

Cast Your Nets on the Right Side of the Ship

Luke 5:6

And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes; and their net brake.

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Table of Contents

Forward		3
Chapter 1	Cast your net on the right side of the ship.	4
Chapter 2	The nets were not torn.	7
Chapter 3	Jesus call James and John.	10
Chapter 4	The nations have caught their feet in a net.	14

Forward

John 21:6-8

And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch." So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish.

Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea. But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net full of fish.

You cast your nets in, and others will help you bring the fish to shore.

Christian worker often struggle in the labor for the Lord by doing the best they know how, yet at times they cast their nets on the wrong side of the ship.

Without the direction of the Holy Spirit, you cannot tell where to find the best place or in what manner to minister in order to bring the lost to Jesus.

Determine to listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit and when you have cast your net on the right side of the ship. You will be rewarded with a bountiful catch.

The net you are to use to bring in the catch is the word of God.

Chapter 1

Cast your nets on the right side of the ship.

John 21:6

And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch." So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish.

Those who are humble, diligent, and patient, though their lives see their affairs take a rewarding turn, after many struggles.

There is nothing lost by observing Christ's orders; it is casting the net on the right side of the ship.

Jesus manifests himself to his people by directing them in their labor. He will take care of those who have left all to follow him.

Peter was the most zealous of the disciples He recognized and reached out to Christ first.

The Lord Jesus had provision ready for them.

We need not be curious in inquiring from where this came; but we are comforted at Christ's care for his disciples.

Although there were many, and large fish, yet they lost none, nor damaged their net. The net of the gospel has enclosed multitudes, yet it is as strong as ever to bring souls to God through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Let down your nets for a catch.

Luke 5:4

When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch."

Though they had taken nothing, yet Christ told them to let down their nets again.

We must not abruptly quit our callings because we have not the success in them we desire.

When I was a young preacher, I would usually take 9 or more scriptures and build a sermon around those. That worked pretty well until the Holy Spirit directed me to read the Bible from start to finish over and over again.

I found that the Bible I was using had 1,240 pages in it. If I would read 40 pages each day, I could read completely through the Bible in one month. I started doing that. Some months I accomplished it, and some months I did not, as I had stopped pastoring and was teaching school in an Alaskan village.

Later, after I returned to the Midwest, I took a teaching job about 80 miles from our home. Each day, I would play tapes of someone reading the Bible all the way to work, and all the way back from work. During those years, I could go listen through the Bible three and one half times each year. Many times, when traveling in the car alone, I still listen to the Bible being read. I challenge you to do the same.

When you pray for the lost or for the sick, it is not you that can save or heal.

It is the word of God in you.

Do you sometimes wonder why your ministry is shallow, or weak, get filled with the Word of God, the whole truth, and you will see a radical change.

A place for the spreading of the nets

Ezekiel 47:10

"And it will come about that fishermen will stand beside it; from Engedi to Eneglaim there will be a place for the spreading of nets Their fish will be according to their kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea, very many.

His river is similar to the river mentioned in Rev. 22:1-2. Both rivers are associated with the river in the Garden of Eden (see Genesis 2:10). The river symbolizes life from God and the blessings that flow from his throne. It is a gentle, safe, deep river, expanding as it flows.

The Arabah is the geological depression in which the Dead Sea lies. The sea that will become fresh refers to the Dead Sea, a body of water so salty that nothing can live in it. The river will be fresh in the Dead Sea's water so it can support life.

This is another picture of the life-giving nature of the water that flows from God's temple. God's power can transform us no matter how lifeless or corrupt we may be. Even when we feel messed up and beyond hope, his power can heal us.

Observe the progress of the gospel in the world, and the process of the work of grace in the heart; attend the motions of the blessed Spirit under Divine guidance.

If we search into the things of God, we find some things plain and easy to be understood, as the waters that were but to the ankles; others more difficult, which require a deeper search, as the waters to the knees, or the loins; and some quite beyond our reach, which we cannot penetrate; but must, as St. Paul did, adore the depth, Rom 11.

It is wisdom to begin with that which is most easy, before we proceed to that which is dark and hard to be understood.

The promises of the sacred word, and the privileges of believers, as shed abroad in their souls by the quickening Spirit, abound where the gospel is preached; they nourish and delight the souls of men; they never fade nor wither, nor are exhausted.

Even the leaves serve as medicines to the soul: the warnings and reproofs of the word, though less pleasant than Divine consolations, tend to heal the diseases of the soul.

All who believe in Christ, and are united to him by his sanctifying Spirit, will share the privileges of Israelites.

There is room in the church, and in heaven, for all who seek the blessings of that new covenant of which Christ is Mediator.

What a great sermon idea: "The river will be fresh in the dead sea waters".

Chapter 2

The Nets are not torn.

Luke 5:6

When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break;

Simon (Peter) was awestruck at this miracle, and his first response was to feel his own insignificance in comparison to this man's greatness. Peter knew that Jesus had healed the sick and driven out demons, but he was amazed that Jesus cared about his day-to-day routine and understood his needs. God is interested not only in saving us, but also in helping us in our daily activities.

Jesus calls Peter and Andrew.

Matthew 4:18

Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.

The Sea of Galilee is really a large lake. About 30 fishing towns surrounded it during Jesus' day, and Capernaum was the largest.

Jesus told Peter and Andrew to leave their fishing business and become "fishers of men," to help others find God. Jesus was calling them away from their productive trades to be productive spiritually.

We all need to fish for souls. If we practice Christ's teachings and share the gospel with others, we will be able to draw those around us to Christ like a fisherman who pulls fish into his boat with nets.

These men already knew Jesus. He had talked to Peter and Andrew previously (John 1:35-42) and had been preaching in the area. When Jesus called them, they knew what kind of man he was and were willing to follow him.

When fish are absent, there is no need to cast a net.

Isaiah 19:8

And the fishermen will lament, and all those who cast a line into the Nile will mourn, and those who spread nets on the waters will pine away.

Egypt was noted for its wisdom, but here its wise men and officials were deceived and foolish. True wisdom can come only from God. We must ask him for wisdom to guide our decisions, or we will also be uncertain and misdirected. Are you confused about something now? Ask God for wisdom to deal with it.

When ungodly men escape danger, they are apt to think themselves secure; but evil pursues sinners, and will speedily overtake them, except they repent.

The Egyptians will be given over into the hand of one who shall rule them with rigor, as was shortly after fulfilled. The Egyptians were renowned for wisdom and science; yet the Lord would give them up to their own perverse schemes, and to quarrel, till their land would be brought by their contests to become an object of contempt and pity.

He renders sinners afraid of those whom they have despised and oppressed; and the Lord of hosts will make the workers of iniquity a terror to themselves, and to each other; and every object around a terror to them.

A place for spreading the nets

Ezekiel 26:5

'She will be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea, for I have spoken,' declares the Lord GOD, 'and she will become spoil for the nations.'

After a 15-year siege, Nebuchadnezzar could not conquer the part of Tyre located on the island; thus certain aspects of the description in Ezekiel 26:12, 14 exceed the actual damage done to Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar. But the prophecy predicted what would happen to the island settlement later during the conquests of Alexander the Great.

Alexander threw the rubble of the mainland city into the sea until it made a bridge to the island. Then he marched across the bridge and destroyed the island (332 B.C.). Today the island city is still a pile of rubble, a testimony to God's judgment.

To be secretly pleased with the death or decay of others, when we are likely to get by it; or with their fall, when we may thrive upon it, is a sin that easily besets us, yet is not thought as badly as really it is.

But it comes from a selfish, covetous principle, and from that love of the world as our happiness, which the love of God expressly forbids.

He often blasts the projects of those who would raise themselves on the ruin of others. The maxims most current in the trading world, are directly opposed to the law of God.

But he will show himself against the money-loving, selfish traders, whose hearts, like those of Tyre, are hardened by the love of riches.

Men have little cause to glory in things which stir up the envy and rapacity of others, and which are continually shifting from one to another; and in getting, keeping, and spending which, men provoke that God whose wrath turns joyous cities into ruinous heaps.

Chapter 3

Jesus Calls James and John

Matthew 4:21

Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them.

James and his brother, John, along with Peter and Andrew, were the first disciples that Jesus called to work with him. Jesus' call motivated these men to get up and leave their jobs—immediately. They didn't make excuses about why it wasn't a good time. They left at once and followed.

Jesus calls each of us to follow him. When Jesus asks us to serve him, we must be like the disciples and do it at once.

Jesus again calls fishermen.

Mark 1:19

Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets.

Fishing was a major industry around the Sea of Galilee. Fishing with nets was the most common method. Capernaum, the largest of the more than 30 fishing towns around the lake at that time, became Jesus' new home (Matthew 4:12-13).

We often assume that Jesus' disciples were great men of faith from the first time they met Jesus. But they had to grow in their faith just as all believers do (Mark 14:48-50, 66-72; John 14:1-9; John 20:26-29).

This is apparently not the only time Jesus called Peter (Simon), James, and John to follow him (see Luke 5:1-11 and John 1:35-42 for two other times).

Although it took time for Jesus' call and his message to get through, the disciples followed. In the same way, we may question and falter, but we must never stop following Jesus.

Every kind of fish were caught in the net.

Matthew 13:47

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind;

The parable of the fishing net has the same meaning as the parable of the wheat and weeds. We are to obey God and tell others about his grace and goodness, but we cannot dictate who part of the kingdom of heaven is and who is not. This sorting will be done at the last judgment by those infinitely more qualified than we.

They immediately left their nets to follow Jesus.

Mark 1:18

Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.

Fishing was a major industry around the Sea of Galilee. Fishing with nets was the most common method. Capernaum, the largest of the more than 30 fishing towns around the lake at that time, became Jesus' new home (Matthew 4:12-13).

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Jesus blessed the disciples for the use of their boats

Luke 5:2-4

And He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land.

And He sat down and began teaching the people from the boat. When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch."

Fishermen on the Sea of Galilee used nets, often bell-shaped nets with lead weights around the edges.

A net would be thrown flat onto the water, and the lead weights would cause it to sink around the fish. Then the fishermen would pull on a cord, drawing the net around the fish. Nets had to be kept in good condition, so they were washed to remove weeds and then mended.

When Christ had done preaching, he told Peter to apply to the business of his calling.

Time spent on week days in public exercises of religion, need be but little hindrance in time, and may be great furtherance to us in temper of mind, as to our worldly business.

With what cheerfulness may we go about the duties of our calling, when we have been with God, and thus have our worldly employments sanctified to us by the word and prayer!

Though they had taken nothing, yet Christ told them to let down their nets again. We must not abruptly quit our callings because we have not the success in them we desire. We are likely to speed well, when we follow the guidance of Christ's word. The draught of fishes was by a miracle.

We must all, like Peter, own ourselves to be sinful men, therefore Jesus Christ might justly depart from us. But we must beseech him that he would not depart; for woe unto us if the Saviour depart from sinners! Rather let us entreat him to come and dwell in our hearts by faith, that he may transform and cleanse them.

These fishermen forsook all, and followed Jesus, when their calling prospered. When riches increase, and we are tempted to set our hearts upon them, then to quit them for Christ is thankworthy.

Those who flatter spread a net for their feet.

Proverbs 29:5

A man who flatters his neighbor is spreading a net for his steps.

Flatterers put men off their guard, which betrays them into foolish conduct.

One is thrown into a net by his own webbing

Job 18:8

"For he is thrown into the net by his own feet, and he steps on the webbing.

Bildad describes the miserable condition of a wicked man; in which there is much certain truth, if we consider that a sinful condition is a sad condition, and that sin will be men's ruin, if they do not repent.

Though Bildad thought the application of it to Job was easy, yet it was not safe nor just. It is common for angry disputants to rank their opponents among God's enemies, and to draw wrong conclusions from important truths.

Chapter 4

The nations have caught their own feet in a net.

Psalm 9:15

The nations have sunk down in the pit which they have made; in the net which they hid, their own foot has been caught.

All of us want God to help us when we are in trouble, but often for different reasons. Some want God's help so that they will be successful and other people will like them.

Others want God's help so that they will be comfortable and feel good about themselves. David, however, wanted help from God so that justice would be restored to Israel and so that he could show others God's power.

When you call to God for help, consider your motive. Is it to save yourself pain and embarrassment or to bring God glory and honor?

The lion seeks to draw the afflicted into his net.

Psalm 10:9

He lurks in a hiding place as a lion in his lair; He lurks to catch the afflicted; He catches the afflicted when he draws him into his net.

Some people succeed in everything they do, and they brag that no one, not even God, can keep them down.

We may wonder why God allows these people to amass great wealth while they despise him as they do. But why are we upset when the wicked prosper?

Are we angry about the damage they are doing or just jealous of their success? To answer these questions we must gain the right perspective on wickedness and wealth. The wicked will surely be punished because God hates their evil deeds. Wealth is only temporary.

It is not necessarily a sign of God's approval on a person's life; nor is lack of it a sign of God's disapproval. Don't let wealth or lack of it become your obsession. See Proverbs 30:7-8 for a prayer you can pray.

The Lord will pluck your feet out of the net.

Psalm 25:15

My eyes are continually toward the LORD, For He will pluck my feet out of the net.

“The LORD confides in those who fear him.” God offers intimate and lasting friendship to those who revere him, who hold him in highest honor.

What relationship could ever compare with having the Lord of all creation for a friend? Your everlasting friendship with God will grow as you revere him.

Let the wicked fall into their own net.

Psalm 141:10

Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I pass by safely.

When the world is bitter, the word is sweet. Let us lift our prayer unto God. Let us entreat him to rescue us from the snares of Satan, and of all the workers of iniquity. In language like this psalm, O Lord, would we entreat that our poor prayers should set forth our only hope, our only dependence on you. Grant us thy grace, that we may be prepared for this employment, being clothed with thy righteousness, and having all the gifts of thy Spirit planted in our hearts.

Hosea 5:1

Hear this, O priests! Give heed, O house of Israel! Listen, O house of the king! For the judgment applies to you, for you have been a snare at Mizpah and a net spread out on Tabor.

Mizpah and Tabor may have been sites prominent in the false worship of Baal. The leaders likely even encouraged the people to sin at these places. With both their civil and religious leaders hopelessly corrupt, the people of Israel did not have much of a chance.

They looked to their leaders for guidance, and they should have found it.

From now on you will catch men.

Luke 5:10

And so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men."

Lamentations 1:13

"From on high He sent fire into my bones, and it prevailed over them He has spread a net for my feet; He has turned me back; He has made me desolate, Faint all day long.

Let down your net for a catch

Luke 5:4-6

When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." Simon answered and said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as you say and let down the nets." When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break;

Luke 5:11

And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

There are two requirements for coming to God. Like Peter, we must recognize our own sinfulness. Then, like these fishermen, we must realize that we can't save ourselves. If we know that we need help, and if we know that Jesus is the only one who can help us, we will be ready to leave everything and follow him.

This was the disciples' second call. After the first call (Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20), Peter, Andrew, James, and John had gone back to fishing.

They continued to watch Jesus, however, as he established his authority in the synagogue, healed the sick, and drove out demons. Here he also established his authority in their lives—he met them on their level and helped them in their work. From this point on, they left their nets and remained with Jesus. For us, following Jesus means more than just acknowledging him as Savior. We must leave our past behind and commit our future to him.

John 21:6-8

And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch." So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea.

But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net full of fish.

Those who are humble, diligent, and patient, though their labours may be crossed, shall be crowned; they sometimes live to see their affairs take a happy turn, after many struggles.

And there is nothing lost by observing Christ's orders; it is casting the net on the right side of the ship. Jesus manifests himself to his people by doing that for them which none else can do, and things which they looked not for. He would take care that those who left all for him, should not want any good thing.

And latter favours are to bring to mind former favours, that eaten bread may not be forgotten. He whom Jesus loved was the first that said, it is the Lord. John had cleaved most closely to his Master in his sufferings, and knew him soonest. Peter was the most zealous, and reached Christ the first. How variously God dispenses his gifts, and what difference there may be between some believers and others in the way of their honouring Christ, yet they all may be accepted of him!

Others continue in the ship, drag the net, and bring the fish to shore, and such persons ought not to be blamed as worldly; for they, in their places, are as truly serving Christ as the others. The Lord Jesus had provision ready for them. We need not be curious in inquiring whence this came; but we may be comforted at Christ's care for his disciples.

Although there were so many, and such great fishes, yet they lost none, nor damaged their net. The net of the gospel has enclosed multitudes, yet it is as strong as ever to bring souls to God.

May God bless you as you cast your nets into the water.

Matthew 11:28
Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.



To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

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Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House
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