

Owning a Faith That Matters

Session 1

January 14, 2024

### **Life-changing Faith**

**The Point:** Faith begins with the call to follow Jesus.

**Session Passage:** Luke 5:1-11

Luke 5:1-3

**Connection to The Point:** Faith begins when we hear God's Word.

**Luke the writer.** Luke, a physician as well as Paul's friend and traveling companion, wrote both the Gospel and the book of Acts. Many Bible scholars believe Luke wrote these books from Rome while with Paul during Paul's first Roman imprisonment. Thus the book can be dated between AD 61 and 63. Luke was a Gentile, and tradition holds he was a Greek.

**Luke the book.** Luke addressed his Gospel to Theophilus, meaning "friend of God" (Luke 1:3). The name may designate an individual of high social and/or political standing or it may refer to any believer. Luke's Gospel is the longest book in the New Testament. It constitutes the first volume of the two-volume work Luke-Acts. In Acts, Luke referred to the Gospel's purpose as dealing with "all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day he was taken up, after he had given instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen" (Acts 1:1-2). Luke described his account as orderly and based on careful research. His goal included giving readers confidence in their faith (Luke 1:1-4). After reading Luke's Gospel, Theophilus should have had no reason to doubt who Jesus is and what He accomplished. The book of Luke, targeting Theophilus, would have resonated with Gentiles.

Luke is one of the Synoptic Gospels, a designation also given to Matthew and Mark. These three books contain similarities. The term *synoptic* means "with the same eye or viewpoint." Matthew, Mark, and Luke share a common organization of their contents. Jesus's ministry in these Gospels is organized geographically, beginning with His Galilean ministry, then moving outside Galilee as well as within Galilee, and ending with events in Jerusalem, including Jesus's death and resurrection.

**Luke's special emphases.** Luke utilized a journey theme. He traced Jesus's steadfast resolve to journey to Jerusalem where He would be crucified (9:51; 9:53; 13:22; 13:33; 18:31). Luke demonstrated special concern for people whom society considered outcasts. He placed emphasis on Gentiles (4:27; 7:1-10). Samaritans received positive attention (10:25-37; 17:11-19). Luke reflected a special concern for poor individuals (21:1-4) and those with leprosy (17:11-19). Additionally, Luke called attention to women who assisted Jesus in His ministry (8:1-3).

**Crowd People** (v. 1). Crowds filled with individuals of varying motives followed Jesus wherever He went. Some sought healing (Matt. 15:29-31). Others wanted that basic staple of life—bread (John 6:24-27). Yet others possessed a sincere desire to learn from Him (Luke 11:1). Jesus drew crowds not only because of the gifts He offered people, but also because they sensed His compassion for them (Mark 6:34). Unfortunately, some followed Jesus solely from a motive to ensnare Him (Luke 11:53-54).

**Was pressing in, Were crowding around, Pressed upon** (v. 1). The Greek verb rendered by this phrase can denote significant pressure. Luke used the same term in Acts 27:20 to denote the raging force of a violent storm. In Luke 23:23 the term identifies the pressure of the crowd, incited by the religious leaders, demanding that Pilate sentence Jesus to crucifixion.

**God's word, Word of God** (v. 1). As the Messiah, Jesus delivered God's word. The Greek term for *word* encompasses the meanings of "doctrines" or "teachings." Jesus presented God's message in terms that the common, ordinary person could understand. Furthermore, His listeners recognized that His words carried an authority unlike that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 7:28-29; Luke 4:32). John used the term "Word" to refer to Jesus, the Son of God (John 1:14).

**Lake of Gennesaret** (v. 1). This body of water, also known as the Sea of Galilee, was a freshwater lake situated in the hills of northern biblical Palestine. It was called Chinnereth in Old Testament times. John referred to it as the Sea of Tiberias (John 6:1; 21:1). Fed mainly by the Jordan River, this lake is thirteen miles long and eight miles wide at its widest point. Because of the hills and mountains around its location, the sea is subject to sudden and violent storms (Luke 8:22-24). In the first century the fishing industry flourished in this sea.

**Boats, Ships** (v. 2). The "Ancient Galilee Boat" or "Jesus Boat" is an example of the small, multiuse vessel commonly found on Lake Gennesaret during the period of Jesus's ministry. This 27-foot boat, recovered from the lake, dates to the first century. Fisherman would have used such a boat not only to net their catch but also to ferry cargo from one side of the lake to the other. Jesus sometimes taught the crowds from these boats (Matt. 13:2-3).

**Fishermen** (v. 2). Fishing comprised a major industry in first-century Galilee. Among Jesus's disciples, Peter, Andrew, James, and John worked as fishermen. Fishermen were characterized as hard workers, crude in manner, and rough in speech. They typically owned their boats and sometimes joined to form companies (Luke 5:7).

**Washing their nets** (v. 2). Fishing nets were made of loosely woven twine or cord. They consisted of two basic types. (1) A cone-shaped net with leads around its wide opening was employed for hand casting (Matt. 4:18-20). (2) A seine net was a large dragnet with floats at its head and lead sinkers at its foot (13:47). It was weighted down to hang vertically in the water. Fishermen washed their nets to remove the debris that collected in them.

**Simon's** (v. 3). This Greek personal name literally means "flat-nosed." In the New Testament it functions as a Greek alternative for the Hebrew name "Simeon." Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew came from the hometown of Bethsaida (John 1:44). Simon was a Galilean fisherman who shared a business with Andrew, James, and John (Mark 1:16; Luke 5:10).

**Sat down . . . was teaching taught** (v. 3). In the first century, rabbis typically taught from a seated position (Luke 4:20-21). The form of the Greek verb rendered was teaching taught indicates repeated and habitual action. While Jesus performed many miracles, His ministry also focused on teaching.

#### **Luke 5:4-7**

**Connection to The Point:** Faith is simply acting on what Christ calls us to do.

**Deep water, The deep** (v. 4). This term, literally "the deep" in the original language, refers to deep water. In other New Testament contexts, the term is used metaphorically of God's wisdom and knowledge (Rom. 11:33), of God's counsels (1 Cor. 2:10), and of God's love (Eph. 3:18).

**Let down** (v. 4). This Greek verb is a standard nautical term for lowering boats or cargo. However, it also was used for lowering any object from a higher to a lower place. Although verse 4 makes clear that Jesus specifically addressed Simon, the command to *let down* the nets is plural, indicating that other disciples were also involved. Jesus may have directed His words specifically to Simon because Simon was the leader.

**For a catch draught** (v. 4). While the Greek noun rendered *catch* can refer to the catching of birds, animals, or fish, it occurs in the New Testament only in the context of catching fish. The term appears only twice in the New Testament. In

Luke 5:4 it identifies the act of catching fish; in verse 9 it signifies the catch itself. Jesus's stated purpose for lowering the fishing nets startled Simon Peter and led to his initial protest of Jesus's command.

**Master** (v. 5). Simon softened his protest of Jesus's command to lower nets in two ways. First, he referred to Jesus as *Master*, acknowledging His authority. Second, however reluctantly, he lowered the nets in response to Jesus's directive. While the other three Gospel writers used the Hebrew *rabbi* or Aramaic *rabbani*, Luke employed a Greek word meaning "schoolmaster." This specific title for Jesus appears only in Luke's Gospel. The Greek title would hold more meaning for Luke's predominantly Gentile readers. The fact the title appears mainly on the lips of Jesus's disciples reveals their recognition of His authority and power.

**Worked hard Toiled** (v. 5). The Greek indicates wearisome effort. It can designate fatigue to the point of exhaustion. Peter's protest called attention to a long night of fruitless labor. Jesus used this term in Matthew 11:28 in His great invitation to the weary and burdened to come to Him.

**All the night long** (v. 5). Skilled in his trade, Simon knew nighttime was the best for fishing. After toiling all night with no results, Peter was reluctant to let down the nets in broad daylight. Because Peter earned a living fishing this lake, did he think he possessed superior knowledge to Jesus on this occasion?

**"But if because you say so"** (v. 5). This statement, followed by the contents of verse 6, reveals Peter's obedience in spite of his reluctance. He had known Jesus long enough (Jesus had previously healed his mother-in-law, Luke 4:38) to know the Master's word took precedence over human experience and knowledge. Thus he was prepared to act in faith although it appeared illogical.

**A great large number multitude** (v. 6). The catch was so large the nets began to break. The Greek word translated *number* can also be rendered "multitude." Perhaps Luke viewed this large number of fish as symbolic of the great multitude of people who would later come to Jesus because of Peter's and the other disciples' preaching.

**Fishes** (v. 6). Zoologists in modern times have counted about thirty different species of fish in Lake Gennesaret. Many of these species differ from those found elsewhere. Fishing comprised one of the most common occupations in that part of the country. Fish provided food for the ordinary person. Perhaps the most well-known fish in the New Testament was the one that held the coin to pay the temple tax for Jesus and Peter (Matt. 17:24-27).

**Their nets began to tear/brake, Their net brake** (v. 6). The Greek language indicates that the fishermen's nets were actually breaking in two. As a result, they would likely lose all the fish they had caught. This emphasizes the miraculous nature of the catch.

**Partners** (v. 7). The Greek word can refer to participating with another in common blessings (Heb. 3:1,14; 6:4) or designate a sharer or associate in a job. Verse 10 identifies the fishing partners of Simon and Andrew as James and John. They came to Simon and Andrew's aid to assist with hauling in the large catch.

**Filled both boats so full that they began to sink, Filled both the ships, so that they began to sink** (v. 7). Simon and Andrew's need for help from their partners along with the fact both boats were so full they were about to sink further heighten the miraculous nature of the event. Jesus revealed He was a Master Fisherman. Obeying His instructions resulted in a record catch.

#### **Luke 5:8-11**

**Connection to The Point:** Jesus calls us to a life of trust in Him.

**Simon Peter** (v. 8). Here Luke referred to Simon as Simon Peter for the first time. Jesus gave Simon the name Peter, meaning “rock” (Matt. 16:18). Paul often referred to Peter as “Cephas,” an Aramaic term for “rock” (see 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:22). Impulsiveness characterized this disciple. Sometimes Peter exhibited deep spiritual perception (Matt. 16:13-16); at other times he denied knowing Jesus (Mark 14:71). But Peter filled a prominent role in the early church and demonstrated boldness when persecuted.

**He fell down at Jesus’s knees** (v. 8). Peter immediately descended from an attitude of prideful self-confidence (v. 5) to a stance of humility. This posture indicates Peter recognized he was in the presence of God. Only divine power could produce such extraordinary fishing results. Peter’s sudden realization that he was in the presence of and had witnessed divine power resulted in his taking immediate action. Peter’s impulsive response here was genuine and appropriate. Falling at Jesus’s knees or feet revealed his reverence and worship of his Master.

**“Go away from me, because I’m a sinful man, Go away from me . . . ; I am a sinful man! “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man** (v. 8). Peter recognized that when he was in Jesus’s presence, he was in God’s presence, and his words reflect that. He responded much like the prophet Isaiah when He saw the majestic Lord in the Jerusalem temple (Isa. 6:5). When we truly recognize who God is, we recognize ourselves for who we are—weak and sinful. The Greek word for *sinful* literally means “missing the mark” as does a common Old Testament word for sin. It describes a person shooting an arrow but missing the target. A sinful person has missed the mark (Jesus, see Heb. 12:2) God has established for the way we should live.

**Lord** (v. 8). Sometimes translated “master,” this title is the term normally used in the New Testament to refer to Jesus as “Lord.” When people in the Gospels used the designation, they sometimes meant nothing more than “sir.” At other times, the title expressed a full confession of faith as when Thomas professed, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28). The declaration “Jesus is Lord” apparently became the earliest Christian expression of faith. This Greek title, signifying one having power or authority, differs from the one translated “Master” in Luke 5:5.

**Were amazed, Was astonished** (v. 9). The Greek phrase means “being seized by a wonder.” The verb, rare in the New Testament, literally means “to encompass” or “to surround.” In the context of Luke 5, it conveys the idea of being taken possession of or being seized by something that makes a person marvel at what has occurred. The disciples Peter felt shocked or stunned by the miraculous catch of fish.

**James** (v. 10). For the first time Luke referred to Simon’s partners by name as James and John. As one of the Twelve, James, along with Peter and John, formed Jesus’s innermost circle of followers. As one of this select three, James witnessed Jesus’s transfiguration (Luke 9:28-29). Jesus looked to these three men for support in the garden of Gethsemane prior to His arrest (Matt. 26:36-38). Perhaps because of their fiery temperament (see Luke 9:51-55), Jesus called James and John “Boanerges” or “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17). Although James and John sought special positions of honor in Christ’s kingdom, Jesus promised them only a share in His suffering (10:35-40). Indeed, James became the first of the Twelve to suffer martyrdom (Acts 12:1-2).

**John** (v. 10). John, along with James, was one of the first disciples Jesus called (Matt. 4:21-22). Luke identified them as Simon’s partners in the fishing business. Like his brother, he was one of three in Jesus’s inner circle of disciples. Five books of the New Testament have been attributed to John: the Gospel; 1, 2, and 3 John; and Revelation. Tradition holds that John lived to an old age in Ephesus, where he preached a message of love and fought against heresy.

**Zebedee** (v. 10). The father of James and John ran a fishing business based at Capernaum on the north shore of Lake Gennesaret (the Sea of Galilee). He possessed sufficient wealth to employ hired men (Mark 1:20). We do not know if Zebedee ever became a believer. However, his wife followed Jesus and ministered to His needs (Matt. 27:55-56).

**“Don’t be afraid”, Fear not** (v. 10). A typical reaction to awareness of God’s presence often is fear. The Greek word can refer to terror as well as to reverence. In the context of verse 10, Jesus’s words reassured Simon Peter of forgiveness. Though sinful, Simon did not have to cringe in terror when facing a holy God. The Lord accepted him as he was and had the power to make him something new.

**“From now on you will be catching fish for people”; From henceforth thou shalt catch men** (v. 10). This event marked a major turning point in Peter’s life. Jesus addressed this disciple’s mission in terms Peter would understand—terminology related to his trade as a fisherman. Jesus’s words also make clear that this event is to be understood in connection with evangelism. Jesus called Peter to join with Him in seeking others for the kingdom. The Day of Pentecost revealed Peter’s faithfulness to that calling as about three thousand people responded in repentance and faith after hearing Peter’s message (Acts 2:37-41).

**Left everything, Forsook all, and followed him** (v. 11). Simon Peter along with his fishing partners left their business behind to follow their Lord and Master. Luke frequently used the term *followed* to denote Christian discipleship. He made clear in his Gospel that all believers, not just the Twelve, were called to follow Christ. The nature of the calling varies from individual to individual, but all are called to commitment. The ability to follow Jesus assumes the experience of forgiveness that enables believers to follow Him in discipleship.