

# When Jesus Calls: Finding Purpose After Failure

Have you ever felt like giving up on your faith journey? Maybe you've experienced failure, disappointment, or confusion about God's plan for your life. The disciples faced these same struggles after Jesus' resurrection, and their story in John 21 offers profound hope for anyone feeling lost or discouraged.

## What Does It Mean When Jesus Reveals Himself?

John 21 begins with a powerful statement: Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples. This marks the third time Jesus appeared to his followers after his resurrection, and John wants us to understand something crucial - Jesus is alive. The resurrection isn't just a historical event; it's the foundation of our entire faith.

As the apostle Paul wrote, "If Christ has not been raised, then your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" - 1 Corinthians 15:17 (ESV). Without the resurrection, everything we believe crumbles. But because Jesus lives, we have hope, purpose, and eternal life.

## Why Were the Disciples Together in Galilee?

The disciples found themselves in Galilee not by accident, but by obedience. Jesus had told them to meet him there after his resurrection. Even though they were confused and uncertain about what came next, they chose to obey God's word.

This teaches us something important: even when we don't understand God's plan completely, we can still choose to be obedient. The disciples were "together" - united despite their different backgrounds and personalities. Peter was impulsive and courageous, John was contemplative and theological, and they came from various walks of life. Yet they remained united around their risen Lord.

## The Power of Christian Community

Their unity wasn't based on similarity but on their shared relationship with Jesus. This is a beautiful picture of the church today. We need each other despite our differences. There's something in you that brings out the best in me, and something in me that brings out the best in you. We grow together in our walk with the Lord.

## What Happens When We Try to Do Life Without Jesus?

Peter decided to go fishing, and the others joined him. These were professional fishermen who knew the Sea of Galilee intimately. They fished all night using their expertise, knowledge, and experience. The result? They caught nothing.

This wasn't coincidence - it was God's providential hand orchestrating events to teach them a lesson. Jesus had already told them, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" - John 15:5 (ESV).

## **The Darkness of Self-Reliance**

Throughout John's Gospel, he contrasts light and darkness. Here, the disciples fish in darkness - representing confusion, spiritual blindness, and fruitlessness. When we try to live life apart from Jesus, when we rely solely on our own strength and wisdom, we experience spiritual emptiness.

## **How Does Jesus Provide When We're Empty?**

As dawn breaks, Jesus calls from the shore: "Children, do you have any fish?" After a night of failure, this question forces them to admit their lack of fruitfulness. Their honest answer: "No."

Jesus then gives a simple command: "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." Notice the certainty in his words - not "maybe you'll find something," but "you will find some."

## **The Miracle of Obedience**

When they obeyed, their net filled with 153 large fish. John immediately recognized what was happening: "It is the Lord!" This wasn't just about fishing - it was about discipleship, about learning to depend on Jesus for everything.

Peter's response is beautiful. Without hesitation, he jumped into the sea to get to Jesus as quickly as possible. Despite his recent failure of denying Jesus three times, Peter's desire was simply to be with his Lord.

## **What Does Jesus' Invitation to Breakfast Teach Us?**

When the disciples reached shore, they found Jesus had prepared a meal for them. He had built a fire, cooked fish and bread, and simply said, "Come and have breakfast."

This is such a tender picture of Jesus' heart. He welcomes them. He receives them. He wants fellowship with them. Despite their confusion, their failures, and their fruitlessness, Jesus invites them to come.

## **The Open Invitation**

This invitation extends to us today. Jesus says, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water'" - John 7:37-38 (ESV).

Are you spiritually hungry? Thirsty? Dry? Come to Jesus. Find hope, joy, peace, love, purpose, meaning, and forgiveness. Find real life - abundant life. Come just as you are.

## **What Does This Story Teach About Our Calling?**

This passage reveals three crucial truths about our relationship with Jesus:

First, we're still called to kingdom work. Just as Jesus originally called these men to be "fishers of men," we're called to embrace the gospel, make disciples, and live life on mission. Even in our confusion and uncertainty, God has work for us to do.

Second, Jesus must direct our efforts. It was Jesus' voice that guided them to the right side of the boat. His guidance through the Holy Spirit must lead and instruct the church. We need his direction for fruitful ministry.

Third, when our relationship with Jesus is strained, we should run to him. Peter had denied Jesus three times, yet he didn't hesitate to swim to shore when he recognized his Lord. No matter how great your failure - dishonesty, infidelity, addiction, financial troubles - don't let that keep you from running to Jesus.

## **Life Application**

This week, examine areas of your life where you've been trying to operate in your own strength rather than depending on Jesus. Are there places where you've been "fishing all night" with little to show for it?

Jesus is calling you to cast your net on the other side - to trust his guidance rather than your own expertise. He's inviting you to come to him for the nourishment and fellowship your soul craves.

Questions for Reflection:

- Where in your life have you been trying to succeed through your own efforts rather than depending on Jesus?
- What would it look like for you to "run to Jesus" this week instead of running away from him?
- How can you better position yourself to hear and obey Jesus' voice in your daily decisions?
- In what ways is Jesus inviting you to "come and have breakfast" - to enjoy deeper fellowship with him?

Remember, Jesus is alive, he sees your struggles, and he's calling you to come. Not when you get your life together, not when you've earned it, but right now, just as you are.