world.

While shopping, Cathy observed a young mother struggling with her child. She spoke gently to the mother, and said, "Don't worry, this too will pass. I raised six children. God will give you strength." This brought a smile and thank you from the mother. On another day, Cathy would walk down a street, see a homeless person, and reach into her grocery bag and give him some fruit. Or she would be driving, see an accident, and pray for those in the accident.

Cathy is an ordinary person with a passion to fulfill Jesus' mission in her little world. She knows how to participate in Jesus' mission by obeying the Holy Spirit in her daily routine. She draws others to Jesus by her actions of love.

10. *Why is it necessary to have a personal relationship with Jesus to participate in His mission?*

11. *What role does obedience play in participating in Jesus' mission?*

12. *In what ways have you seen others participate in Jesus' mission?*

Yes, I Will Follow

Jesus didn't force the disciples to follow Him; they chose to follow Him. The disciples didn't stop to ask Jesus questions about where they would be going or what they would be doing. They trusted Him and immediately followed Him.

Jesus is calling us immediately to follow Him and participate in His mission of drawing all men to God through salvation in Jesus. This doesn't mean going around with a Bible and preaching to everyone we meet, although God may call us specifically to share His Word with others. However, one way we can participate in Jesus' mission is by being a light for Jesus wherever we go. A light draws people away from darkness and into the right direction.

► *In what ways has Jesus called you to follow Him and participate in His mission? Take time in the next week to ask God to show you how you can further participate in Jesus' mission.*

KEY VERSE

Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

—Luke 5:10b, KJV

Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people."

—Luke 5:10b, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of January 11 through January 17

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

Mon. Isaiah 57:14-21—Peace and Healing Will Come.

Tues. 1 Peter 2:18-25—Healed by Christ's Wounds.

Wed. Matthew 15:21-28—Canaanite Daughter Healed by Mother's Faith.

Thurs. James 5:13-16—Anoint Sick with Oil and Prayer.

Fri. Mark 5:21-34—Woman Healed by Her Faith.

Sat. Mark 2:13-17—The Sick Need a Physician.

Sun. Mark 2:1-12—Jesus Heals and Forgives the Paralytic.