

# Fishing

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] our story is all about fishing and I love fishing. My wife Rachel later on this year hopefully she's going to let me buy a little boat, fingers crossed. And if I asked you to come fishing with me would you do it? Would you come along? And if this doesn't seem to interest you at all don't worry Rachel couldn't be less interested either. But let me see if I can sell you on the idea. So firstly you'll have to get up at 5am in the morning when it's still dark. You probably won't get home till well after lunchtime and so it's pretty much the whole day. You'll have to wear warm clothes but also clothes you don't mind getting wet. And so I don't know what you're going to choose, something very old. You'll need to be willing to let your hands get dirty and by dirty I mean that you'll have to bait your own hooks. You'll have to fill it and gut your own fish. Your fingers will smell, well there's no nice way to put it is it? Awful is the case. There's a lot of downtime when you go fishing, a lot of waiting around for them to bite. So either bring a good book or you'll have me in your ear all day. But most of all there's no certainty that we're going to catch anything.

I can't guarantee a catch. Our chances will probably be like slim to none. But hey it's called fishing and not catching right? Rachel said to me once, you spend all this money fishing and on equipment but when are you actually going to catch something? And that was actually quite hurtful especially because on your screen here I am catching a whopper in the bay. If you can't tell that's just I faked that photo last night. But anyway still would you like to go fishing with me?

And obviously none of you are going to take up my offer but in the passage I think that's the offer that Jesus gives to his disciples. Verse 10, from now on you will fish for people. You see like me Jesus loves a bit of fishing and that's how we find him in the story. One day, verse 1, as Jesus was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God.

The idea here is that the normal fishing is finished. There are two boats, verse 2, they're left on the water's edge, left there by the fishermen and so Jesus takes over for a spot of people fishing instead. There are so many people, he has to use Simon's boat like a pulpit. Verse 3, then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. You see Jesus knows the right bait to use when it comes to people fishing. Verse 1, the crowd were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. Verse 3, he sat down to teach the people. If we had to think of the right bait to fill our churches, to catch people for our cues, we're tempted to think of other things, perhaps revamping our music. What about making ourselves seem less formal? No ties for me because really it's the formality and the religion that puts people off. Maybe we could try and show everyone how God really moves with the times and be progressive in our thinking. But a boring old word? And it's wrong to say the Bible is boring, isn't it?

Because it's always electric when Jesus starts speaking. People always come round to hear the special one. In our generation, we're tempted to lose confidence in the power of the word taught well.

[ 4 : 0 3 ] But if you're in the business of people fishing, it's exactly the right bait to use. But when Jesus had finished speaking, verse 4, he did something you should never do to a fisherman.

And that is, tell them how to do their business. See, if you came fishing with me, we'd see all these really old, crusty blokes lined up along the jetties. They all keep to themselves. They won't talk to you. And the etiquette is, you don't talk to them. I think it's because they're all there escaping their wives. But anyway, imagine if I came down in my clergy collar and I started telling these old blokes how to fish, the truth is they'd chop me up and use me as the bait.

And I think you'd feel the same. Imagine if I came down to your workplace and told you how to do your business. I don't think you'd appreciate it. And Simon himself, he's a bit put off by Jesus in verse five. Master, we've worked hard all night and we haven't caught anything. You see, but Simon has seen the power of the word. And so end of verse five, because you say so, I will let down the nets because you say so. I'm at Jesus words, the word which draws people in, which last week frees them from death and evil. Look at what it does here. Verse six, when they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. Now, I know that you can train a dog, you know, to fetch and roll over. I think you can train a bird as well. Can you train a cat? Well, probably wouldn't do what you said anyway, but surely you can't train a fish. You know, if you said, come, would the fish come to your side of the fish bowl. But in our story, Jesus summons so many fish that their nets began to break. Generally, of course, fishermen, they never let the truth get in the way of a good story. I once caught a fish this big. Well, one day the disciples went fishing.

They caught so many fish that not only did their nets break, but end of verse seven, even the boats began to break too. They came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. And why?

Because Jesus said so. Think back to Genesis chapter one, the creation account. The repeated idea is, then God said, and it was so. Then God said, and it was so. And in our story, the fish have not forgotten the voice of their master. They come when Jesus calls. And Simon's response is the right one.

[ 6 : 59 ] This is our next point. Verse number eight. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, go away from me, Lord, I am a sinful man. You see, that's what happens when people come face to face with God. It's a response you see right throughout the Bible. In Exodus chapter three, when Moses met God face to face at the burning bush, the story says he hid his face because he was afraid.

When Israel assembled at the base of Mount Sinai, when it was trembling with the awesome holiness of God. And in our first reading, which Tim brought us, Isaiah's vision of the Lord.

Woe to me, he says, for I am a man of unclean, sinful lips. You see, and that is Peter in our passage, face to face with the God of Genesis one, but also face to face with his own spiritual state.

And sinners are right to tremble when they meet God. But in Luke's gospel, Jesus has come to be a savior, hasn't he? To baptize us with the Holy Spirit, to wash us clean and forgive us our sins.

And I think that makes sense of Jesus' response to Peter. Verse 10. Do not be afraid. You see, before Peter can be used by Jesus, he needs to be humbled and reassured by him first.

[ 8 : 37 ] Jesus is mighty. Peter is weak. Jesus is holy. Peter is sinful. He's right to tremble and be afraid.

But Jesus says, don't be. And I think that makes Jesus a very strange fisherman. Because for some reason, he's decided to use sinners to catch other sinners.

You see, instinctively, I'd want to use doctors and lawyers and other elite types of careers. That's what attracts people, isn't it? Instinctively, I'd use rich people, polished people, good looking people to go fishing in the eastern suburbs.

But for some reason, Jesus has decided to use sinners to catch other sinners. And Peter falling before Jesus, that's really important.

Because it means he'll always be aware that it's not about him. That's not about his efforts or how many people he converts or about how good he is.

[ 9 : 41 ] He'll always need to remember that he's a sinner, saved, cleaned up and graciously used in the privilege of the master's service.

And that is really important for us as well. Because we have nothing to offer Jesus. No right mix of talent and ability here. No inherent goodness that Jesus finds attractive.

It's just that we're sinners. And he's decided to use sinners to catch other sinners. Go away from me, Lord. That is the right response.

That's what should have happened. But he was forgiven and assured instead. Don't be afraid. See, if you want to be better at reaching people around you, don't work on your attractiveness or your polish or your speeches.

Work on the humble realization that we're sinners. Graciously cleaned up, forgiven and used for the master's service.

[ 10 : 46 ] Included in Jesus' big mission in the world. We should be afraid to be near him. He says, don't be. By rights, we should be condemned. But he commissions us instead.

And this is our third point. Verse 10. Then Jesus said to Simon, don't be afraid. From now on, you will fish for people. And notice this is not a command.

Not a command to please go and be my witnesses. But a command. You will fish for people. They're sinners, remember. What effect can sinners have on reaching other sinners for God's kingdom?

This is a promise about what God's spirit will achieve in them when they open their mouths and speak. It's very similar to our next verse you can see on your screen.

It's very similar to the beginning of the acts, the commissioning. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

[ 11 : 53 ] It's not please go and be my witnesses. But a promise of how the spirit will work in them when they speak and share the good news.

You see, I wonder if that's what this fishing miracle is. It's a massive visual aid as to the power of the word. As the word goes out, the people are summoned.

Not by human effort. They tried all night, remember. They couldn't catch anything. But because Jesus says so, they let down the nets.

The promise for the disciples, it's not a huge catch of people. Actually, not even Jesus converted everyone every time he preached. The Bible, the word of God, it's not a book of magic spells to put people in a trance.

But a promise that when we speak, we will be like Jesus. Being used in the service of the king. And for Peter, that means a totally new life.

[ 13 : 00 ] See, verse 11, it speaks of a change in him. So they pulled up their boats on the shore. They left everything and followed him.

You see, they've given up one sort of fishing and replaced it with another sort. And in principle, Peter here, he gives up one livelihood for another.

But as soon as I say in principle, I think the weight of the passage loses all its effect, all its force. Because I'm tempted to say this doesn't mean that you have to give up your nine to five job and go into full time ministry.

But for some of you, that's exactly what you should be doing. You see, leaving everything to follow Jesus, verse 11, it doesn't mean a bit more of him on Sundays.

But a lifelong, overflowing commitment. I think that's what it means. You might not have to leave your jobs and your families to go on mission. But do you have the same overflowing commitment that a missionary does?

[ 14 : 06 ] See, we're tempted to think that full time ministry is just for the keen beans with the gift of the gab and, you know, no social skills. But in this passage, in verse 10 and 11, there's a tight connection between following Jesus and going fishing along with him.

It's as if Jesus says, if you're a follower of mine, then you're automatically commissioned to go fishing for people too. And that makes sense, doesn't it?

How could we know about Jesus? How could we experience his salvation in our lives, yet not tell other people and share our faith with them?

And I realize that's quite a hard line. But I want to push you back to Peter. See, the more we realize how much Jesus has done for us, the less room, the less emotional space we have to be afraid or lazy or scared or unwilling to go fishing with him.

And actually, we don't even need to go on mission to the ends of the earth like Axe to be fishing because living in Melbourne, all the world comes to us.

[ 15 : 24 ] People from all over are in your workplaces, your classrooms, your neighborhoods, in your coffee shops. You see, maybe Jesus hasn't placed you in that job or classroom or neighborhood to grow your bank balance or your career or your well-being.

Maybe he's placed you where you are, nine to five, so that you can go fishing and be a witness for him. And changing our mindsets that way, I think it's being like Peter.

It's leaving everything else behind and choosing to follow Jesus. Here's some homework questions just to make this practical. Some questions for you when you're having a cup of tea.

I put it on the handout that was attached to the website. How will an overflowing, lifelong commitment for Christ change how you go to work or school or a friend's house or coffee with someone?

If the proclamation of the gospel is the big thing Jesus is doing in the world, what is your life organized around? There's so much you can give yourself to in this city.

[ 16 : 41 ] Don't aim too low. Why not give yourself to the business of fishing for people? For the people around you, what if you are their best chance at hearing about salvation in Jesus?

Imagine if all the people you know went back to their own families with the news about what Jesus has done for you in your life because you decided to be bold and open your mouth and share it with them.

People always ask me, they say, you know, when did you go into gospel ministry, Vijay? And I always say, well, you know, it was about 2012 when I stopped being an accountant and went into ministry that way.

But actually, the truth is, it was when I first became a follower of Jesus. Actually, when I was a teenager, that's when he first commissioned me.

And that is your story as well. There's a book, it's called The History of the Expansion of Christianity. It's by Kenneth LeTourette.

[ 17 : 52 ] And in the book, he says this quote, which should appear in your screen. The chief agents in the expansion of Christianity appear not to have been those who made it a profession or a major part of their occupation, but men and women who earned their livelihood in some purely secular manner and spoke of their faith to those whom they met in this natural fashion.

Like Peter, we'll all feel inadequate, won't we? Unworthy for the task. Inadequate next to the Jesus that we proclaim.

Go away from me, Lord. I am a sinful man. That is the right response. We're acutely aware of our failure to live it out. Our hopelessness, our attempts are, even when we do try to be bold.

But that's okay, because the power to save people is in the word. It's in the word of Jesus, the Bible.

It's in the words about Jesus, which we share with the people around us. The promise is that we are commissioned in the service of the king.

[ 19 : 05 ] Privileged, washed up and cleaned and ready for use when we speak. And they are just some of the reasons why it's worth leaving everything to follow him.

Should I pray that we would go fishing? Let me do that. Father God, we thank you for the Lord Jesus, who assures us that we are able to be used in his service.

Father, we'll always feel inadequate, always feel aware of our failures. But we thank you that Jesus uses sinners to catch other sinners.

And we thank you that the power is in the word. So please make us bold to speak, to share our faith. Please would we change our mindsets and have a lifelong overflowing commitment to win people for the Lord.

We ask this in his name. Amen.