

Fishers of Men

(Luke 5:1-11)

Introduction

[Teacher, have a fisherman visit the classroom and talk to students about the basics of fishing. Have this person select common fly-fishing flies and explain how each fly is used. For example, a fly may be used to catch fish of a specific size, fish in murky water, fish that are close to the surface, or fish that prefer a certain type of insect. Ask him to also show and tell about important equipment used in fishing, such as rods, flies, tackle boxes, waders, nets, and vests. Compare this to fishing for men.] How is telling others about Jesus similar to fishing? What preparations would be necessary? What kind of "bait" would you use? Fishing flies are created to be attractive to fish. How can you make the good news about Jesus attractive to your friends?

Opening Prayer

Father, this morning we want to learn what it takes to be fishers of men's souls. I pray that you will show us how to be disciples and followers of Jesus. In His name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. (Matthew 4:19)

Lesson

Jesus began his ministry on the north end of the Sea of Galilee. By now, many people in Galilee had heard about Jesus. His messages and miracles thrilled the people. People were now following Jesus everywhere He went.

One day the crowds pressed around Him to hear Him teach by the lake.

Luke 5:1-2

One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. (2) He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets.

The Sea of Galilee is really a large lake. About 30 fishing villages surrounded it during Jesus' day.

Fishermen on the Sea of Galilee used nets, often bell-shaped nets with lead weights around the edges. A net would be thrown flat onto the water, and the lead weights would cause it to sink around the fish. Then the fishermen would pull on a cord, drawing the nets around the fish. Nets had to be kept in good condition, so they were washed to remove weeds and then the holes were mended.

Luke 5:3

Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there.

Jesus climbed into Peter's boat and asked him to push it out into the water so He could sit and teach the people gathered on shore.

Luke 5:4

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish."

When Jesus finished teaching, He told Simon Peter to launch his boat into the deep water and let down his nets to catch fish.

Luke 5:5

"Master," Simon replied, "we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, I'll let the nets down again."

What a strange thing Jesus asked Simon to do! Any experienced fisherman knew that the best fishing was done at night in the shallow water! Simon had just been fishing all night and hadn't caught a single fish! But, he reluctantly obeyed Jesus.

Simon had to simply trust and obey Jesus' word. He needed to commit himself to the Lord Jesus. Commitment means not just giving part of yourself, but giving your all. Peter started to question Jesus' word. He didn't trust Him at first. But Peter put his own understanding aside and followed Jesus' advice.

You can commit your life to God by faith, too. To commit your life to God is to give yourself completely to Him, having faith in His Word. The Bible says trust God with all your heart, rather than depending on your own understanding (Proverbs 3:5-6). For Simon to commit himself to do what the Lord Jesus said took a lot of faith. Peter put aside his own way of doing things, and obeyed Jesus. And, boy, was he ever glad he did!

Luke 5:6

And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear!

So many fish were caught that the net began to break.

Luke 5:7

A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking.

As the fishermen struggled with the heavy nets, they were amazed at what was happening! Do you think they were glad that they had decided to follow Jesus' advice? Even though His directions seemed unreasonable, now they were rewarded greatly for their faith in Him.

Having faith in God means believing Him; taking Him at His word. Sometimes it means doing something that may even seem unreasonable like giving up friends who are not good for you. Although you may not understand what God is doing, remember that God loves you and will only do what is best.

The Bible says that when you commit your life to God by faith, you bring Him pleasure (Philippians 2:13), and He will bless you (Psalm 37:5-6). God blessed the fishermen for their faith and commitment, giving them more fish than they could handle.

Luke 5:8

When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm such a sinful man."

This miracle was all Simon needed to know that Jesus really was the Messiah, the Savior of God. Seeing Jesus as Lord, who is perfect, Simon recognized his own life was totally sinful by comparison. Like Peter, we must recognize our own sinfulness; we must realize that we can't save ourselves.

The Bible says, "There is none righteous, no, not one." (Romans 3:10). We are born with a desire to sin. [Teacher, discuss sinful things children might think, say, or do.] God hates sin and warns that sin must be punished by separation from Him forever. But in God's great love for you, He made a way for your sin to be forgiven by sending His Son, Jesus, to die, taking the punishment for sin. Jesus gave His blood on the cross, willingly taking your place and mine (Revelation 1:5b); then He arose from the dead. Only the Lord Jesus could take sin's punishment. Even before Jesus died on the cross, Simon knew that He was special. Seeing this miracle of fish convinced Simon that Jesus truly was Lord, making him aware of his own sin.

Luke 5:9-10

For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him. (10) His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed. Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!"

Jesus told Peter and Andrew to leave their fishing business and become "fishers of men," to help others find God. Jesus was calling them away from the way they made a living to help make other people's lives worth living. We all need to fish for souls. If we share the good news of what Jesus has done for us with others, we will be able to draw them to Jesus just like a fisherman pulls fish into his net.

Luke 5:11

And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus.

If we know that we need help, and if we know that Jesus is the only one who can help us, we will be ready to leave everything and follow him and we will want to tell everyone we know about him, too. We will desperately want to make sure that every man, woman, boy and girl gets an opportunity to come to know Jesus, too.

If we practice Jesus' teaching and share the good news of what Jesus did for us on the cross with others, we will be able to draw those around us to Christ like a fisherman who pulls fish into his boat with nets.

Closing Prayer

Lord, help us to really understand that following You requires surrendering everything in our lives to You! Break down the hardness in our hearts and overflow into our lives as never before. Cleanse and fill us up to overflowing with only Yourself. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Fishing Lure Memory Verse Cards: Have kids make simple fishing lures with feathers and string or wire. Hook or tape the lure to a card with the memory verse printed on it. Encourage children to use these lures as reminders to tell others about Jesus.

Fish-Shaped Tracks: Cut fish-shaped pieces of construction paper. Have students assemble booklets using several "fish." On each page have students write a verse that will help someone know how to become a Christian. (Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, John 3:16, Romans 10:9) Encourage students to "go fishing" and give their salvation booklet to an unsaved friend or neighbor.

Game Center

Review questions follow the descriptions of the following two game ideas:

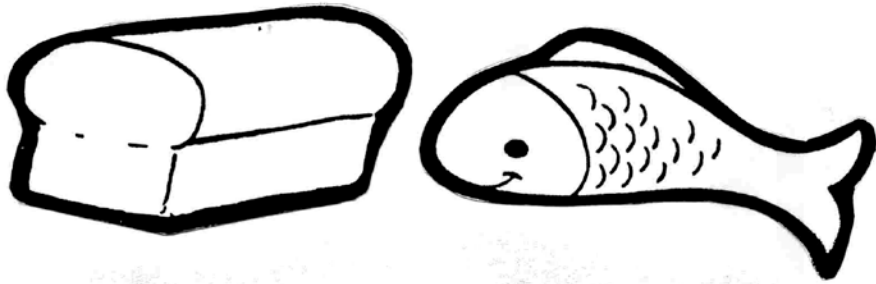
1. *Fishers of Men Game*

1. Cut out pictures of men, women and children from magazines.
2. Glue a small paper clip to the back of each.
3. Write a number on the back to correspond with the number of the question.
4. Tie a magnet to a piece of string; tie the string to a twig or small branch.
5. Put the questions in a bucket or similar size object (not metal).
6. Each child comes up one at a time and "fishes". If more than one "fish" is caught, they decide which one they want and throw the others back in the bucket.
7. Ask question that corresponds with the number on the back of the "fish".
8. Give prizes or team points for right answers.

2. *Fish and Bread Tic-Tac-Toe*

1. Cut out strips of paper for the lines of tic-tac-toe (or use yarn).
2. Give one team "fish" pieces; the other team the "bread" pieces.
3. When a team correctly answers a question, they can place their marker in a square.

4. The team that gets three in a row across, diagonally or vertically is the winner.



Review Questions:

1. What did Peter, James, John, and Andrew do before Jesus called them to follow Him? (They were all fishermen.)
2. What did Peter, James, John, and Andrew leave behind to follow Jesus? (Their jobs-everything)
3. What did Jesus mean when he said he would make them fishers of men? (That instead of trying to get fish, they would be trying to reach people for Jesus.)
4. Why did Jesus want His disciples to be fishers of men? (So that others will come to know Jesus.)
5. How can we be fishers of men? (By leading godly lives and telling others the gospel, bring a friend to Sunday school, tell someone about what Jesus did for you, etc.)
6. What character qualities in a person's life might be like "bait?" (Kindness, sincerity, love, long suffering, etc.)
7. How is telling others about Jesus similar to fishing? (If we share the good news of what Jesus has done for us with others, we will be able to draw them to Jesus just like a fisherman pulls fish into his net.)
8. Fishing flies are created to be attractive to fish. How can you make the good news about Jesus attractive to your friends? (If you live a godly life it will be attractive to others; people will want the peace and joy that you have.)
9. What did Peter learn about Jesus the day He said to cast the fishing net out? (Jesus is trustworthy and He is all-knowing, plus He's a miracle maker!)
10. Why is sharing Jesus with others sometimes hard to do? (People can misunderstand you or reject what you're saying.)
11. What does it mean to follow Jesus? (It means we believe in Him, love Him and try to obey Him in everything we do. We do what He says and trust Him to help us live the way He wants us to, even when it's hard.)
12. How can we learn ways to follow Jesus? (Learn about what God's word says, talk with other Christians, ask questions, ask God for help.)
13. What can you do to show that you believe in Jesus (Be kind to others, show respect to others, spend time learning about Jesus, talk to God.)
14. What would you say to someone who asked you about how he could follow Jesus?

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