

Isa. 6:1–8, (9–13)

Ps. 138

1 Cor. 15:1–11

Luke 5:1–11

New Depths

Goal for the Session Youth will hear Jesus' invitation to Peter and consider how they too can respond to Jesus' call to discipleship.

■ P R E P A R I N G F O R T H E S E S S I O N

Focus on Luke 5:1–11

WHAT is important to know?

— From "Exegetical Perspective," Gay L. Byron

At first glance Luke 5:1–11 is difficult to classify. It is generally considered a call narrative. This passage is also considered a miracle story, given the abundant outcome manifested at verse 6. Yet the theme of discipleship provides a theological anchor for this story about the fishermen and their experience with Jesus. The lection ends with the theme of renunciation, indicated by the terse statement, "they left everything and followed him" (v. 11). This is the heart of discipleship. For Luke, it includes the denial of family, friends, and physical possessions (5:28; 9:57–62; 14:33; 18:22–23).

WHERE is God in these words?

— From "Theological Perspective," David L. Ostendorf

The life-altering power of God's word—spoken, heard, and heeded—is dynamically evident in this story of call. The word begins to move horizontally—outward and outbound from Jesus. It falls on the ears of crowds hungry for that word; it falls on the ears of Simon and James and John, afraid, amazed, attracted, and ready. Not knowing what lay ahead on that open and uncharted journey from their familiar fishing boats, "they left everything and followed him," unbound, outward-bound, horizon-bound, captured by a word that they would, in turn, carry "on the ground" among people waiting for it, listening for it.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From "Pastoral Perspective," Howard K. Gregory

The invitation to put out into the deep for a catch provides a sharp contrast to our human penchant for the predictable and the routine. It is an invitation to venture into new ground or new depths, but it also points to new challenges in mission and ministry for the church in every generation. We are challenged to respond to the urgings of God breaking into human lives. In the case of Simon, as for the Christian faced with such a command, there is the realization that the most profound and significant experiences of God and life are not to be found in the safe ways and places. Simon obeys the instruction and is surprised.

NOW WHAT is God's word calling us to do?

— From "Homiletical Perspective," Peter Eaton

The NRSV rendering "catching people" masks a dynamism in the Greek that is lost in translation. Jesus is saying to Peter that he will be "taking" or "saving men and women alive" for the kingdom. "To take men and women alive" is a very different image from simply catching them as though they are food to be consumed. So how can the preacher and the community of the body of Christ make Jesus real for others and for ourselves in ways that are both true and genuinely compelling?

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Luke 5:1–11



YOU WILL NEED

- Bibles
- battery-powered pillar candle
- construction paper, scissors
- map of Palestine in Jesus' day

For Responding

- option 1: paper, pencils
- option 2: copies of Resource Sheet 1, pens or pencils
- option 3: copies of Resource Sheet 2, fishnet or other netting, construction paper, marker, yarn, scissors, hole punch, pens, basket

For Video Connection

- Internet-connected device

Option: Ask a youth to look up the definition of “call” on a digital device and read the definition to the group.

Focus on Your Teaching

Youth attend church for various reasons: some come with parents or grandparents while others are brought by friends or come because they enjoy the activities. The youth group at church can provide a supportive place to explore what they'd like to do and be. Younger youth might be involved in confirmation classes, which offer opportunities to explore their own personal commitment to the Christian life. Through the focus scripture in this session, you can help youth consider how Jesus' call to cast nets of God's love in the world involves both risk and reward.

O God, help me to encourage these young people to recognize and trust God's call in their lives and to follow Jesus in faithful service to the world. Amen.

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, cut out simple fish shapes about 5 inches long from construction paper, one per person. Place the candle in the center of your meeting space and arrange the fish shapes around it. Bring a map of Palestine in Jesus' time in a study Bible or Bible atlas.

Gather in a circle. Ask a volunteer to leave the room while the group selects a leader to initiate actions (such as rubbing eyes, waving, slapping knees). The leader should change actions every fifteen seconds and group members copy the leader's actions without watching him or her directly. Have the volunteer return and try to guess the leader's identity by observing the group. After the volunteer identifies the leader, that person leaves the room, and the group chooses another leader. After three rounds, stop and ask:

✠ Leaders: How did it feel knowing everyone was following your every action?

✠ Followers: If a leader did something questionable, would you still follow? Why or why not?

Say that this week's Bible reading story is about some people who chose to follow Jesus.

Pray aloud:

Holy One, be with us today as we explore what Jesus' radical call to discipleship means in our lives. Amen.

EXPLORING

Distribute Bibles and ask youth to turn to Luke 5. Show a map of Palestine in Jesus' day and ask a volunteer to locate the place named in Luke 5:1. Note that Lake Gennesaret is also known as the Sea of Galilee or Lake Galilee.

Introduce youth to this reading by offering this information about fishing in Jesus time:

✠ Fishing was big business around the Sea of Galilee, and several families often worked together to form fishing co-ops.

- ✪ Fishing families would own or rent their boats. Each boat could accommodate a crew of four to seven.
- ✪ Fishing was done with large circular nets that could be thrown from the boat.
- ✪ Most people fished at night, when it was too dark for fish to see the nets and avoid swimming into them.

Ask three volunteers read aloud Luke 5:1–11, taking the roles of narrator, Jesus, and Simon Peter. After the reading, ask:

- ✪ What surprises you about this story?
- ✪ What do you think about Simon Peter’s reaction to the amazing catch of fish? Why do you suppose he said what he did in verse 8?

Invite the group to retell the story as if it was an interview for a radio station. Form two groups, one to play the host and ask questions and the other group to respond as the characters. Spend some time role playing the interview. Ask a volunteer to read aloud verses 10–11. Discuss:

- ✪ Why do you think Jesus tells Simon Peter not to be afraid?

Emphasize that fishing was the only kind of life these men knew; it was how they earned their money, and it was probably how generations of their families had lived. Discuss:

- ✪ Why do you think these fishermen decided to leave everything behind and follow Jesus?
- ✪ What might have been some of the benefits to them in accepting Jesus’ call?
- ✪ What might have been some of the risks to them?

Invite youth to reflect on their own sense of God’s call. Ask:

- ✪ If you had been one of those fishers, would you have followed Jesus? Why or why not?
- ✪ What do you think Jesus meant when he said, “you will be catching people” (v. 10)?

Summarize by saying that like Simon Peter and the other fishermen in this story, each one of us is also called to follow in the way of Jesus, to care for people, and to work for justice. We may not be called to leave everything behind, but Jesus’ call does mean that sometimes we need to move out of our comfort zones and our routines. Invite silent reflection on the following questions:

- ✪ When have you been called to step out of your comfort zone to act or respond in the way of Jesus?
- ✪ What helps you or gives you courage to do this? What stops you?
- ✪ What are some of the things that God might be calling you to do?

RESPONDING

Choose one or more of the following learning activities:

1. **Elevator Speech** Youth will think about ways to talk with others about why their faith is important to them. Invite youth to imagine that they are in an elevator in a tall building and have only one minute to tell someone why they are a Christian and the difference that following in Jesus’ ways makes in their lives. Ask them to write a summary in two

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to three sentences, which they can memorize, and then form pairs to tell each other their “elevator speech.”

- 2. Diamante Poems** Youth will express their understanding of being called to trust God’s call in their lives, even when they don’t understand it completely. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Fish Poems) and go over the instructions for writing diamante poems. Invite participants to create their own poems within the fish shape expressing their experiences of and/or feelings about responding to the call to follow Jesus as a disciple.
- 3. Prayer Net** Youth will delve into how to respond to Jesus’ invitation to discipleship and to consider inviting others to do the same. Invite youth to prepare a “prayer station” for the congregation where people can renew their commitment to follow Jesus. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Prayer Net) and follow the instructions. Have youth place their own prayers on the net. Talk about how to work with ministry leaders to invite the rest of the congregation to participate.

CLOSING

Gather the group around the candle and light it. Say: “Jesus is still inviting us to venture out into new depths as his followers.” Invite youth to spend a few moments in silence reflecting on these words. Ask each participant to take a paper fish and write down one way he or she will respond to Jesus’ invitation to “fish for people” and live in God’s way.

Close the session by inviting youth to hold their “fish” in open palms as they listen to the prayer you offer aloud:

O God, you sometimes call us in surprising ways. When it feels risky to be Jesus’ follower, help us to trust in your call in our lives. And help us to live so that others will see the way of Jesus in us. Amen.

■ ENHANCEMENT

VIDEO CONNECTION

Jesus invited the fishermen into a new way of living and they left everything to follow him. Go to: www.thirtysecondsorless.net/tag/jesus/ and scroll down page to the video clip titled “Direction, Not Directions.” View this short video selection as a group. Discuss:

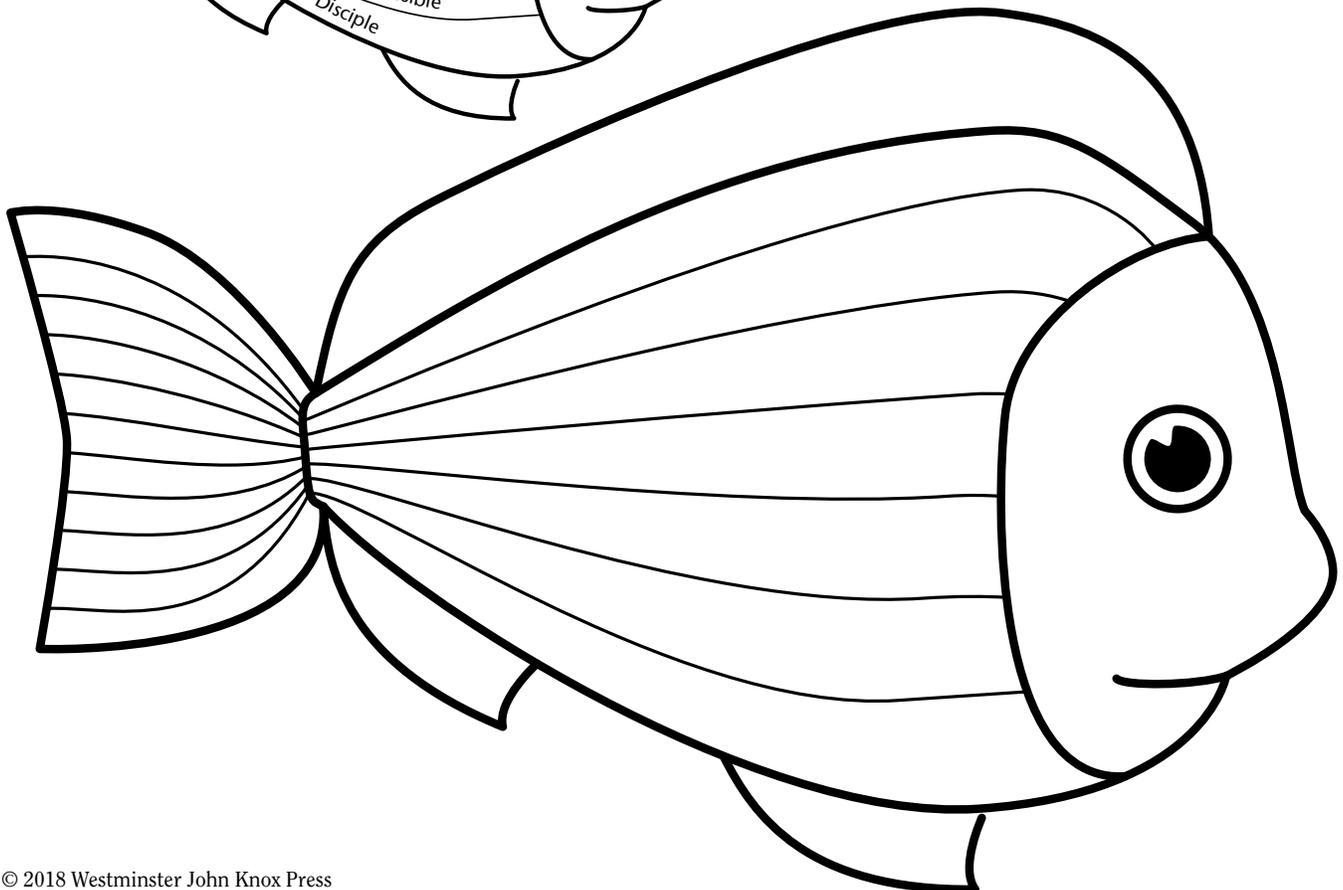
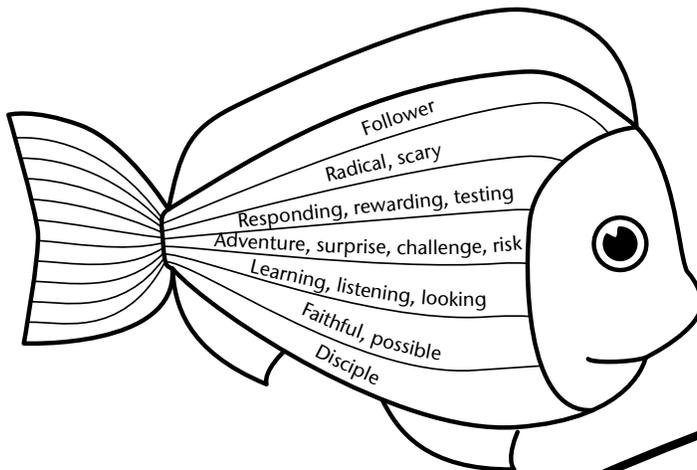
- ✠ What is the difference between a leader offering “direction” and a leader offering “directions”?
- ✠ When you think of Jesus’ life, how do you think he offered “direction”?
- ✠ The video author tells us that Jesus invites us to participate in God’s story. How can you participate in God’s story as a follower of Jesus today?

Invite the group to brainstorm their own “thirty-second message” about a call to radical discipleship.

The Amazing Catch of Fish

A diamante poem forms the shape of a diamond. Follow the instructions below to write a poem about responding to Jesus' call to discipleship. Write each line in one of the seven spaces on the fish. (See sample below.)

- Line 1: one noun (to name the subject of the poem)
- Line 2: two adjectives (that describe line 1)
- Line 3: three verbs (ending in "ing" that describe line 1)
- Line 4: four nouns (first two connect with line 1; the last two connect with line 7)
- Line 5: three verbs (ending in "ing" that describe line 7)
- Line 6: two adjectives (that describe line 7)
- Line 7: one noun (a synonym for the subject)



Prayer Net

They pulled their boats up on the beach, left them, nets and all, and followed him.
(Luke 5:11, *The Message*)

As the Gospel of Luke tells it, Jesus' first disciples were fishermen who left their nets to follow him. They stopped fishing for fish and started fishing for people who needed help.



ΙΧΘΥΣ (Ichthys) is the Greek word for "Fish." It is also an acronym for the phrase "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior" (Iēsous Christos, Theou Yios, Sōtēr). According to tradition, during a time of persecution by the Roman Empire, ancient Christians used the fish symbol to mark meeting places and tombs and to help distinguish friends from foes.

Make a prayer net:

1. Cut at least thirty fish shapes from construction paper, use a paper hole punch to punch one hole in each tail, and place the fish in a basket with several pens or markers.
2. Cut at least thirty pieces of colorful yarn, each one about 12" long. Place these in the basket with the fish shapes.
3. Hang a two- or three-foot length of fishing net (or some other netting) on a bulletin board or wall. Make a sign to put at the top of the net, inviting people to take a paper fish and write a prayer for someone or something, or then use a piece of yarn to tie it to the net.

