

This week we're going to focus mainly on the disciple Peter and some of his interactions with Jesus, especially the ones that happened by the lake. READ Luke 5:1-11.

There are many interesting things about this passage. Imagine yourself in Peter's place when Jesus tells them to try throwing their nets out in deeper water. Many of us might consider that an insult—they've already been fishing all night! Obviously, something about Jesus had impressed Peter, who even calls Jesus "master." Peter has already learned that he might want to listen to what Jesus is saying!

1. Jesus tells Peter that from now on he will "fish for people." Some commentators not that another meaning is to "take them alive." What do you think it means to fish for people?

Notice that Jesus meets the disciples where they were. He came to them. This is good because the disciples sometimes needed extra help. At times they seemed to have things really figured out, and other times they missed it altogether. The Bible has several stories about times when Peter blew it. We can relate to these because he sounds like a real guy that screws up sometimes. Let's look at these:

READ Mark 8:27-30. Notice that Peter seems to have more understanding than most. Good job, Peter! But let's keep going... READ Mark 8:31-33. Mark goes on to describe a time when Peter spoke about things that he didn't understand. He was clueless and began to "rebuke" Jesus!

Peter may speak impulsively sometimes, but we see that he is a true disciple and follower of Jesus. One day, Jesus had been giving a hard teaching and many people deserted him, but Peter stayed:

"You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.

⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God." (Luke 6:67-69)

2. Sometimes Peter is "on" and sometimes he is very "off." How do you relate to Peter? What are times you've acted impulsively, and Jesus had to correct you?

There are many ways that Peter might be similar to Judas, who betrayed Jesus to the chief priests who wanted Jesus arrested. Judas' actions may have been more premeditated, but when Peter denied Jesus three times it was the first steps down the same path. The difference is that Peter had "Godly sorrow" which is the type of sorrow that leads to repentance. We turn back to Jesus.

Thankfully, Jesus is always looking to receive us back when we come to him. We see this with Jesus and Peter. After the resurrection, Jesus wants to make sure that Peter knows that he is still included. Let's look at what happens with Peter in John 21:

"Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee.^[a] It happened this way: ² Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus^[b]), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the

sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. ³ “I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴ Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

⁵ He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?”

“No,” they answered.

⁶ He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

⁷ Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. (John 21:1-7)

3. What are ways that this story is similar to the previous encounter from Luke 5 that we read above?

Notice that again Jesus asks the disciples to do something that could even seem insulting—“throw your net on the right side of the boat...” This sounds like somebody who is joking around! But Jesus is serious—and they find the fish and they realize it’s the Lord.

4. What is a time in your life when Jesus asks you to do something that seemed a little crazy?

Notice that when the disciples worked hard and did it their way, they ended up with an empty boat and no fish! Our best efforts are meaningless compared to Jesus. We really have nothing that we can bring to Jesus that has any value. Everything that’s not of Jesus needs to be purified.

This purification made me think of a crucible, which is a container used when you want to purify metal. The crucible is heated up to remove the impurities from the metal. In a similar fashion, the Bible talks about purification and sometimes we will “pass through the fire” to be purified. Anything that is not of God’s kingdom will burn away. It may not feel good to be in the heat, but through the process we are made stronger and more like Jesus.

There is something else that a crucible is used for. It could be called a “container of change.” This is because once the metal is melted into a liquid form it is often poured into a mold and can be shaped into any design that you want. Similarly, when we come to God we are purified and also reformed! We are shaped more and more into the image of Jesus!

Just like Peter, we may have our good and bad days, but over time God is doing a work in us and reminding us of our purpose and value in him. We may not meet Jesus in a fishing boat, but Jesus comes to us as well and asks us to follow him.

5. What are the times in your life when you knew you had met Jesus?

6. Who are you following? What do you need to do to make sure you are following Jesus?

GOING DEEPER> READ the rest of John 21. Notice how Jesus reminds Peter of his purpose and reinstates him. Do you need Jesus to meet you over “breakfast” like he did with Peter? What would you want Jesus to say? Take some time to pray and ask Jesus to speak to you about this.