

# **The Conversations of Jesus - Calling His Disciples** a message for the **Abundant Life Class** at Gulf Coast Baptist Church by Steve Thomas

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## **Introduction**

Jesus had many conversions with His disciples. There are two that stand out in their parallel settings. Jesus's first call of Peter, Andrew, James, and John and then His return to Galilee after His resurrection to "re"-call the same group was significant. The disciples were called from their initial vocations on a mission to become "fishers of men". Three years of ministry with Jesus had prepared them for many things, but after Jesus's death, the men were ready to return to their vocations. The phrase Peter uttered - "I go a fishing" in the present tense, signified continuous activity. I believe it was the declaration of Peter returning to the vocation He was called from. Jesus was not done with the disciples yet, He graciously called them a second time with the same miracle that he called them with the first time.

## **Follow Me**

Matthew and Mark give us the bare bones of the story, but Luke includes the miracle that bore Jesus's credentials. Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11 Jesus calls men who are involved in ordinary work, into an apprenticeship that would change their vocation from fish to men. His call to follow brings immediacy to the situation, asking them to leave and begin right then. They respond by faith, believing the man who just demonstrated His power over His creation. They accepted the Messianic credentials and were willing to leave everything to follow Christ.

Peter was especially affected by the actions of the Messiah. Perhaps the miracle affected him more deeply because of his critical words to Jesus in verse 5. After the miracle Peter acknowledges that he does not deserve to be in the company of such power. Jesus's response was one of peace and of directing focus. Taking the words that Matthew and Mark recount along with Luke's words, Jesus calls the men to follow him, and that he will make them fishers of men. He also calms the fear that has sprung up in them from seeing such an amazing miracle. These actions along with the call, was enough to cause these men to leave everything and become disciples of Jesus. These nets were abandoned, and the men began a journey that would change their lives, and the lives of many others. The leaving of the nets was significant, because it demonstrated a break with their previous identity and security, trading this for an identity as a Christ follower.

## **Feed My Sheep**

The second time that Jesus had to call these men, much had changed. Jesus had mentored them, taught them, and performed many more miracles in front of them. He had even empowered them to perform some miracles themselves. However, they had been devastated with Jesus's death, even to the point where Peter declared to the group that he was returning to the vocation of fishing. Such is the power of discouragement. It causes us to forget the focus that we had at one

time. Discouragement causes us to lose hope and the power that we once felt. Peter was content to return to a life at the nets, even though he had once walked on water. Peter returns to the scene where he first met Jesus, the sea of Galilee and finds that not much has changed from that first event. He toiled again, without any success, on through the entire night. The next morning, Jesus appeared on the shore and asked a question that every fisherman who has failed hates, “Have you any meat (How many fish have you caught?).” The answer was a rueful “no”. Jesus at this point instructs the men to cast on the other side. At this point, some of the men must have begun to have a sense of déjà vu, and Peter does not even wait to bring in the net, but casts himself into the sea, eager to see his Lord. Jesus asks him to help bring the fish to shore, and then feeds the men with the fish that He had prepared.

Jesus begins to work on Peter, calling him again, not to fish for men, but to tend to them, to feed them. He restores and commissions Peter, (“Feed my lambs... Tend my sheep... Feed my sheep”) and repeats, “Follow me.” John 21 (esp. 21:1–19)

### **Compare and Contrast**

Both events happen at the same setting, where their identity as fisherman is the most vivid. Jesus wanted to use the imagery of fishing to highlight the work that they will be doing, first for the kingdom and then for the Church. The first image is calling people and gathering them for the Kingdom, the second metaphor is gathering them, but then discipling and caring for them. The second time, Jesus directs Peter to assist in drawing the nets in, and then tells him to feed and tend the sheep/lambs. While the nets were abandoned in the first call, they are utilized in the re-commission. “They left their nets...”—the cost of discipleship and reordering of priorities is front and center. Matthew 4:18–22. But in John, the net is filled and brought in—emphasizing mission, provision, and the gathered community after the resurrection. Instead of just recruiting people for the kingdom, the disciples are directed to feed, and tend to them, resulting in the Great Commission where Jesus tells them to make disciples of all the nations.

Each time, Jesus highlights the futility of any effort that is not directed by Him. Through their own efforts, they will not have success, but following the direction of God, they will not be able to contain the results. This echoes the comments that Jesus said in the upper room, that the disciples will do “greater works than these”. This success is all the more significant the second time after the disciples had experienced failure, fear, and scattering. God uses broken things, and still has plans for these men, in spite of their failures.

### **Conclusion**

The significance of these conversations to the disciples to commission and then to recommission them demonstrates the long suffering that Jesus had with His followers, guiding them into the service that would change the world. God allowing us to participate in His work is always beyond human comprehension. He is using clay vessels to demonstrate His power.