

RUF Bible Study – The Gospel According to Peter  
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Fishers of Men – Luke 5:1-11

*Luke 5:1-11 1-3* Once when he was standing on the shore of Lake Gennesaret, the crowd was pushing in on him to better hear the Word of God. He noticed two boats tied up. The fishermen had just left them and were out scrubbing their nets. He climbed into the boat that was Simon's and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Sitting there, using the boat for a pulpit, he taught the crowd.

*4* When he finished teaching, he said to Simon, "Push out into deep water and let your nets out for a catch."

*5-7* Simon said, "Master, we've been fishing hard all night and haven't caught even a minnow. But if you say so, I'll let out the nets." It was no sooner said than done—a huge haul of fish, straining the nets past capacity. They waved to their partners in the other boat to come help them. They filled both boats, nearly swamping them with the catch.

*8-10* Simon Peter, when he saw it, fell to his knees before Jesus. "Master, leave. I'm a sinner and can't handle this holiness. Leave me to myself." When they pulled in that catch of fish, awe overwhelmed Simon and everyone with him. It was the same with James and John, Zebedee's sons, coworkers with Simon.

*10-11* Jesus said to Simon, "There is nothing to fear. From now on you'll be fishing for men and women." They pulled their boats up on the beach, left them, nets and all, and followed him.

What if you got everything you wanted? What would that really be like? If you're like me, I would imagine that you think it would be absolutely amazing and incredible, and your life would be set for forever.

What would make you happy right now? An A without going to class? If he asks you out tonight? If you won the lottery?

In this passage we see Peter getting what he'd always hoped for, but things don't turn out quite like he had thought they would.

### ***Fish***

It's been a year since Peter and Jesus had met at the lake (in John 1). They'd been through a lot together already; Peter had seen Jesus heal people, preach and blow his categories for what a friend was supposed to be.

Now Jesus is on Peter's turf again. Jesus wanted to preach a sermon, and climbs into Peter's boat. In essence, he rents the boat so he get out into the water and speak to the crowd gathered there. He sat on the boat and taught, the traditional posture for teaching. He transforms that boat into a pulpit.

But Luke leaves out the sermon and concentrates on the miracle that follows. He zeroes in on Jesus and Peter here.

Later in this passage, Jesus will call them to fish for men, but first he shows them how it's done. He'll catch James, John, Andrew and Peter. Little did they know that they had been washing their nets for the last time.

When he's done preaching, he turned to Peter, who owned the boat and asked him to go out for another round. Why is he doing this? One reason is that he had rented the boat and wanted to pay Peter for it. So he wanted to go out fishing.

Peter isn't so sure. Why not? If an expert, fishing at the right time of day/night, doesn't catch fish, why would a carpenter going out at the wrong time of day have any luck? Plus, they'd already been cleaning the nets. Everything was being put away and stored for the next night. He didn't want to go out again, not for nothing for sure.

Peter thinks Jesus is crazy, and he's obviously not a fisherman. He almost says no, but doesn't. Look how close he is to telling Jesus no. But he doesn't. He pulls back and instead says, "If you say so."

"If you say so" isn't the best response, but it's no the worst either. In fact, it's really pretty good. If you say so. A tone of reluctant obedience. You can also see this if you knew the Greek because the word there for Master is a polite title, Teacher.

Imagine a friend, who for some crazy reason, has never tried chocolate. You realize this and give her a piece. I don't know, she says. Come on, you say. Okay, if you say so... Oh yeah. Delicious.<sup>2</sup>

Or going on a rollercoaster for the first time. It looks so high. It looks so scary. The safety harness looks so loose. Okay, if you say so... Awesome.

There are a lot of things like that, not only as you grow up but all throughout your life. Try it. You'll like it. If you say so.

Can you say "If you say so" to Jesus? Can you say that to friends, mentors and leaders in your life who are committed to helping you? It may look crazy to do the thing he's asking, but can you trust and obey?

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For this series, I used commentaries all throughout the gospels. I also used as my base text Michael Card's book, *The Fragile Stone*. The reader should assume that none of the ideas expressed are original to me.

<sup>2</sup> This is true for sushi too.

Peter might not agree, but he could obey. He expected either a complete dud, a whole lot of unproductive busy work or a fishing disaster.

Fear

When I went to Montana, my friend Brad arranged a fly fishing trip the first afternoon. All I did was buy a fishing license and show up at the river. The guide did all the rest. He put the boat in the water, had it stocked with fly rods, switched out for us all the lures, floated the boat down the river in the right way, pointed out the hot spots, gave us tips on how to cast correctly, and entertained us with stories.

He was a great guide, and I had a great time. And I caught one fish. One measly fish. That was a lot of time, energy and expense for one fish that we threw back into the river.

Peter was the guide, and Jesus told him to go out and fish at the wrong time of day. And what happened?

Fish!!! Too many for the nets to hold. There is no mistaking the miracle here, as this is clearly abnormal. The Bible say it was “a huge haul of fish, straining the nets past capacity. They waved to their partners in the other boat to come help them. They filled both boats, nearly swamping them with the catch.” You can imagine them calling the other boat over, fish flapping everywhere and everyone scurrying around to help and to try not to sink the boats.

What is Peter’s response to this? What would your response be if you got what you’d always wanted, your life ambition realized in just a few moments.

Peter did not welcome this big catch. His response was much different - Fear.

He asks Jesus to leave. He recognized the miracle and that he was in the presence of God. Peter now calls him Lord. God, Guilt, Grace, Gratitude

Often in the presence of Peter when Jesus reveals himself, he has to say, “Do not be afraid.”

In those instances, Peter sees things as they really are. He knows himself to be a great sinner and one now in the presence of the holy and living God and its too much to take. It undoes him.

Have you ever been close enough to be terrified by the presence of Jesus?

Why is a net full of fish terrifying? Seeing fish shouldn’t be that scary to fishermen.

“Simon fears because he is a man who, thanks to the preaching of John the Baptist, has become of his sinful state. And now he has become the beneficiary of Jesus, who has graciously filled his nets in spite of himself. There was nothing in his experience, nor in ours, that could have prepared him for this frightening generosity. We are forever asking for things we think we deserve. Simon knew then what we need to learn now: what we *deserve* is only death and separation from God and all his goodness. If we, for one blink, could step back and glimpse the awesome generosity of the One who should, by all rights, destroy us, we would join Simon on his knees with the same confession on our trembling lips.”<sup>3</sup>

Fear. Repent. He is not ready for the kingdom coming. What they prayed for all their lives is here – the overflowing nets are a sign to the fishermen. And they are scared.

Fear

Fish

Fear

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Fish

Jesus says what? What could he have said?

He says Fear not.

Peter is the first person to confess his sinfulness to Jesus. And that is precisely the kind of man Jesus is looking for. A confessor.

Waiting for the Messiah is over. Now a life of faith is following Jesus, for he has come.

What does following Jesus mean? Leaving everything behind, and that terrifies us.

It’s natural to say to Jesus, Go away. This is more than I can deal with. I can’t possibly be the person you’re looking for.

We stand before these possibilities

To let go of our security

To gain complete and utter success.

To leave the familiar for an unknown world

And then we notice Jesus is standing beside us and saying, Don’t be afraid. Don’t be afraid. Let go of the nets. It’s me.

“Jesus has shown Simon that the sea he thought was empty was in fact full of fish. And Simon has begun to learn what it means to become partners with Jesus. A new kind of fishing lies ahead.”<sup>5</sup>

This is where Peter’s life came together. He had had varying success in fishing. Now Jesus tells him it will be men and women he’ll be fishing for, and it makes such sense to him that he leaves his nets right there to follow him. He leaves his old life and embraces the unknown new.

Simon Peter was caught that day.

We normally talk about going out to be fishers of men, but I want to ask you: Have you been caught?

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<sup>4</sup> A Fragile Stone, 40

<sup>5</sup> A Fragile Stone, 42