

INTRODUCTION

To follow someone is a hard lesson to learn. You have to let go of your own ideas. It is contrary to our human nature because we often think that we are smarter, more knowledgeable and more capable than others. But what if the One we are called to follow is Jesus Christ? What have you given up when you follow Him? In Luke chapter 5 Jesus had just begun His earthly ministry of preaching the good news of the Kingdom of Heaven. Our story today is sandwiched between a series of miracles Jesus performed. He healed some people of their sicknesses and cast out demons. Jesus did so to fulfill what He stated in [Luke 4:18-19](#) when He quoted a passage from the book of Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” In doing all those ministries, Jesus pronounced that the Kingdom of Heaven had arrived. Also, through the manifestation of God's power Jesus proved that He is God. Besides performing miracles Jesus also called disciples and provided “on the job training” to prepare them for future ministries. Our story today is an episode of Jesus recruiting disciples. Luke told us that Jesus was at shore of Lake of Gennesaret. Other names for the place are Lake of Galilee and Sea of Galilee. Jesus met a multitude of people crowding Him who wanted to listen to His teaching. Thus, Jesus hopped onto a fishing boat that belonged to Simon Peter. Jesus asked Peter to push the boat a little away from the shore. Then Jesus sat down on the boat and began His teaching from there. What follows is an interaction between Jesus and Peter. In our discussion I will address him as Peter rather than Simon because we are more familiar with the name Peter. As a result of this encounter, Jesus invited Peter to be His disciples. Through this conversation with Peter Jesus told us what He looked for in the people He called: Jesus Christ asks us to be His obedient followers.

EXPLANATION

1. 改變我們的意志 A Change in Our Volition

In order for us to follow Jesus, first of all, Jesus has to change our volition. In other words, we have to submit ourselves to the Lord's command. In this story, Jesus changed Peter's volition by asking him to go fishing at an odd time. [Verse 4](#) tells us after Jesus finished preaching to the crowd: ...he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.” How did Peter respond? Continue to read [the next verse](#): 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.” Let us use some imagination here and speculate the tone in Peter's reply. Would he be reacting with excitement: “We have tried it but we failed. But hey, since you are so confident perhaps we can have a good catch.”? Or did Peter grumble in his heart: “You must be kidding me! But we will do as you say to prove that you are wrong.”? Which version may be closer to the reality? I think Peter must be hesitant to follow Jesus' order. He and his fishing partners had labored all night but came back empty-handed. Commonsense also tells us that day-time is not the optimal moment to fish because when the fish see a net they will dodge away from it. But Peter obeyed Jesus' command anyway. We know the results. [Verses 6-7](#) read: 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. Can you picture the situation in your mind? One boat went out to fish though the fishermen expected nothing in return when they came back with two full boatloads of fish. Luke was quite animated in his depiction. He described that the nets “began to break” and the two boats “began to sink.” Can you see something unusual in the story? Remember what Jesus’ profession was as He grew up in Joseph’s family? He was a carpenter by trade. If I were a reporter of the Galilee Post at the scene I would have put this heading in my news article: “Carpenter Instructed Professional Fishermen How to Fish.” It is like when two IT experts are clueless why they there is no power in a computer, then a third non-geeky guy like me passes by and casually remarks: “Have you plugged in the power cable?” Voila!

What was Jesus teaching Peter and his fellow fishermen? In order for them to follow Jesus there has to be a change in their volition. They had to obey Jesus’ words rather than their own ideas. They had to put their faith in Jesus so that they could overcome the obstacles in their future ministries. Following Christ needs a lot of faith. Recently, three young people from a mission organization passed by our city. They asked Pastor Mark and me to meet with them so that they can introduce their ministries to us. When I saw them I was surprised at how young they were. They might be in their mid-20. But two of them were already full-time missionaries who had traveled to various countries. The third brother would join the team soon. The organization recruits young people, provides them training and send them out for short-term or even long-term missions. The focus is countries that are normally hard for Christians to get in. Pastor Mark asked how they overcome the language barrier. One brother replied that all they are given is a pile of paper with phonetics of simple phrases like hello, where is the restroom, how much, etc. At the back is a gospel outline for them to read out to the local people following the phonetics. The amazing thing is, with limited training and broken foreign language, they are able to bring people to Christ! I was greatly encouraged by their passion for Christ and their love for the lost. I need the Lord’s forgiveness for my lack of courage to even knock on a neighbor’s door and introduce Christ to them. Very often there are three E’s that hinder us from following Jesus – education, experience and expertise. We tell ourselves: “Based on what I have learned this is impossible, or based on the many years I have been in this field it cannot be done, or this is beyond our capabilities and so we have better give up.” Having faith in Jesus is a not blind faith. There are false teachers out there who tell people that if they have enough faith they can accomplish anything. They are teaching people to put faith in their own faith, rather than putting faith in God. They ask God to sign blank checks so that they can fill out whatever they want at the top line. Our faith should be built on God’s promises. Jesus commanded us to make disciples of all nations. I am sure those three young missionaries might have doubt in their mind at the beginning. But they walk out in simple faith and respond to Jesus’ calling just like Peter said: “but because you say so.” What is holding you up from following Jesus Christ? What prevents you from sharing the gospel to a classmate or colleague whom you see every day? What makes you hesitant to commit in a new ministry? What affects individual Christians may also affects our church as a whole. When we plan our ministries we should look beyond our present limitations. We trust that if it is God’s will, He will provide the resources and opportunities we need. As we say that our mind has to be renewed to be like Christ we need to pray to our Lord that He will change us in our volition.

2. 改變我們的職份 A Change in Our Vocation

Jesus Christ asks us to be His obedient followers. Jesus was calling Peter and his companions to be His disciples. Today Jesus is also calling us to follow Him. Besides changing us in our volition, Jesus also demands a change in our vocation as we follow Him. Jesus used a miracle as a turning point in Peter's life to change his vocation. How did Peter react at perhaps the biggest catch of his career? **Verse 8-9** tell us: 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. Peter and his companions were greatly surprised by the amount of fish they caught. It had to be a miracle! Next, Peter dropped down on his knees before Jesus to express his humility and confess his ignorance. A Jew would not kneel before another person casually unless it was someone of esteemed status. Peter addressed Jesus as Lord. Previously in verse 5, Peter called Jesus "Master," which can be understood as rabbi or teacher. By "Lord" it does not necessarily imply that Peter recognized Jesus as God. After all, even after Jesus' resurrection the disciples were still quite confused about Jesus' deity. Here Peter might think that Jesus was an agent of God who displayed God's authority. When Peter saw God's power at work, he immediately recognized his sins and therefore, he plea Jesus to stay away from him. We may remember the same reaction when God revealed Himself to prophet Isaiah. Isaiah said in **6:5** of his book: "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." That is a natural reaction when a sinful man encounters a holy God. After God showed Himself to Isaiah, He sent Isaiah to be a prophet to carry His message to His people. Jesus did the same thing for Peter. In the second half of **verse 10** Jesus said to Peter: ... "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." Jesus thoughtfully calmed Peter and his companions. Jesus did not push Peter away because of his sins. Instead, Jesus invited Peter to help expand His Kingdom despite Peter's sinfulness. Peter and his companions had a change in their vocation. From now on, they would catch men instead of fish. In their former profession, they caught fish to kill and sell as food. From now on, they would catch men alive and bring them to submission as Jesus' followers. In the past, James and John were Peter's business partners. As they decided to follow Jesus they became co-labors in the gospel.

A simple definition of a disciple is a follower. There is a big misconception that believers and disciples are two successive tiers of Christians. If we study the whole counsel of the Bible we can clearly see that a believer is a disciple of Christ. There is only one step, not two, to salvation. A simple example is in the well-known Great Commandment in **Matthew 28:19-20** Jesus charged His disciples and every Christian: 19 "...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you..." Jesus asked us to make "disciples," not to make "believers." Therefore, when we invite people to accept Christ we need to make sure that they are ready to follow Christ. How did the fishermen respond to Jesus' invitation? **Verse 11** tells us: So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him. That included James and John, Peter and his brother, Andrew. Not only did they leave the biggest catch of their life, they also forfeited their families and their profession. Without hesitation, they decided to follow Jesus. Jesus changed their vocation to become His disciples and fishers of men.

We are also called to a change of vocation. After we received Christ we may keep our same role in the society. However, no matter where we serve Christ, we are His disciples. Recently, I read an article about a Christian named James Brown. He is a well-known sportscaster in professional football. He prays before every TV show. His humble character touches his colleagues. Once a fellow sportscaster went through a divorce and he requested to go to Brown's home after work. He shared his challenges with Brown and asked Brown to pray for him. Brown understands that his vocation is about the Word of God. Besides commentating sports Brown is an ordained minister too. He preaches regularly around the country when it is not football season, speaking to congregations in tiny rural churches and huge mega-churches. Brown hopes to use the platform God has given him wisely and to excel in his work for God's glory. God puts you in a different day job. However, if you are a Christian your vocation is about the Word of God. God gives you a unique opportunity to reach out to your classmates, professors, colleagues and bosses that no one else can. Not too long ago a sister shared with me a challenge she had at work. Her supervisor bases all his research on evolution. She did not know how to reconcile the Christian faith and the demand from her boss when publishing her paper. I advised her that as she wrote she could make it clear that evolution is just a theory. You may face similar dilemmas in your career. The company you work for may manage its business in a way that is contrary to the Christian faith. We need God's wisdom to know how to stand firm in our faith as we witness for Christ at work. Perhaps you are a manager. Being a disciple of Christ, you should display Christ's character as you treat your subordinates. While other managers may treat their coworkers as tools to complete the company's goals, you care about them as people. Perhaps you are only an ordinary employee. You live as a disciple of Christ by being faithful and diligent in the tasks given. No matter what role we are in, our vocation is doing our best for God's glory.

CONCLUSION

Jesus Christ asks us to be His obedient followers. We are to turn over the ownership of our lives to Him. On that day in Galilee a few fishermen committed themselves to follow Jesus. When Peter recognized his limitation and his sinfulness he learned to depend on Jesus. In the following years Peter still needed a lot of fine-tuning from the Lord before he became a leader in the early church. By the same token God is still refining our lives to make us more effective for His Kingdom. As a disciple of Christ we are in a life-long process to imitate Him. It is not that we are able. God does not need our help. On the contrary, when we humbly admit our deficiencies God is willing to infuse His might power in us and accomplish His work through us.