

Luke 5:1-11 | Jesus Goes Fishing

InterVarsity Bible Study Guide (60 minutes)

WELCOME (7 minutes)

Icebreaker: What is something you really like for people to ask you about?

We are studying the Bible together because we want to grow in our love for Jesus through Scripture and because we want to grow in our witness to Jesus through Scripture.

Let's pray and ask God to help us as we study today's passage together...

GROUP NORMS (3 minutes)

Let's remember our group norms as we study together today:

1. Use "I" statements (speak for yourself, not for everyone)
2. Avoid judgmental statements (no shame or blame)
3. Allow space for everyone to share if they choose
4. Practice active listening and give advice only if invited to do so
5. What we share here stays here (confidentiality)

INTRODUCE the Scripture Text (3 minutes)

Up to this point in Luke, Jesus has been ministering in many towns – casting out demons, healing people (including Simon's mother-in-law), and teaching in the synagogues. But now he's going public. He shows up at the lake. The Lake of Gennesaret (Lake of Galilee) is huge (8x13 miles) and the home to a thriving fishing industry ("Sea of Galilee Boat" discovered in 1986). Imagine a vibrant business (not grandpa in a rowboat), and Jesus shows up.

You may want to reference Joshua 2:13, Jeremiah 16:12-17, and Ezekiel 47:8-10 for more understanding (that the original readers of Luke would already have had).

SEE the Scripture Text (10 minutes)

Let's read the passage and talk about what we see.

- Who are the characters? How are they connected?
- What is happening? When? Where?
- Which words are being repeated?
- Is the author comparing or contrasting anything?
- Would you like to point out anything else you notice?

Luke 5:1-11 NIV

¹ One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. ² He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. ³ He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

⁴ When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.”

⁵ Simon answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.”

⁶ When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. ⁷ So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

⁸ When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” ⁹ For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, ¹⁰ and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon’s partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.” ¹¹ So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

DISCOVER the Scripture Text (25 minutes)

Let’s discuss a few questions that will help us discover and understand the text.

1. Re-read verses 1-3 and imagine you are there on the scene as a little child. What do you see, hear, or smell? What are you noticing or experiencing?
2. What does Simon risk in putting out the nets again? Why does he do it anyway?
3. More and more fish are coming in, and then Simon falls and confesses. Why do you think Simon has this spiritual reaction to the physical catch of fish?
4. How might these men have perceived the meaning of Jesus inviting them to fish for people? What did they think it meant to fish for people?
5. If we could communicate the core message of this text in just one sentence, what would it be? What do we sense God is communicating through this passage?

RESPOND to the Scripture Text (10 minutes)

Simon and his colleagues had just had a terrible night of work, and Jesus interrupted their cleanup. They thought they were headed home soon, but instead they found themselves caught up in a teaching session and then another trip out to fish. But this time they go in daylight, to the deep, after a night of no fish. And they catch more fish than they have ever seen before! Simon is so deeply moved that he falls before Jesus and confesses. Simon experiences a deep realization of who Jesus is and who he is. Jesus says that Simon will now fish for people. Simon and a few friends leave the catch behind and begin following Jesus.

Going deeper with Jesus changes everything.

Let’s discern together how we can respond to what God is saying. We will answer one option from below, whichever seems most relevant to our group’s discussion of the text.

- A. In what area of your life are you experiencing Jesus intruding in order to reveal more of himself? How are you responding?
- B. What scares you about a “falling in the fish” encounter with Jesus? How can you pursue Jesus into this experience anyway?

- C. How is Jesus inviting you to go deeper with him?
- D. What could it look like for Jesus to make you fishers of people? Pray together and ask Jesus who he might want you to seek out and invite. Make a plan for inviting them.

CLOSE (2 minutes)

Let's pray and thank God for our time in Scripture together...

Tips for leading the group discussion:

- *Participate but keep your comments short to make space for others.*
- *Silence is okay. Encourage further discussion by saying "What else?" instead of commenting on every response.*