

GONE FISHIN'

by Carol Duerksen

KEY VERSE:

Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid, from now on you will be catching people."
Luke 5:10b

FAITH STORY:

Luke 5:1-11

FAITH FOCUS:

One day, as Jesus was preaching along the shore of Lake Galilee, the crowds were pressing in on him so much that when he noticed several empty boats nearby, he decided to use one to get some space away from the crowd. The boats belonged to fishermen named Simon, James and John, who were cleaning their nets nearby. After he was done speaking to the crowd, Jesus told Simon to take the boat out and catch some fish. Peter was hesitant because it hadn't been a good day for fishing, but he agreed to do so, and they caught so many fish that two boats nearly sank with the load. Peter recognized Jesus as a holy man and himself as a sinner, and fell on his knees before Jesus. Jesus told Simon, James and John not to be afraid, and that from then on they would be fishing for and catching people. They took their boats to the shore and left them there to follow Jesus.

SESSION GOAL:

Invite students to follow Jesus and go fishing for people.

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session, the students will:

- Know the story of Jesus calling the first three disciples
- Contemplate what it means for them to follow Jesus and go fishing for people

MATERIALS NEEDED AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- 1 Bibles
- 2 Fishing poles, lines, nets, lures, tackle boxes—anything you can bring that's related to fishing. You have should AT LEAST one item per student and preferably more.
- 3 A sign/poster that says "Gone Fishin.'" Make one if you need to. Have the sign hanging someplace where students will see it as soon as they enter the room.
- 4 Dry erase board, chalk board or newsprint and marker
- 5 Fishing line
- 6 Scissors
- 7 Small crosses to attach to fishing line to make a necklace or bracelet, or alphabet blocks that spell FISHIN. If possible, offer both options to students so they can choose to make a cross or FISHIN piece of jewelry.

- 8 Write the Sending Litany in the Respond section on newsprint so you can use it at the end of class.

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS: (5–10 minutes)

Ask students to claim one of the fishing items when they come into the room. Gather the students together and ask them to talk about their fishing item and what they know about it and the sport of fishing. Some students may know a lot about fishing, and others may know very little. Encourage those who know about the sport to share their knowledge—what kind of fishing they do, how, when, where, etc.

CONNECT: (2 minutes)

Ask: *Why are we talking about fishing? What does fishing have to do with the Bible and our faith?*

Solicit as many ideas and answers from your students as you can before moving on to the Bible story.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE: (7–10 minutes)

Make sure all students have a Bible. Ask for a volunteer to read the story while the other students follow along. When you've read the story, ask students to refer back to the passage as you discuss the following questions. Refer to Insights from Scripture for additional information.

- Do you think Jesus knew Simon, James and John before the day we read about in this account? Why or why not?
- Why do you think Simon listened to Jesus' suggestion that they go out into deep water and put out their nets, when they'd already had a bad day of fishing?
- To what do you think the fishermen attributed the huge catch of fish? Jesus knew where to send them? Luck? Jesus did a miracle? The fish just happened to be biting then?

Why do you think these guys were so willing to give up everything to follow Jesus that day?

APPLY: (10 minutes)

Ask students to look at the fishing items and compare it to what it means to follow Jesus and go fishing for people. Make a list on the board or newsprint of the comparisons of the equipment as well as the fishing experience itself with inviting people to follow Jesus. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Lures: What did Jesus use to lure people to follow him? What do people use to lure other people to follow Jesus?
- Items used to fish—different kinds of poles, boats, etc: Is there more than one way to fish for people? What are they?

- What affects whether or not fish will bite? Does it help to know something about them and the conditions of the water? What affects whether or not people follow Jesus? Is their response predictable? Can you force a fish to be caught? Can you force a person to follow Jesus?

Say: *Half of fishing is knowing what to do and where to do it, and the other half is just “showing up.” Neither of those will guarantee a catch—the fish still has to choose to bite. When we go fishing for people, we need to know the Gospel story to share, and we need to “show up.” But the person we are talking to still has to “bite.”*

RESPOND: (10 minutes)

Invite students to make jewelry using the fish line, crosses or alphabet blocks. If using the blocks, they should spell FISHIN. While students are making their jewelry, post the newsprint with the Sending Litany on the wall.

After students have completed their jewelry, say:

You’ have created a symbol or reminder of the fact that Jesus is calling you to follow him, and for you to go fishing for other people to follow him. Wear it or put it someplace to remind you of this calling.

Now, let’s commission each other to the calling by reading the litany together:

SENDING LITANY

Girls: We hear you calling us, Jesus, and it’s up to us to follow.

Guys: It’s up to us to bite on that line and be reeled in by you.

Girls: It won’t be easy.

Guys: It’ll mean leaving our comfort zones.

Girls: Sometimes we’ll feel like a fish out of water.

Guys: But you’ll be with us.

Girls: And then you’ll want us to go fishing for people too.

Guys: More leaving what’s comfortable.

Girls: More being fish out of water.

Both: More depending on you, Jesus.

Girls: So reel us in,

Guys: And then send us out.

Teacher: And Jesus said, “Do not be afraid, for I am with you always.”

All: Amen and Amen!

INSIGHTS FROM SCRIPTURE

Sometimes, when we read the story of Jesus calling these disciples, we assume that Jesus came that day as a complete stranger and that the fishermen answered his call "out of the blue." Actually, it is quite probable that Jesus had met these men before. Capernaum was not that far from Nazareth, and Jesus may well have gone to the lakeside town other times. Perhaps he was already friend with Simon, James, and John. If that's the case, their choice to follow him was based not only on his words that day, but also on the relationship they had already established.

Whether or not they were friends with Jesus prior to the call, they could have had no idea what it would mean to follow him. They didn't know he was the Son of God, they didn't know he would die and rise again. All they knew was that when they were with him, and when he beckoned them to come along, there was nothing they wanted more than to be with him. They said "Yes" when Jesus said "Come with me," not based on their knowledge, or their learning, or their perfect lives. They simply said "Yes" and the rest would come.

WORKS CITED

The Interpreter's Bible, Luke and John, Abingdon Press, 1951