

# Luke 5

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Let's turn once again to the chapter we read, Luke chapter 5 and verse 4. Luke chapter 5 and verse 4. And when he had finished speaking, Jesus said to Simon, Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch. And Simon answered, Master, we have toiled all night and took nothing, but at your word I will let down the nets. And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish and their nets were breaking. 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.

And when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. I guess that Peter, of all the disciples, is the most well-known. More is known about Peter than any of the other disciples as you go through the New Testament. And there are two phases to Peter's life. There's one when he is an older Christian, and he is an absolute giant of a Christian. He is hugely courageous. He's prepared to go to prison and even face death because of his faith in Jesus Christ. If you read Acts chapter 12, it tells us about how he slept like a baby in a prison cell. On the night before, he thought he was going to have to be put to death. Now, I can tell you, if I knew I was going to be put to death on the next day, I don't think I would sleep like a baby.

But that was Peter. The night before he was going to be put to death, well, he actually wasn't put to death because that wasn't his time. God had other plans for him. But even so, he thought he was going to be put to death. And nevertheless, he slept all night until the angel had to wake him up. Now, that's courage. You look at his writings, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, and they're full of the most complicated knowledge, amazingly complicated and thoroughly theological knowledge. Even so, the last 2,000 years, scholars, even today, wrestle over what he meant by some of the things that he said.

He was too clever. And yet, he was only a fisherman. He was only an ordinary fisherman. But if you look at his later life, there's no one like him for knowledge and for grappling with the truth. He's a giant in every way. He's a giant of a preacher as well. When the day of Pentecost came and there were thousands of people in Jerusalem, and Peter, full of the Holy Spirit, stood up and started preaching about the cross and how Jesus had laid down his life on the cross as a sacrifice. And as a result, 3,000 people came to faith in Jesus. Now, that is some power. And all of this was done through this one man, Peter, the best known of Jesus' disciples. Now, if you compare yourself with a man like that, then you think, I could never, ever come close to a man like that. As a preacher, I could never come close to a man like that. As a person of knowledge, whatever knowledge I might or might not have, I could never come close to a person like that. It's the same with courage. Whatever he was in his later life, we could never come close to his maturity and his knowledge and his love for the Lord and his devotion for the Lord. So, if you're going to measure whether you're a Christian by comparing yourself with someone like Peter, you've got no chance. You're going to conclude that you're not a Christian at all. That's why tonight I am thankful that the first phase of Peter's life is told to us in the pages of the Gospels. And in that first phase, we find out that the great Christians all have humble beginnings. They have beginnings in which they have to start somewhere. They have to take those initial steps, these baby steps that we all have to take, during which sometimes we fall and fail and stumble and do all kinds of stupid things and things that we're all ashamed of. It's all there in the apostle Peter. And that's why we can be so encouraged tonight when we read Peter. If you want somebody to compare yourself with, then you go to Peter. Not when he was an old man, but when he was a younger man. And there is enough information given to us in the Gospels during his young life for us to be really encouraged. Because here, this man is a disciple, despite all his failures and his immaturity and his foolishness, his gross foolishness, this man is truly a disciple of Jesus and a man in whom Jesus is working to prepare him for great things in the days ahead. Now, I'm saying that for a good reason.

I'm saying that because there's a tendency within us, if you've begun to follow Jesus, and you maybe think that you might not be, and you think you might be, and you're not quite sure whether you are or whether you aren't. And you know what you do? You know what you end up doing? You end up comparing yourself with someone who you know has been a Christian for years and years. And you try to match yourself up with that person. And from what you can see on the outside, you don't even come close to that person. That's a fatal thing to do. Don't do it. Don't compare yourself to anyone. If you're a think, if you think you've begun to follow Jesus, then you keep your eyes on Jesus. You don't look at other people because they've got their own burden. They've got their own life to live. And by the way, you don't know, you only know what you see on the outside. You don't, you don't know what struggles that person's having on the inside. What incredible temptations they're having to wrestle with on the inside. You don't know what sins they're having to fight on the inside. You only know what you see on the outside. If you have started following Jesus and all you've done is taken baby steps, then you keep your eyes on Jesus. And don't look at other people. Don't compare yourself with other people. And Peter is a marvelous example of someone who stumbled and fumbled his way through the Christian life as he tried to orient himself to what it meant to be a follower of Jesus. And yet he was a follower of Jesus. Despite all the failures, he was, and we're going all the way back to the beginning in this chapter, to his first encounters with Jesus. This wasn't the first. If you read beforehand, you'll find out that there was an incident where Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law.

[ 7 : 24 ] So Peter had already come to see something of the power of Jesus. But perhaps this was the moment in which the penny dropped and he discovered once and for all that this Jesus wasn't someone who was just endowed with special power from heaven. He wasn't an ordinary man. He wasn't just a prophet or a rabbi, but that this Jesus was none other than God himself. And that's a moment that is absolutely essential in the life of anyone who comes to faith in Jesus. There has to be that moment, that momentous second when you discover that Jesus is not just simply a man of history who was special or who was different or who was even unique, but that Jesus was none other than the Son of God himself.

I want us to look at this chapter just very, very briefly. I'm really going to try and be brief tonight, and I'm going to try and see if there's information in this chapter that tells me what a true follower of Jesus is. Can I find anything in this chapter that tells me, that just gives me an indication, that helps me to understand what it means to follow Jesus and helps me to understand if I am following Jesus by faith? Because that's the only way there is to follow Jesus. You can only follow him by faith, by trusting in him, by asking him to be your Lord, and by resting on what he has done on the cross at Calvary as your sacrifice. Now, let me just say three things from this chapter. I believe there are three things that help me to understand whether I am a follower of Jesus. The first thing is this. A follower of Jesus is someone for whom Jesus is in their everyday life.

A follower of Jesus is someone in whom Jesus lives every day. Not just at Sunday, not just in church, not just when we are feeling religious, but every day. Now, that doesn't necessarily mean that we are always aware of his living in us every day. There are often times when I'm not aware.

I go through lots of times when I get so distracted by other things and so wrapped up in what I'm doing that I have to confess. I forget for long periods of time the presence of Jesus. I say that to my shame.

But that's what part of what it means to grow in grace and to wrestle with some of those sinful distractions in this world. And yet, with the best will in the world, with all that we have to do in the world. Sometimes in our places of work and when we're a project going or when we're wrapped up in something, then sadly we forget about Jesus. Nevertheless, that doesn't mean that Jesus is not part of my everyday life. I thank God that my Christian life does not depend on how often I think about him. It doesn't. It depends on him and his being in my life, whether I'm aware of it or not.

[ 11 : 06 ] Now, how does this passage help me? Well, look at what happened here. It starts off with Jesus by the Sea of Galilee. And he is teaching the people. He's actually preaching. His pulpit was a boat.

He had got into the boat because there were so many people on the shore. He couldn't move because of the crowd. He got into the boat and he just let the boat drift a few feet from the water's edge.

And there he was a safe distance enough from the crowd. The crowd just were all standing or sitting by the shore. And Jesus used the boat as a pulpit and to teach the people. But then there came the time when he stopped. He finished. He had said everything that he was going to say. And most of the crowd went home. That was it. As far as they were concerned, they'd heard out everything that we're going to hear. And they went home. But Jesus stayed with Peter and the rest of those who would one day become his disciples. And that was what made the difference between what it is to be a true disciple of Jesus and simply being part of the crowd.

Let me ask you this question tonight. Are you content to simply come and hear about Jesus, to hear all that he's got to say, and even if you like hearing about it, are you content to just go out that door and just shut it all away and just go back to what you were doing, which is what you really want to be doing and what you really think life is about without Jesus? But you don't want him to intrude in the rest of your life? Or do you want him to be part of your life? No, I shouldn't have said that. Not just part of your life, but the very center of your being. I didn't ask, was he the center of your being? Because then again, we're coming back to the question of to what extent I really am. I really am aware of my own obedience to Christ because I think every one of us has to say to that question that we are not.

But do we want him as the Lord, as the center, on the throne? Do we want Jesus to be on the throne of my life? Not just to turn to him when things get tough or when somebody is ill or when I'm in a real dire situation? And when I feel that I can't turn anywhere else, then I turn to him. You can't just keep Jesus as in a box somewhere. Jesus is not, the gospel is not an airbag.

[ 14 : 01 ] doesn't just come into being whenever we're about to have an accident. If that's the way you treat God, then you're not a follower of Jesus. Jesus said, I must be first. If he's not Lord of all, he's not Lord at all. That's what it means to become, to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Not just to appear to be on the outside as we come to church and as we do all the right things and as we take all the right boxes. Jesus is concerned with what we are and where we are on the inside. Where are our hearts? Is my heart, in my heart of hearts, do I really want him more than anything else? Let me ask you this question. Let me give you this as a word of encouragement. If you really, truly, tonight, if you really want Jesus as your Savior, more than anything else, I didn't say that you might be aware of that desire all the time, but if you really, really want him as your Savior, if you've come to see that over and above everything else in this world, that you need God through Jesus, you need to have your sins forgiven, and you want to know him, you want to be his, you want to be saved, then I believe you are saved.

I believe you are a Christian. Because after all, Jesus said himself, he who comes to me, if you come to me, I will not drive you away. So if you're coming tonight and you're saying, I really, I know that, I know that there are so much, there's so much in my life that needs to be sorted out. And in fact, the more I want the Lord, the more I discover the shame and the, and the, and the complexity of my own life, but if you really want the Lord tonight, then don't think that he's that a million miles away from you. He's not. Those who seek me, says God, find me. So don't ever think for a moment that on the one hand, you are longing for Christ to be your Savior, longing to be a Christian, and God somehow is keeping his hand, keeping your arms, life, and saying, no, no, no. That's not the way the gospel works at all. The Lord is gracious.

He knows where you are. He knows who you are. He knows your thoughts. He knows your heart. And so therefore, if you really want him, you have him. It's as simple as that.

Secondly, a follower of Jesus acts in faith to Jesus' word. Acts in faith to Jesus' word. What do we have here? Let's read on. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon, he asked him to put out a little from the land, and he sat down and he taught the people from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch. But Simon said, Master, we have toiled all night and we have taken nothing, but at your word, I will let down the nets.

Now, in those days, fishing took place during the night. I know nothing about what it means to be a commercial fisherman. I have no, it was never something that I have been interested in. I know that there are people who are passionate about fishing for sport, and I know that there are people who are passionate about fishing as a way of life. They couldn't do anything else, and they wouldn't want to do anything else. For me, it would be my worst nightmare to find out that I had to change my career, even from work, which is very often difficult, to being a fisherman. It would be my worst nightmare, but then these people grew up with that. That was their way of life. They loved the sea, and they loved the work, but they were dependent on it, and they were dependent on whether or not they happened to be in the places where the shoals of fish were, and they were poor. Their life depended on this, and here was one of those awful nights where you worked and worked and worked, and you were tired and exhausted in the morning, and you had nothing. You picked up, you caught nothing. So that meant no food, it meant no money coming in, and it meant that you had all the uncertainty of emptiness.

[ 18 : 48 ] And they were having to contend with this disappointment when Jesus seemed to give a command which made no sense whatsoever to Peter. It was illogical. It seemed to contradict all of Peter's expertise and whatever Peter knew. You see, Peter was an expert. He had grown up in the fishing business. He knew all about nets, and he knew all about boats, and tides, and currents, and all the rest of it, and nobody could tell him because he was an expert in it. And he was this rabbi who knew nothing about fishing. And he was coming to Peter. He was entering into his world, and that's what it means to be a Christian, for Jesus to enter into your world and to take to do with your life. And often when Jesus takes to do with your life, he tells you and he leads you in directions which sometimes seem illogical and they make no sense to you. Now, let me tell you what faith is. Faith means that you put your own thinking to one side, and you listen to what Jesus says.

And that's what Peter does. He says, Master, we have toiled all night, and we have caught nothing.

That's logic. The logic is let's give up and let me go to bed. But, he says, but at your word, because you have said it, and only, only because you have said it, I will let down the nets. And the moment he obeyed Jesus, that was when he discovered who Jesus was once and for all.

Because at the moment that he obeyed Jesus, he discovered the power of Jesus, and that Jesus was not commanding him to do something for no reason, but that Jesus actually knew where the biggest shoal of fish he had ever come across was in the Lake of Galilee. It was right there below the boat, and all he had to do was to do the simple thing that Jesus asked him to do. And that is what faith means. Jesus will not ask you to do anything that is beyond your knowledge and your ability to obey. And I want you to notice all the way through this chapter, Jesus is leading Peter from one step to another, and he's teaching him what it means to obey him one step after another. And that is why it is so, so harmful when we compare ourselves with men and women who have been years in the faith, and God has led them into new phases in their Christian life, and we compare ourselves with people who are mature and who have learned some of the most painful lessons in this life. What we need to do is start at the beginning. This was where Peter had to start, and this is where you have to start. You have to take those small steps that listen to faith, listens to the Word of God. That's where faith begins. Faith is hearing. It comes by hearing.

Faith is the way in which we hear God's Word, and if tonight you are listening to God's Word and receiving it to yourself, you are receiving that Word in faith. But if all the time you're arguing with everything I am saying or everything you're reading in the Bible, you're saying, but this and but that, and whatever arguments that you've got, then that's not faith. I'm not saying that you shouldn't ask questions. There are loads of questions. But you could spend your whole life asking questions. If you're one of these people that will not come to faith until all your questions are answered, then that's it.

[ 23 : 05 ] You'll spend your whole life, and you will never discover the Lord, and you'll never come to know Him. There has to come a time, a time of commitment and surrender, a time when you fall down in worship, and that's the moment that Peter came to when he acted in faith on Jesus' Word.

And time after time, we are shown in the Bible that when you do, when you take that simple step of listening to God, listening to what He says to you, and just acting upon it, then is the moment that you discover who God is. Like, for example, Abraham in the Old Testament. What did he do? There was nobody in the Bible like Abraham who lived a life of faith. How did that faith begin? He listened to what God said, and God said to him, go out of your country, out of your comfort zone, out of your house, and everything that you're used to, and go to a land I will give you. And so he listened, and he did. Packed his bags. Off he went. He never went back to his own home, out of the colonies, which was a comfortable, nice, prosperous place. Abraham was a rich man, and off he went on a seemingly senseless, meaningless journey into the unknown, not knowing where he had gone, but yet trusting in God.

It's the same with the children of Israel. When they left Egypt, Egypt, although it was a fearful place with such cruelty, it was home to them. When God gathered them together, and He led them out through the Red Sea, off into the wilderness, they had to live by faith, not knowing where the next meal was going to come from, depending on God for everything. That's the life of faith, and it won't happen unless you hear and listen to God's Word and act upon it. And that's all. A series of step after step after step, listening to God, hearing His Word, doing what He says. It's like Lazarus.

Remember how illogical that was. In John chapter 11, where Lazarus had died, Jesus' friend, and when they went to the grave, and there was a stone rolled over the mouth of the grave, Lazarus' body had been in the grave. He had been there four days, and Jesus said the most outrageous thing to them, something, the last thing that they ever expected, He said, take away the stone.

The people were absolutely aghast. They said, Lord, He's been in there for four days. Jesus said, did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?

[ 26 : 04 ] Your choice tonight is, do you believe that? Because Jesus is saying, if you believe, you will see the glory of God. There's no other way to see the glory of God than to believe and to take that step of faith.

And it was when they took the stone away from the mouth of the tomb that Lazarus came out. If they hadn't obeyed Jesus, Lazarus would have remained in the tomb. If Peter hadn't obeyed Jesus and let down the nets for a catch, Peter would have gone home hungry. And so will you. You will always have that hunger, that sense of emptiness in your life until you listen to God saying to you through Jesus Christ, come and trust in me and give your life to me.

And a follower of Jesus, thirdly and lastly, is a worshiper of Jesus. Jesus. When Jesus, I'm not saying, though I say that obeying Jesus, letting down the nets for a catch was such a simple thing for Peter, it was also a painful thing.

Because not only did at that moment, did he discover the power of Jesus and the person of Jesus, that he was standing right next to God, but all of a sudden, perhaps for the first time in his life, he discovered what he was like inside. You see, you can't come to God without discovering yourself.

In fact, let me tell you this, you only discover yourself by coming to God, because only God can show you what you're really like on the inside. And perhaps tonight, that is what makes you afraid to come to God. Because perhaps you've got your life mapped out. And there are things that you want to believe about yourself, or there are things that you don't want to believe about yourself either.

[ 28 : 25 ] In fact, you refuse to believe about yourself. You've argued long and hard about yourself inside. You believe you believe you know yourself. And you believe you've sorted out the stuff in your life that you think has not been quite right. You've worked on your bad temper. You've stopped smoking.

You've stopped drinking so much. You've stopped falling out with people. You realize that perhaps you were a bit too proud and too argumentative. And you've worked on yourself all through the years, and you've got yourself into a place where you believe that all the stuff that used to be wrong has now been sorted out. And the last thing you want tonight is anybody telling you that your life is not what you think it is. But that's what God does. He has to. In order for him to wash all your guilt away, he has to show Peter that he is a sinful man. And that's where worship begins.

Worship begins when we discover ourselves in the light of the glory of God. And when we come to that same glory, that same greatness of God is the God who is able to take away the glory of sin by his Son, Jesus Christ, and his death on the cross.

But for Peter, discovering the glory of God, the power of God, the power of Jesus, also meant discovering what he needed to find out about himself.

But there was no other way, and there's no other way for us as well than to come. Whatever it takes, whatever God is going to show you, and wherever God is going to lead you, it doesn't matter because it's all worth it. You may think, you may have your life mapped out, especially if you're young. You think, I know what I'm going to study.

[ 30 : 44 ] I know what I'm good at, what I'm bad at. I'm going to concentrate on what I'm good at. I'm going to get this job and that job. This is the kind of house I'm going to have. This is the kind of person I'm going to marry, the kind of car I'm going to have. Here is where I see myself in five years' time or ten years' time. Let me ask you, how much does God figure in that plan?

How much does he figure in it? Is it all about you, you, you? That's the way we are. That's what sin is all about. S-I-N, eyes in the middle. And when we're concentrating on ourselves, then God gets pushed out of the picture. Can I ask you, can I plead with you tonight to stop and to ask God to replace the I, to come into your life once and for all?

Let me tell you that all your plans could be shot to bits. All my plans were shot to bits when I was a young man. God didn't tell me that one day I would end up in Stornoway.

God didn't tell Peter that one day he would be in a prison cell. I'm not saying Stornoway is like a prison cell. God didn't tell Peter one day he would be standing in front of 3,000 people and preaching the gospel.

If he had found that out, he probably would have run a mile. He wasn't ready for it. And neither are you. You're not ready for what God has planned for your life. I'm not ready for what God has planned for the rest of my life.

[ 32 : 16 ] He won't tell me. And I thank him that he doesn't. But what I need to do is to put my trust completely in him. There is no safer place in all the world than the hand of God.

Are you in God's hand tonight? That's the only question. Are you in the hand of God tonight?

Is Jesus your Savior? Are you a follower of Jesus? Don't think you're going to have a perfect life and don't compare yourself to others. That's the only question.

What does Jesus mean to you? Let me tell you this just in closing. That if the answer to that is, yes, I am a follower of Jesus, I believe that I have begun to follow Jesus, just like Peter took those little, small beginnings, those baby steps in obeying Jesus and listening to his word, then let me ask you this.

When are you going to tell us openly? And I hope you do because that's what Jesus commands us to do, to tell us so that we can thank God for what he has done in your life.

[ 33 : 51 ] Are you going to come and make that known to the elders so that you can sit at the table and openly remember what he has done for you in love, in obedience to his word?

I hope you do because you know that that is the right thing to do. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, once again, we bless you for what you have done for us in sending your son into the world, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we pray, Lord, that as we come to consider once again his power and his person and his lordship over us, we pray that you will encourage us, that you will fill out hearts with himself and take away our sin.

In Jesus' name, Amen.