



Bible Study

LUKE 5:1-7



Canadian Lutheran
World Relief

CLWR BIBLE STUDIES

CLWR's Bible Studies have been designed to help congregations delve deeper into the challenges leading to injustices around the world, to explore related Bible stories, to discuss how these connect and how God calls us to act together.

These studies are meant to be adapted for your congregation's needs and are free to use. Each study includes discussion questions for children to adults, as well as suggestions to connect this discussion to action.

As CLWR continues to grow our resource collection, we would love to hear suggestions and insight from you. Please feel free to contact Heidi Van Schaik, our Church Relations Manager at heidi@clwr.org with ideas and feedback.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- The gospel of Luke was typically shared orally until it was written down, likely between 80–90 CE.
- The author was writing primarily to gentiles—those who were on the “outside” of the Jewish community.
- In Luke, the disruption of Jesus is who he includes.
- Luke shares that, through Jesus, God was doing something completely new, turning the norms of society on their head.

- The Sea of Galilee, or Lake Gennesaret is a body of fresh water measuring 21 km long and 13km wide.[i]
- Fishing was a fundamental part of the economy in first century Galilee. [ii]
- “Most peasant fishing families were poor and lived at subsistence level, while a small minority of elites held the bulk of wealth and power. Fishing licenses were required for access to certain areas, and fishers needed various raw materials such as wood for their boats and flax for their nets.”[iii]
- “The Apostles Peter and Andrew and their cousins were part of this highly successful industry. They owned their boat and had a house in the city of Capernaum, an extraordinary accomplishment in a land dominated by large estates and menial labor.”[iv]
- The main species of fish caught in the Sea of Galilee were St Peter’s Fish (Tilapia), carp and catfish.[v]
- According to Leviticus 11: 29, Jews could not eat fish without scales or fins and so catfish were sold to the Greek communities, while the others were sold locally or preserved and sent to Jerusalem to be sold.

1. <https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/prayer/arts-and-faith/culinary-arts/biblical-fishing-101-reeling-in-the-first-fishers-of-faith/> May 14, 2024.

2. <https://m.bibleodyssey.org/articles/fishing-economy-in-the-sea-of-galilee/#:~:text=Most%20peasant%20fishing%20families%20were,and%20flax%20for%20their%20nets.> May 15, 2024

3. Ibid.

4. <https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/prayer/arts-and-faith/culinary-arts/biblical-fishing-101-reeling-in-the-first-fishers-of-faith/> May 14, 2024.

5. <https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/prayer/arts-and-faith/culinary-arts/biblical-fishing-101-reeling-in-the-first-fishers-of-faith/> May 14, 2024.

- Peter and Andrew's boat is believed to have been 7m long and just over 2m wide. A boat this size could hold approximately a half tonne of fish, or 11-13 passengers.[i]
- Most fishing was done at night so the fish could not see the nets made of flax or linen.[ii]
- "In deep water fishing, two or three boats would work together to set up a net between them and chase fish into the net. This would be done seven or eight times during the night and by morning the fishermen could bring in a half ton of fish." [iii]
- When dawn came, the fishermen would sort the fish for market, mend and wash the nets then hang them to dry, then would fold them in preparation for their next excursion.
- By this time in Jesus' public ministry, he was well known and sought after. We see evidence of this in the verses preceding this passage (Luke 4: 40-44). This is different from other accounts.
- It can be presumed that by virtue of this popularity, it is likely that Simon, James, and John at least knew who Jesus was, or at least had heard of him.[iv]

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2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. The New Century Bible Commentary, The Gospel of Luke, E. Earle Ellis, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., Grand Rapids, 1981.

Luke 5:1-7

Once while Jesus was standing beside the Lake of Gennesaret and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, **2** he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. **3** He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. **4** When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.” **5** Simon answered, “Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.” **6** When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to burst. **7** So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink.

Read Luke 5: 1-7

Our story opens with crowds of people pressing in on a man (Jesus) eager to hear him speak. The man climbs into an empty fishing boat and asks the fisherman (Simon) to push out a little ways.

What do you think Simon's first reaction would be to this request?

- He's just come in from fishing
- He has lots of work to do yet—the nets aren't even out of the boat yet to be cleaned
- He's likely tired
- He might be impatient

What do you think the reaction would be today if someone's busy day is interrupted and they were asked to sit with the stranger a while?

How might that reaction change depending on the relationship with the person asking? Would it be different if the person asking was a spouse? A child? A friend? What about if it was someone in need?

Why do you think Simon complies with the request?

- He's starstruck—he's heard of this Jesus already
- He's just a good soul
- He was compelled by Jesus' personality

Read verses 4–5

What do you think Simon is thinking about Jesus' request?

- He's skeptical—*what does this stranger (non-fisherman) know about fishing?*
- Jesus clearly doesn't know what he's talking about—you don't fish during the day
- They haven't caught anything all night, what makes you think now will change that?
- Anxious (he may need a license from the authorities to fish at that time as those were required in some instances (see this [i]))
- Eager to see what Jesus is up to

The title “Master” is used in Luke's writing to denote that that speaker submits to the authority of Jesus, but the phrase “at your word” denotes a skeptical attitude of obedience.[ii]

Read verses 6–7

What do you think Simon's initial reaction to the catch was?

- Disbelief, shock, awe
- Excitement
- Concern for how they were going to haul all the catch in alone

1. <https://m.bibleodyssey.org/articles/fishing-economy-in-the-sea-of-galilee/#:-:text=Most%20peasant%20fishing%20families%20were.and%20flax%20for%20their%20nets.>

2. The New Century Bible Commentary, The Gospel of Luke, E. Earle Ellis, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., Grand Rapids, 1981.

Simon calls his partners to help.

What do you think their reaction was?

- *Did they initially wonder why Simon would go out in the first place?*
- *Did they think he was in trouble when he called?*
- *Were they amazed and astonished at the result?*
- *Were they afraid about sinking when they saw the catch?*

Why do you think Jesus chose Simon's boat?

Why do you think Jesus chose Simon and his friends?

What gifts/skills/talents might these ordinary (and smelly), yet successful fisherman have that Jesus wanted to use or lift up?

Why do you think that Jesus took Simon out alone, and then the catch was so massive it required Simon to call for help?

- *Maybe to show us that we aren't expected to do it all on our own*
- *To illustrate how as disciples we need to work together*
- *To illustrate how we need each other/community to be effective disciples*

STUDY (CONTINUED)

How do we, as followers of Jesus, react to Jesus' requests on our lives?

Are we willing to take time for Jesus in the middle of our busy lives to sit in the boat and hear his teachings and then set out into deep water with him?

If you are willing, share an example of a time you did this.

What was the result?

Who are the "friends" we can call on when we find ourselves with nets too heavy to haul in alone?

As followers of Jesus, in our time and place in the world, how can we be the friends that respond to calls for help?

Did You Know:

- Fish and seafood are amongst the most traded food products in the world. [i]
- “People in developing countries are particularly reliant on fish as a basic livelihood as they deliver the largest volume of catch and production worldwide and employ 97% of the world’s fishing work force.”[ii]
- Fish is one of the healthiest foods on the planet. It is rich in protein and vitamin D, is a good source of omega-3 fatty acids while being lower in calories than many other animal protein sources.
- “Billions of people worldwide—especially the world’s poorest— rely on a healthy ocean as a source of jobs and food, underscoring the urgent need to sustainably use, manage and protect this natural resource.”[iii]
- The same can be said for all water sources.
- In regions where heavy flooding has covered farmland, fishing has become the best source of income and food.[iv]
- CLWR has recently launched a project to revitalize the ecosystem in the Lake Chad basin. This landscape is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Resources that previously helped communities respond to shocks have been lost or weakened, including viable forests, biologically diverse ecosystems, and soil health. This is partly due to poor livestock management, poor cropland management practices, unsustainable fishing, and insecure land tenure systems. CLWR’s project will specifically promote proven nature-based solutions and technologies such as sustainable fishing (including bigger mesh sizes in fishing nets, respecting no-fish zones in the spawning area, limiting pollution).

1. <https://www.fishforward.eu/en/topics/developing-countries/#:~:text=People%20in%20developing%20countries%20are,employed%20by%20large%20fishing%20fleets.>

2. Ibid.

3. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/oceans-fisheries-and-coastal-economies>

4. <https://www.clwr.org/product/23BC37F/fishing-kit>

WONDERINGS

Consider your local community, how does the fishing industry impact your community?

Consider Canada, what are the challenges facing the fishing industry in this country?

Consider the world, what factors might contribute to challenging fishing resources (fish and equipment) in various developing countries?

ACTION BRAINSTORM

How can you/your parish learn more about the fishing industry locally?

How can you/your parish learn more about the fishing industry nationally?

How can you/your parish learn more about and support the fishing industry globally?

ACTION SUGGESTIONS

Read and learn more.

Have a blessing of the fishing rods/nets service. Collect loose offering to support the CLWR initiative to purchase fishing kits for a family in a developing country. (\$10/kit).

Host a friendly community competition where your leisure fisher people contribute \$1 for every fish they catch this season to a pool that will support CLWR's project in the Lake Chad Basin, helping to purchase sustainable fishing materials and training. The "winner" of the competition gets bragging rights for the biggest fish, most caught, etc. for the season. Host a fish fry dinner to celebrate your competition.

Ask:

- *Do you go fishing in the summertime?*
- *Do you enjoy fishing?*
- *Do you like to eat fish?*
- *Did you know that there are many places in the world where fish is the main thing people eat? Fishing is important for them to be able to eat and stay healthy.*
- *Did you know that in those places, the fish they don't eat they can sell so that they can afford other things they need?*

Share the story of Luke 5: 1-7

When Jesus helped Simon catch all those fish, he needed help to pull them all in. In many places in the world, where they need fish to sell and to eat, they need help to catch them too.

How can we help other people in other places catch fish?

Talk about CLWR initiatives to help supply fishing nets.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

you are our eternal provider.

You provide for our every need in abundance.

Help us to share from that abundance with those around us.

Strengthen us to always be mindful of the needs of others.

And empower us to help others when they need us.

Amen.