

'THE REALLY GOOD LIFE'

(The Life of Christ Series)

Studies in Luke's Gospel

Go Deep to Grow Up

When fishing, if you stay in shallow water, you limit what you'll catch. Sure, it's safer, cheaper and easier near the shore, but the big fish are in the deeper waters. But if you are satisfied just floating around near the beach with nothing but swimmers and jet skis around you, a tiny little boat will do just fine. In fact, a big boat in shallow water not only looks ridiculous but is dangerous and awkward to maneuver without getting beached. If you get serious about fishing for truly exciting recreation or vocation, you'll need to invest in a bigger boat with quality gear.

Spiritually speaking, growth in one's relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ is a gradual progression from being rescued from our sins by faith in Him to leaving the safe shore of salvation for the shallow waters of obedient discipleship (baptism, join a good church, worship, etc.). In due time, we move into deeper water by becoming involved in ministry with our spiritual gifts. And eventually, normal Christian growth will make you want to launch out into a relationship of depth with God on board the vessel of dedication and discipleship.

If a Christian is growing properly, his/her desire to experience the adventurous abundant Christian life will overcome the reticence and fears of shallow spirituality. To really know Jesus intimately you have to go out into the more distant, deeper waters where you will be forced to trust Him more than ever. Perhaps you are bored in your Christian life and wonder what happened. Maybe Jesus is challenging you to leave the shallow waters you have soaked in too long. Maybe it's time to launch out in faith into new challenges that will help you grow in grace.... but only if you will go out from the shallows and go deep with Him.

Go Fish!

(Jesus Takes the Disciples to Launch)

Luke 5:1-11

A Sermon from Simon's Boat

(Listening & learning from the Lord)

"So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the Word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat." **5:1-3**

Note: This seems to be the second or perhaps third time Jesus called the disciples to follow Him: 1st - His original call to them near Bethabara (*John 1*); 2nd - His call(s) to the fishermen at the Sea of Galilee (*Matthew 4 & Mark 1*) and 3rd - this call to leave the family business to follow Him. Discipleship is like that – gradual, periodic allegiance at first, then eventually total, complete commitment to Jesus as Lord. Is following Christ a 'half-hearted', off and on thing with you? This is a sign of immaturity. Full, whole-hearted ministry is your next step.

Apply: Simon Peter's boat became a pulpit from which God's Word went forth. Are you finding ways to use your vocation, possessions and to promote Christ and the gospel?

Apply: Are you like Peter and Andrew? They had gone fishing on their own and completely failed. But they tried again after hearing Jesus and submitting to His Word. With Jesus in the boat they had great success. Maybe what you are trying to do in your way would succeed if Jesus and His word, the Bible, were more part of what you're trying to do. Try again...His way; in His power.

A Sign from Simon's Heart

(Launching & laboring with the Lord)

*"When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "**Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.**" But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; **nevertheless at Your word I will** let down the net." And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. So, 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. When Simon Peter saw it, he **fell down at Jesus' knees**, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken..."* **5:4-9**

Note: Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John were experienced fisherman who knew that fishing during the warm part of the day would be futile. They had just spent a sleepless night fishing, finished washing the nets and now Jesus wants to go fishing! However, they had seen Jesus do amazing things so they reluctantly obeyed Christ's command. Real discipleship obeys what God's word says whether it makes sense or not, and whether you feel like it or not.

Apply: Is the Lord telling you through His word and His Spirit to do something you don't feel like doing? Are you going to neglect His direction or follow His lead? Your answer reveals a lot about how it's going between you and Him. If you stay on the shore of what you want, you'll miss some very exciting adventures in faith that He has on the high seas of abundant Christian living.

Apply: God blessed the fishermen's obedience with a record catch of fish! What was Jesus trying to teach them? Probably, that when you follow Him and do what He says there will be abundant provision. Are you worried that the cost of following and serving Jesus more faithfully will just be too costly? Go ahead and launch out into new areas of ministry for Him, trusting Him to provide all your need.

Apply: Peter seems to forget about the boatload of slippery, flopping, smelly fish when kneeling before Jesus in worship. The others were busy pulling in the nets and keeping afloat while Peter could only kneel in humble adoration. When God blesses you, be sure to praise Him. Worship is the only fare He really desires from us when we're truly thankful.

A Show of Simon's Faith

(Loosing & leaving with the Lord)

*"...all who were with him (Simon, a.k.a. Peter) were **astonished at the catch of fish** which they had taken; and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "**Don't be afraid. From now on you will catch men.**" So, when they had brought their boats to land, **they forsook all and followed Him.**"* **5:10-11**

Note: This was probably the biggest catch in the history of Lake Genneseret. It was an awesome display of Jesus' power over nature. They learned that the Lord of the lake and the fish, the nets and boats must be Lord of them as well. That knowledge sent 'fear of the Lord' into their hearts. Jesus calls again and this time they follow Him unconditionally and fully. Awesome things happen in our lives from time to time that bring a powerful sense of the Lord's power and presence upon us. The proper response is humility and clearer sense of His call upon us to serve Him more earnestly.

Apply: It wasn't just about catching fish – Jesus was illustrating personal evangelism as well. What are some lessons about guiding people to Jesus that compare with the fishing lesson of this passage? How could you be a better 'fisher of men' with the gospel?

Apply: Some day God may call you to leave your 'day job' and serve Him vocationally. If He did call, would you walk away from it all and follow Him? If He does, don't fear. He will take care of everything. Remember those two boat loads of fish? They probably were sold with the profits used to compensate their families and pay the bills while they left to follow the Savior. They may have gone fishing occasionally after that, but now they were fully committed to casting the gospel net and catching men for the kingdom.