

FINDING NEW PURPOSE

Bible Passage: Luke 4:42-5:11

Key Verse: Luke 5:11

❖ *SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LESSON:*

- The *Theme* of this lesson is that Jesus gives us a new purpose in life.
- The *Life Question* that this lesson asks is: How can I find new purpose in my life?
- The *Biblical Truth* declares that Jesus' followers are called to tell the good news of God's kingdom.
- The *Life Impact* is to help you find renewed purpose in telling others about God's kingdom.

Finding God's Purpose

Many people wander aimlessly through life. They wake up, eat breakfast, get dressed and drive through rush hour to work and punch in. They work about eight hours with a one hour lunch break. They clock out and fight traffic back home. They eat dinner, watch TV for a couple of hours, and go to bed. Then, they start the same routine again the next day. Most people never feel the vitality and excitement of waking up each day with a purpose for living. Do you want to wake up and face each new day with a dynamic purpose? God is calling all of his followers to just this sort of life. Believers are to wake up each day energized with the purpose of reaching people for the kingdom of God.

Word Study: Master

The Greek word for **Master** is *epistates*, and it occurs 6 times in the New Testament. All occurrences are in Luke (5:5; 8:24; 8:45; 9:33; 9:49; 17:13). Every time the word describes Jesus. The word also occurs 13 times in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint. The word denotes one in authority (i.e. an officer in the Old Testament). It pictures a chief, a commander, or an overseer. Other gospel writers used the words "rabbi" or "teacher," but Luke used master. These words are not equal in meaning. They each show different emphases in the ministry of our Master. Luke, speaking to a Gentile audience, wants to emphasize the authority of Jesus.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

In Luke 4:42-44, Jesus speaks of his purpose in coming to earth. His purpose is to preach the kingdom of God. In Luke 5:1-11, Jesus calls men to follow him. He gives them a new purpose in life. Jesus calls fishermen to be his followers. He uses their occupation as a picture of what their duties will be in following him. Just like they used their talents and energies to catch fish, now they will be catching people. Being a follower of Jesus means catching people. Luke 4:42-5:11 tells us how we can make an impact in our world by

being followers of Jesus. It informs us that our primary purpose in life is to be involved in catching men for the Kingdom of God.

Understand Jesus' Purpose (Luke 4:42-44)

What is Jesus' purpose for coming to earth? What was he driven by in this life? What was the content of Christ's message on earth? How does the content of his message apply to our lives?

In verses 42-44, Jesus discusses his purpose for coming with the crowds. He is driven by the task of preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God. They are saddened because he will soon leave them and go elsewhere. They do not understand that he was not sent for them only. He was sent to preach the good news of the kingdom of God in many cities and villages. Today, Christians should study the model that Christ set for us. His mission was not just to one group of people. His mission was to reach the whole world. We, likewise, must not focus merely on our own communities, though we must do that. We are sent by Jesus, as he was sent by the Father, to preach the message that Christ is Savior of the world.

Jesus enters Capernaum and amazing works begin to happen. Christ exorcises a demon, heals a fever, and cures many diseased people. The people marvel at the miracles he performs and the authority he possesses. **When it was day, He went out and made His way to a deserted place.** Mark 1:35 tells us that he got up early in the morning to go out to this place and pray. People have a tendency to want good things to last forever. The people of Capernaum are out looking for Jesus, because they know that he is about to leave. **But the crowds were searching for Him. They came to Him and tried to keep Him from leaving them.** They want to prevent him from leaving. They did not want the miracle worker to take his works elsewhere. However, Jesus' mission compels him to go beyond Capernaum. **But He said to them, "I must proclaim the good news about the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because I was sent for this purpose."** It is his divine destiny to preach the gospel. He **must** preach the gospel. It is a commission from God. There are many instances in Jesus' ministry where he says that he **must** do something: John 9:4 says, "I **must** work the works of him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. (NKJV)" The same idea is present in John 4:4, where the Bible says, "And He **had** to pass through Samaria, (NASB)." He had to pass through Samaria to proclaim the gospel to the woman at the well. John 3:14 says, "And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so I, the Son of Man, **must** be lifted up on a pole. (NLT)" Mark 8:31 says, "And He began to teach them that the Son of Man **must** suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. (NKJV)" Whatever the Father sent Jesus to do, Jesus did. Jesus is compelled to preach the gospel He is driven by the divine imperative and he desires to please and obey his Father. Jesus works hard to fulfill his purpose, so he moves outside the city of Capernaum. **He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee.** The word could also be translated Judea. However, this means that he was continually preaching in the synagogues around Palestine.

The content of Jesus' message is the **Kingdom of God**. Luke 4:43 is the first time this phrase is used in the book of Luke. It is used more than 30 times. The Kingdom of God is a mysterious thing. This is because the Kingdom is both present and future. It is already, but it is also not yet. It is like the song we sing in worship, "Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine." The words are, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!" The Christian already has Jesus in their life, but this is only a foretaste of what is to come. What is the Kingdom of God? Christ's ministry was a breaking in of God's rule on earth. There are two aspects to the kingdom: reign and realm. Jesus' first coming inaugurated the kingdom with his life, death, and resurrection. The complete fulfillment of the kingdom will be at Christ's second coming. At present, the kingdom is working out through the church. Local churches are like little kingdom colonies on earth. What does this mean for our lives? It means that we should live like kingdom citizens under the authority of the kingdom. The Kingdom of God should be the content of our preaching and the call of our evangelism. We should be about the business of bringing people into the Kingdom.

Some truths from this section are:

1. Christ was compelled to preach the gospel. We must follow his example.
2. Christ's message was the kingdom of God. We must proclaim the message of Christ's rule on earth.
3. The Kingdom of God is here already, but not yet fully realized. Until Christ's kingdom comes in its fullness, the church must behave like Kingdom citizens on earth.

Allow Jesus to Use What You Have (Luke 5:1-3)

What abilities, talents, or gifts do you have that are being used by God? What things are you withholding from God's service? How can you better yield yourself to God's purposes?

Luke now moves into a different story. Christ is teaching the crowds at Lake Gennaseret, which is another name for the Sea of Galilee. Here Christ will first call his disciples. There are other accounts of this calling in Matthew 4 and Mark 1. However, neither of these accounts includes the great catch of fish that Luke records. **As the crowd was pressing in on Jesus to hear God's word, He was standing by Lake Gennesaret.** They are crowding him in order to hear the word of God. The crowds are aggressive and this is not conducive to good teaching. Jesus looks for an efficient way to teach the crowds. **He saw two boats at the edge of the lake; the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, which belonged to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from the land.** Jesus sees two boats resting on the shore, and the fishermen getting out of the boats. These fishermen begin to wash their nets after a long night of fishing. Jesus decides to go over and get into one of the boats, and it just so happens that the boat belongs to Simon (Peter). This is not the first time that Christ has encountered Peter. John 1:35-42 records their first encounter. John the Baptist tells Peter that Jesus is the Lamb of God. Peter ran and exhorted his brother, Andrew, to follow Jesus. He told Andrew that they had found the Messiah. Peter's example should be

followed by us today. We must encourage our family to follow the Messiah. If we have found the Messiah, then why would we not encourage our family to follow Him?

Jesus wants to borrow Simon Peter's boat. Jesus looks at Simon and asks him to shove off from the shore a little ways. **Then He sat down and was teaching the crowds from the boat.** Jesus teaches from the customary sitting position, and the crowds could hear the message that they came to hear. Christ would not let obstacles get in the way. His practice was to do the bidding of the Father, in synagogues, in miracle encounters, and even in boats with fishermen.

The fishermen were faithful in the workplace to allow Christ to use what they had to teach the crowds. Today, we must be willing to be used by Christ in our workplace to carry the gospel forth. God is not honored by every type of work. Christians should be engaged in jobs that maximize the talents and abilities that God has given to them. Every occupation that the Christian is engaged in should be done to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31).

Lessons to be learned here are:

1. Jesus was creative in teaching and reaching people. We must be creative in reaching people as well.
2. Peter allowed Jesus to use his boat. We must be willing to yield what is ours to Christ.

Follow Jesus' Instructions (Luke 5:4-7)

What doubts do you have about God's purposes for your life? Do these doubts hinder your obedience to Christ? What should motivate us to be obedient even when we cannot see God's ultimate purpose?

The narrative now shifts from the crowds to Christ and the fishermen. Jesus' teaching session is completed. Like many times throughout his ministry, Christ teaches the crowds and then gives his most intimate and detailed attention to his disciples. **When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch."** Jesus commands Simon to do something that goes against his instincts. Instead of questioning, Peter is faithful. His faith and obedience is followed by a miracle. Obedience to Christ brings blessing. Even when we think we know better than Christ, we should obey Him because ultimately we recognize that God knows best!

Jesus tells Simon to put out into the deep part of the Lake. Once the boat comes into the deep waters, Christ says to them, "Lower your nets for a catch of fish." **"Master," Simon replied, "we've worked hard all night long and caught nothing!"** Luke uses the word "Master." It denotes a position of authority. Peter recognizes the authority of Jesus. However, Jesus request is not an easy one for a professional fisherman to follow. Simon may be thinking, "Look Jesus. We know that you are a great teacher. You teach as one having authority and no man speaks like you and all that, but this isn't your specialty. This is our specialty. Do you not understand that we are the professionals here? We know

that night is the best time to catch fish. Plus, we worked our fingers to the bone all night long and didn't catch anything. You want us to fish during the day. Look Jesus, We are tired. We want to go home and get some sleep. Please don't make us fish in the day." Simon could have made any one of these arguments. From the perspective of human rationale, these are good points. Some tasks seem impossible by human standards. When things are impossible by human standards, God can break-in and act. He demonstrates his power through the faith and obedience of his people.

Peter does not raise any objections. He obeys. **But at your word, I'll let down the nets.** Simon and his partners take the steering oar on the right side of the boat and they row the boat into position. They pitch the nets over the left side of the boat. **When they did this, they caught a great number of fish, and their nets began to tear.** When Simon puts down the nets he catches such a great number of fish that their nets begin to split open. They caught too many fish, **so they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them; they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.** They start waving to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. Their partners come and help them, but both boats are so full that they begin to sink.

This is the way that it is today. People look at the tasks we are commanded to do and they sometimes feel that the request is too big. Evangelizing the world, reaching America, and even sharing with some family members seems too big. It seems beyond our abilities, ingenuities, and energies. We get discouraged and do not think the job can get done. However, every task Christ has given us is possible because we have Christ on our side. It is not mission impossible. It is mission inevitable. The task will be completed. The job will be done. It is already guaranteed. People from every nation and language and tribe on this earth will bow down and confess Jesus Christ as Lord. It is beyond our abilities, ingenuities, and energies, but Christ will accomplish this task for his glory and do so through us. Just consider David and Goliath. No one in their right mind would think that the little shrimp from Bethlehem could conquer the Hulk from Gath. Yet, David fought for God's name and defeated the giant (1 Sam. 17:32-51). An example from history is the church in China. In 1951 Mao (the Communist leader) kicked all the missionaries out of China. It became a closed country with no access for missionaries who wished to preach the gospel. Will the church in China die without people sharing with them? When Mao kicked out the missionaries in China in 1951 there were 5 million Christians. Today, it is estimated that there are between 100-120 million Christians, and this is with no missionaries allowed. The Persecuted Church.Com estimates that, based on the current standard of growth, by the year 2010 there will be more Christians in China than all the Christians in the entire Western world combined. It seemed impossible that the Church would grow in a closed country. Yet, throughout scripture and history, God is pleased to move where people think He cannot move. We may doubt the purposes that God has for our lives, but if we are faithful and obedient, we will see the "impossible" accomplished.

Spiritual lessons from this section are:

1. God does not always work his purposes in ways that we understand. We must believe that God is working everything together for good.
2. Obedience to God is always the right response.

3. Faithfulness and obedience to God can lead to great blessing.
4. Faithfulness and obedience to God can lead to being involved in God's great work throughout the world.

Respond to Jesus' Call to Tell Others (Luke 5:8-11)

Have you ever recognized your unworthiness before God? Does the forgiveness you have in Christ motivate you to serve Him? Have you answered the call to be a people-catcher in your workplace? What things hinder you from being a people-catcher and a follower of Jesus?

This story is the calling and commissioning of the disciples, especially Simon Peter. Simon sees this tremendous miracle of the fish and he is shaken and afraid. Peter has come face to face with the living God in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ. He recognizes his unworthiness and sinfulness. **When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Depart from me, because I'm a sinful man, Lord!"**

People all throughout the Bible fall before Christ. There are three reasons that normally caused people in Scripture to fall before Jesus. First, people fell before Christ to request a miracle. Mark 5:22-23 says, "And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet and begged Him earnestly, saying, 'My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live.'" (See also Mk. 7:25-26 and Lk. 5:12). Second, people fell before Christ because they were afraid. This is seen in Mark 3:11 Luke 8:28. Even the Apostle John fell before Jesus in fear. Revelation 1:17 says, "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, 'Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.'" (NKJV). Finally, people fell before Christ to worship Him. Revelation 5:8 says, "Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints."

Peter fell before Jesus out of fear. The miraculous catch of fish amazed and overwhelmed Peter because it went against his professional knowledge. He was a skilled fisherman. This was his livelihood. He knew the best way to catch fish. Yet Christ did in one try what Peter could not do all night. Peter has come face to face with the one true and living God. Peter has been forced to come to grips with his own sinfulness. He finally recognizes his sin and he admits it to Christ. In the presence of almighty God, when men see God for who He really is, they finally see themselves for who they really are, sinners. Men in such close proximity to the splendor of God must see their own wretchedness. Peter comes face to face with the Christ and he knows his own sin.

Peter is seized with fear and amazement at the miracle. However, it is not only Peter who is captured by fear. His partners who are working with him are also arrested with fear. **For he and all those with him were amazed at the catch of fish they took, and so were James and John, Zebedee's sons, who were Simon's partners.** They simply were not expecting such a great catch of fish. His partners are completely stunned at what

Jesus has done. The Bible says that even James and John, the sons of Zebedee, are afraid. What a shock! These are the “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17). They rebuked an exorcist in Mark 9:38. In Luke 9:54, when a Samaritan village rejects Christ, the Bible says, “And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, ‘Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?’” (NKJV). These guys were bold and fearless. Yet these who wanted to condemn an exorcist and consume a village are afraid of a catch of fish. This is the power of the Son of God.

Jesus speaks and challenges Peter with a new assignment, a new purpose. The disciples are called away from the pursuits of this world to pursue men for God’s kingdom. **Don’t be afraid,” Jesus told Simon. “From now on you will be catching people!”** Jesus tries to calm Peter’s fear and then he calls him to a new mission. He says that they are to **catch** men. The metaphor of fishing is instructive to Christians in how they should evangelize. What does it take to go fishing? First, you must be equipped. You must buy supplies: pole, line, hooks, and bait. Second, you must be trained. When you go fishing for the first time, someone has to show you how to do it. Third, you must be able to adapt. You do not fish the same way for every type of fish. Fly-fishing is different than fishing for trout. These three areas help us in learning about evangelism. First, we must be equipped and have the right tools to share. This means that we must be saved and we must know the basic tenets of the gospel. Also, we need to be trained. This can be done formally through FAITH, Evangelism Explosion, or the Romans’ Road, or it can be done personally simply by watching others witness (i.e. the way that Campus Crusade does it). We must learn how to adapt to different situations. We will witness differently to diverse groups of people. You will not witness to a Muslim the way you would to a Jew.

This new task may seem strange to us. Some may see catching people as intolerant. When people go fishing, the fish dies when caught. Why would Jesus use this metaphor? The actual word means capturing someone alive. It does not mean killing. It has the idea of preserving life. It does not denote capturing for the purpose of killing. The word means to capture alive so as to preserve the life. It means rescue, deliverance, or salvation. Being a follower of Christ means catching men for God. When Christ called us to discipleship, he did not just call us to follow a person. He called us to fulfill a purpose, catching men!

This raises a question. Why would these men leave their business after their best day ever? The reason is that Christ does not call them away from a booming business to a fruitless ministry. There was a reason that Christ gave them the miraculous catch of fish, and it was not just to impress the disciples. The catch of fish was a picture. Many people fail to notice that the miracle catch is a picture illustrating what will be the ultimate result of the disciples “catching people.” The miracle catch is supposed to be pointing out to the disciples, “You think this is amazing? When you leave this business to catch people, God will open the flood gates to the Kingdom of Heaven.” Just like their nets were busting wide open by so many fish, the gates of the Kingdom of God will be bust wide open by the redeemed. Jesus is giving them a promise. If you are faithful and obedient in sharing with people, you will catch a great multitude!

Then they brought the boats to land, left everything, and followed Him. They answered the call and surrendered to the mission. They did not look back. They did not sit down and chart out how this would affect their long-term goals. They did not open up a dialogue discussing the positives and negatives from this career change. They simply brought the boats back to the shore, got out, and followed after Jesus. All the attractions of this world were now meaningless to these new disciples. We should follow their lead, leave behind the world, and follow after Christ. Let us leave behind our ambitions for worldly success and be ambitious for souls!

We are called to be ambitious for souls in the circles of influence that God has given to us. One of the primary places that we do this is at work. God has given you people to influence that are around you everyday. We must be intentional in using the workplace as an opportunity to proclaim the gospel. This does not mean witnessing to the exclusion of doing your work. After all, Christians should be the hardest and most dedicated workers at their jobs. However, this does mean using every opportunity to build relationships with you co-workers, and it means using every opportunity to share with them the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ.

Here are some important truths from this section:

1. Finding God's purpose for your life means giving up earthly ideas of success.
2. We are called to be rescuers of souls for God.
3. God promises that when we are faithful in fishing for people we will catch them.
4. Being a follower of Jesus means being a people-catcher.

SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATIONS

In America, we are captivated by rescue stories. The heroic rescue of Private Jessica Powell in Iraq enthralled and fascinated the nation. Great efforts were undertaken to rescue a prisoner of war. We put together an elaborate plan. We worked hard day and night to return this hostage to her loved ones. According to Luke 4 and 5, Christ has called us into the rescuing business. Being a follower of Jesus means being on rescue mission with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Many are the people held captive by the enemy. Let us be the Special Forces for the gospel. People need to be rescued. It's our job to rescue them!

What is your current purpose in life? How is it different from what Jesus' purpose for your life is? How can you change areas of your life to become a people-catcher for God?

Prayer of Commitment: Father, thank you for giving me a meaningful and eternal purpose in this life. May I be a more faithful witness for your kingdom. Amen.