

Explore the Bible: January 31

Followed • Luke 5:4-11; 27-32

By Ann Maniscalco



Maniscalco

Since I've been downsizing, my children have helped me in various ways. My daughter saw my engagement ring, set with a few small diamonds. With my permission, she took it to a trusted jeweler to see what the value of the stones might be. The center one, even though no bigger than a mustard seed, was valued at \$600!

This week's lesson is entitled, *Followed*. Just as the tiny diamond surprised me with its worth, Jesus' choice of specially-selected followers included some whom society would have greatly undervalued or even detested. Today, we'll consider a lowly group of fishermen and a despised tax collector who became Christ followers.

By the time our focal Scripture begins, Jesus has developed quite a following. As He stands to preach on the shore of Lake Gennesaret, the crowd so presses in on Him that He calls on Simon (later known as Peter), a local fisherman, to "put out a little from the land" (v. 3 NKJV).

The Lord then taught from the boat, after which He issued a surprising challenge to the seasoned fisherman: "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch" (v. 4). Verses four through eight have so many spiritual applications

that it's impossible to fully examine all of them in this brief lesson overview. This is just a synopsis, so meditating on them further is greatly encouraged.

First, we see Jesus' *request* to Simon and his partners. Second is Simon's *response*: they'd "toiled all night and caught nothing." Thirdly, the fisherman's *relinquishment*: "Nevertheless, at Your word, I will let down the net."

Fourth, the *results*: netting such an incredible number of fish that they had to signal partners in another boat to come help them. Both boats began to sink from the weighty catch! Fifth, we see both Simon's *realization* of who this Jesus is, and his own need for *repentance*.

Like Simon, we sometimes exert great effort doing things for God, but without employing His power or seeking His guidance. Thus, we don't see the fruitful service the Apostle Paul describes in Col. 1:9-11, 29. However, when we apply the "nevertheless" principle of Luke 5:5 – following the Lord's leading whether or not it makes sense to us – Jesus promises to produce fruitfulness (John 15:8, 16).

When Christ lives His life through us, it can create a longing in others to experience what we have, leading to their repentance and salvation.

In verses nine through eleven we see James, John, Simon, and other business partners totally aghast at the size of their catch. Turning their attention to spiritual matters, Jesus gave them a new "business." Instead of working the nets for fish, they would now catch men. They then "forsook all and followed Him."

Continuing our theme, today's passage picks up as the Lord passes a tax collector's booth. Seeing Levi (later known as Matthew) working there, Jesus says, "Follow Me." Surprisingly, the man immediately got up, left behind his profitable business, "and followed Him."

Soon after, Levi held a great feast in his house to honor and introduce Jesus to his fellow associates and others. Some scribes and Pharisees were indignant, asking Jesus why He would eat with tax collectors and sinners. Jesus responded that healthy people don't need a doctor; those who are sick do.

Today, we don't normally seek medical answers until we realize we're having health issues. Likewise, those who realize and admit they are "sick" spiritually are those drawn to seek spiritual answers. Addressing these self-righteous Jewish leaders, Jesus said, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

We know the Lord is "not willing that any should perish..." (2 Peter 3:9). Indeed, He is eager to embrace those who come to him with seeking, repentant hearts, but those who have other gods must lay those gods aside. Sadly, like the rich young ruler many are unwilling (Mark 10:17-22).

Perhaps you've heard the poem, The Touch of the Master's Hand. It describes an auctioneer requesting bids for a battered old violin. It almost sold for just a few dollars until an accomplished violinist came forward. Dusting it off, he tuned it up. As his bow caressed the strings, it poured forth exquisite music. The auctioneer opened bidding again, selling the instrument for \$3,000. What changed the value? The touch of the master's hand. Even today, those whom we may consider as having little worth or status (including ourselves) can become beneficial kingdom citizens when transformed by God's grace and power (1 Cor. 1:20-29). All it takes is the touch of our Master's hand!

Maniscalco is a member of Emmanuel Church, Ocean Springs.