

Small Group Guide

Based on Luke 4:40 - 5:11



Overview

This week's sermon examined two contrasting responses to Jesus: the people of Capernaum, who wanted to keep Jesus close for their own comfort and benefit, and Peter, Andrew, James, and John, who recognized the power and holiness of Christ and surrendered everything to follow him. The central challenge of the message is this: are we asking Jesus to follow us and improve our lives, or are we following Jesus and joining his mission?

Key Takeaways

- Jesus healed the sick and cast out demons in Capernaum out of genuine compassion, but his mission could not be reduced to one location or one group of people's needs.
- The people of Capernaum tried to hold Jesus back from his mission because they were focused on what he could do for them rather than what they were called to do for him.

- Peter's response to witnessing the miraculous catch of fish was the opposite of Capernaum's response. Rather than saying "stay with us," he said "depart from me, I am sinful." Recognizing the holiness of Christ produced humility, not entitlement.
 - Peter, Andrew, James, and John gave up their livelihoods and futures to follow Jesus, joining his mission rather than recruiting him to theirs.
 - Understanding the gospel requires knowing where you are: a sinful person who cannot erase guilt through good deeds, in need of the only innocent one who can replace that guilt with his righteousness.
 - Following Jesus is not a path to comfort. The apostles are the clearest example that faithfulness to Christ often costs everything in the temporary life, while gaining everything in the eternal one.
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Discussion Questions

Opening Question

Think about a time when you wanted something from someone but were not really interested in what they needed from you. What did that relationship look like, and how did it eventually play out?

Digging Into the Text

1. In Luke 4:42-43, Jesus tells the crowd in Capernaum that he must preach the kingdom of God to other cities because that is what he was sent to do. What does this tell us about the nature of Jesus' mission? What does it reveal about the difference between what the crowd wanted and what Jesus came to accomplish?
2. The people of Capernaum had just been healed and delivered. Their desire to keep Jesus with them was understandable on the surface. At what point does a desire for God's blessing become a way of trying to control God? How can we tell the difference in our own lives?
3. Peter's reaction to the miraculous catch of fish was to fall on his knees and say he was a sinful man who did not belong in Jesus' presence. Why do you think witnessing the power of Jesus produced that response in Peter rather than excitement or pride? What does that tell us about what it means to truly encounter Christ?

4. The sermon pointed out that Luke does not record what Jesus taught the crowd from the boat, but instead focuses on what happened between Jesus and the fishermen afterward. Why do you think Luke made that choice? What does the structure of the passage emphasize?
 5. James and John are described as likely being well-off, owning a fleet of boats. What does it mean that men with financial stability and established careers walked away from all of it? What does that say about what they believed about Jesus?
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Connecting to Our Lives

6. The pastor described a version of Christianity that focuses on how God can improve the quality of your temporary life. Have you encountered that message? How does it compare to what you see in this passage?
 7. The sermon used the illustration of standing before a judge. Good deeds cannot cancel out guilt already on the record. How does that illustration change the way you think about what you bring to God? Does it change how you think about grace?
 8. The pastor asked this question directly: are you humble enough to submit to Christ, or do you want God to submit to you to make your life better? How would you honestly answer that question right now?
 9. Think about the people in your life who might be in the same position as the crowd in Capernaum: aware of Jesus, maybe even grateful for something he has done, but not yet willing to follow him. How does this passage inform how you might talk with them?
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Practical Applications

- **Examine your prayer life.** Take an honest look at what you most often bring to God in prayer. Is the majority of it requests for your life to improve, or is there a genuine posture of submission and a desire to know and follow his will? Consider keeping a prayer journal this week to track the pattern.
- **Identify what you are holding onto.** Peter, Andrew, James, and John left their nets and their boats. What is in your life that you have not yet placed before Christ? It does not have to be a career. It could be a relationship, a habit, a plan, or a comfort. Name it honestly and bring it to God this week.

- **Study the mission, not just the benefits.** Pick one of the Gospels and read through it this week with one specific question in mind: what did Jesus say he came to do? Let the text shape your understanding of what it means to follow him.
- **Have a conversation about the gospel.** The sermon drew a clear line between guilt and innocence, and between earning and receiving. Find one person in your life this week and have a genuine conversation about what the gospel actually is. Not what it can do for your comfort, but what Christ actually accomplished and what it calls us to.

Closing Reflection

The sermon opened and closed with the same idea: knowing where you are is the only way to know how to get where you need to go. Before your group closes in prayer, take a moment for each person to silently answer this question: where am I right now in my relationship with Christ? Am I following him, or am I trying to get him to follow me?

Close in prayer, asking God for the humility of Peter rather than the grip of Capernaum.

5-Day Bible Reading Plan and Devotional Guide

Following Jesus: From Comfort to Commission



Day 1: The Compassion That Does Not Quit

Reading: Luke 4:40-41 -- Jesus heals all who are brought to him at sunset, casting out demons and refusing to let them speak, because he knows who he truly is.

Devotional: Jesus stayed through the night. He did not turn away a single person who came to him broken, sick, or bound. His compassion outweighed every physical limitation of the flesh he wore. This is the God who sees your suffering and does not look away. But notice what he also did -- he kept his mission intact. His mercy was never an end in itself. It pointed to something greater. Reflect today on how God's compassion in your life has been an invitation, not just a comfort. Where has his mercy been calling you forward rather than simply settling you in?

Day 2: When We Try to Keep Jesus for Ourselves

Reading: Luke 4:42-44 -- After a night of healing, Jesus withdraws and the crowd tries to prevent him from leaving; he tells them he must preach the kingdom of God to other cities as well.

Devotional: The people of Capernaum had experienced something real and powerful. Their response was to hold on tight and keep Jesus where he was most convenient for them. It is a deeply human impulse. We want the Jesus who fixes what hurts without asking anything of us in return. But Jesus told them plainly -- he had a mission, and it was larger than their comfort. The same is true today. Following Christ means releasing our grip on what we want him to do and opening our hands to what he is actually doing. Where are you trying to hold Jesus still when he is calling you to move?

Day 3: The Weight of Unworthiness

Reading: Luke 5:1-8 -- After a miraculous catch of fish, Simon Peter falls to his knees and asks Jesus to depart from him, confessing that he is a sinful man.

Devotional: Peter did not respond to the miracle with a request list. He responded with honest self-awareness. He saw the holiness of Christ and immediately felt the weight of his own sin. This is where genuine faith begins -- not in confidence in ourselves, but in a clear-eyed recognition that we do not belong in God's presence on our own merit. Romans 3:23 reminds us that all have fallen short of God's glory. Guilt is already present. We cannot undo it through good works or good intentions. Like Peter, the first step toward following Jesus is falling down and admitting we cannot stand on our own. Have you taken that step honestly?

Day 4: Innocence That Replaces Guilt

Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:21 -- God made Christ, who had no sin, to become sin on our behalf so that through him we might receive the righteousness of God.

Devotional: No judge accepts a charity donation as a substitute for a verdict. Guilt requires innocence to replace it -- nothing else will do. This is the heart of the gospel. Jesus, the only truly innocent one, took on the full weight of human guilt so that his righteousness could be credited to those who trust in him. This is not a transaction that makes life easier. It is a transaction that makes eternity possible. The debt is paid. The ledger is wiped clean. The question is whether you have accepted that payment on your behalf or whether you are still trying to earn your way out of a verdict that has already been handed down. Rest today in what Christ has already done.

Day 5: Forsaking All to Follow

Reading: Luke 5:9-11 -- James, John, and Simon Peter bring their boats to shore and leave everything behind to follow Jesus.

Devotional: They left boats, nets, livelihood, and reputation. James and John likely left behind a prosperous business. None of them left because following Jesus promised an easier life -- the apostles would go on to face persecution, imprisonment, and death. They left because they had seen something true, and the eternal weight of that truth made everything else feel light by comparison. As Philippians 3:7-8 describes, what once seemed like gain becomes loss when measured against knowing Christ. The call of the gospel is not an upgrade to your current life. It is a new life entirely. What would it look like for you today to stop asking Jesus to follow your plans and instead follow his?