

# **BaptistWay Bible Series for February 7: Called to gather people for the kingdom**

January 26, 2010

Sometimes it takes a miracle. Jesus used one to help Peter, James and John make their commitment to follow him.

## **What the Bible says ...**

The passage in Luke 5 is direct, concise and straightforward. Jesus commanded Peter to go fishing. Peter objected at first, for he had fished an all-nighter with no success. Yet he obeyed and the miraculous catch filled not only his boat, but a second vessel as well (vv. 4-7).

Jesus used what was there in a miraculous, unexpected way. The fish were there. The fishermen were there. The miracle is seen in the timing of it all and the words Jesus spoke.

If we stay focused on the miracle only, we miss the point. Catching a boatload of fish is one thing. Capturing the hearts of people is another.

This event changed Peter's life. Two aspects of this encounter are significant. First, when Peter experienced the presence of God, he recognized his own sinfulness and unworthiness. "When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man'" (v. 8). The same thing happened to Abraham (Genesis 18:27), Job (Job 42:6), and Isaiah (Isaiah 6:5). When these men drew near to the presence of God, they understood God's holiness, and they understood their own sinfulness.

Second, Peter and his partners chose to follow Jesus. “Then Jesus said to Simon, ‘Don’t be afraid; from now on you will catch men.’ So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him” (vv. 10-11). This was not the first time they had been with Jesus (John 1:40-42). This event and this invitation caused them to respond, not just by voicing a statement of belief, but by changing their way of life.

### **What the Bible means to me today ...**

We are called to be “fishers of people.” God responds to our sinfulness and unworthiness with the offer to forgive and to save us. We are then empowered to tell others of God’s love and mercy.

Many people never get past Jesus’ words when he spoke to Peter in verse 10: “Don’t be afraid.” We are paralyzed with fear. Instead of ignoring the clear command of God, or excusing yourself because you do not have the gift of evangelism, consider a fresh approach. If you need help in understanding what “dropping our nets and following him” really means, then consider the following:

Consider those you know who are far from God. It’s easy to identify those who we think need God. But most of those individuals are most likely strangers. Can you look at your own sphere of influence and name someone who needs the Lord? Capturing the hearts of people begins with knowing those people.

Consider the value of spiritual conversations. Once you have identified a person who is far from God, think of the opportunities to engage that person in a dialogue about spiritual things. Everyone visits about issues of life. These brief encounters take place around the coffee machine, over lunch, at the gym or just about anyplace. One of the most encouraging things you can say to someone is simply, “How can I pray for you?” I can think of no other phrase that allows for more meaningful follow up.

Consider your story. If you are building a relationship with someone, then a time will come when the telling of your own experience will be appropriate. How would you share your salvation story? The previous sentence contains a word—salvation—that does not communicate well to many people. So be careful not to use language that demands detailed explanations. Write out two or three brief paragraphs, recounting how you recognized your sin and how you gave your life to Christ. The expression “crossing the line of faith” describes well the choice one makes to follow Jesus.

Consider the cost of disobedience. If Peter, James and John had refused to follow Jesus, what would have happened to them? Their lives, to be sure, would not have been as fulfilling as God purposed. Likewise, if you and I refuse to take seriously the call of Jesus to bring people to him, then our lives will fall short of God’s best intentions for us. Think of how you came to Christ. Who shared the good news with you? Where would you be if that person had said no to God?

Consider the resources available to us. We should not attempt to do God’s work in our own strength. We have prayer to help us discern the best way to approach people who we know need Christ. We have the Bible. Though quoting verse after verse may overwhelm the person we are trying to reach, our sharing must be true to God’s Word. We have the church. Inviting friends to significant events at church allows them to see authentic, genuine love in action. And we have Jesus. He is with us every step of the way.

Sometimes it takes a miracle. But don’t define the miraculous as just supernatural events. Jesus chooses to use ordinary people like you and me to join him in reaching our friends and neighbors. The fact that he would work in you and me is miraculous.