

# 5

## Rabbi

People were curious and amazed at what Jesus was doing. He taught them with authority and did things only God could do. The people crowded around him to watch. Now Jesus begins to call out some of them to follow him. It was a great privilege to become the student of a Jewish teacher.<sup>1</sup> These teachers, called rabbis, taught their students as they traveled around. What kind of people do you think this great rabbi is going to choose?

### Part One: Simon the Fisherman

#### Luke 5:1-11

Simon has already met Jesus. What do we know about Simon from Luke 4?

#### **LOOK OVER** the Text

1. Simon was a fisherman. Look for words that refer to water or fishing. Underline them before you read.
2. Read Luke 5: 1-11.

5:1 One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret,<sup>2</sup> with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, 5:2 he saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. 5:3 He got into

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<sup>1</sup> Since this lesson is about the disciples of a rabbi, talk about your own school experience. What are you studying in school, or what did you study? What kind of work have you done? Do you plan to continue working in that field? Why or why not? If you could study anything you wanted, what would you study?

one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out<sup>3</sup> a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

5:4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.”

5:5 Simon answered, “Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.”

5:6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. 5:7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

5:8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” 5:9 For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, 5:10 and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, “Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men.”<sup>4</sup>  
5:11 So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him. NIV

### **LABEL the Text**

3. This story is about Simon and his partners. What do we know about them from this passage? Circle the words that tell you.
4. This chart will show how Simon changed. Fill it in with words or phrases from the text.

<sup>2</sup> This is also called the Sea of Galilee.

<sup>3</sup> GNB: “push off”

<sup>4</sup> This means men and women.. There were several women disciples who traveled with Jesus. See Luke 8:1-3.

What does Jesus say, do, or ask? How does Simon respond?		
Luke 5:1-3		(Note: The text does not tell you directly, but think about it.)
Luke 5: 4-5		
Luke 5: 6-9		
Luke 5: 10-11		

**LEARN from the Text**

- Why *do you think* Jesus chose Simon?

6. What *do you think* Jesus meant when he said that Simon was going to “catch men”?

## Part Two: Levi the Tax Collector

### Luke 5: 27-32

This is the story of Levi, a tax collector. Tax collectors were Jewish, but they worked for the Roman government. Taxes were used for the roads and the army. Jewish tax collectors got their pay by asking for extra money from the people. The Jewish people hated them.

#### **LOOK OVER** the Text

1. Underline the name “Levi” each time you see it. Which verses talk about Levi? Hint: The word “but” changes the topic from Levi to others.
2. Read Luke 5: 27-32.

5:27 After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. “Follow me,” Jesus said to him, 5:28 and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.

5:29 Then Levi held a great banquet<sup>5</sup> for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. 5:30 But the Pharisees<sup>6</sup> and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect<sup>7</sup> complained to his disciples, “Why do

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<sup>5</sup> ESV: “feast,” or a big dinner party

<sup>6</sup> The Pharisees were a Jewish group that wanted everyone to obey the Law of God. However, if the law did not say exactly how to obey, the Pharisees made up their own laws.

you eat and drink with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?”

5:31 Jesus answered them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.

5:32 I have not come to call the righteous<sup>8</sup>, but sinners to repentance.”<sup>9</sup> NIV

### **LABEL the Text**

3. Where is Levi at the beginning of the story? Circle the words.
4. Who are the other characters? Underline the words in the text that tell us.
5. How does Levi respond to Jesus? Put a star ☆ next to the words that tell you.

### **LINK to History**<sup>10</sup>

The Pharisees were a group of Jewish leaders. At first, they wanted to be close to God. They thought the way to do that was to follow the law perfectly. However, they had trouble doing that. The law has general rules such as “Love the Lord your God,” “Honor your father and mother,” and “Do not work on the day of rest, the Sabbath.” To follow these rules, you need a good heart and a good attitude. The Pharisees said to one another, “How do we know if we are good enough?” So they made little rules to help them follow the more general laws.

Their new rules defined exactly what they should DO. The Law says, “Do not work on the Sabbath,” so the Pharisees defined “work.” They decided exactly what they could do, how far they could walk, and what they could carry. At the same time, many of them forgot why God commanded a day of rest.<sup>11</sup> Jesus had very different ideas about the law.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> ESV: “the Pharisees and their scribes”

<sup>8</sup> Righteousness usually means “right with God,” “acceptable to God.” Jesus has a different meaning for the word here. Can you guess it?

<sup>9</sup> Repentance is a complete turn away from sin and toward God.

<sup>10</sup> You can read the actual words by looking up the references.

<sup>11</sup> “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord. On it you shall not do any work....” Exodus 20:8

<sup>12</sup> The following sentences are paraphrased. The Bible references are in the footnotes.

**Pharisees:** You and your disciples are eating with sinful people! You are breaking the law! Do you want to throw away the law?

**Jesus:** I did not come to throw away the law. I came to give it its full meaning.<sup>13</sup>

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**Pharisees:** We stay away from bad people. They might make us “unclean.” We follow special washing rules to keep us “clean.”

**Jesus:** Evil comes from inside, from a person’s heart.<sup>14</sup> You clean the outside of the cup, but inside it is full of all kinds of evil.<sup>15</sup>

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**Pharisees:** We keep the law.

**Jesus:** You keep the little laws, but you have forgotten the more important matters of the law – justice and the love of God.<sup>16</sup>

The Pharisees and Jesus disagreed on many other matters. Some Pharisees followed Jesus, but others were completely against him.

### **LEARN from the Text**

6. Use the information above to help you explain the reaction of the Pharisees in Luke 5:30.

7. Jesus is playing with words in Luke 5:31,32. Which words have new or different meanings?

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<sup>13</sup> “...to fulfill [the Law]” Matthew 5:17

<sup>14</sup> See Mark 7:20-23.

<sup>15</sup> See Matthew 23:25.

<sup>16</sup> See Matt 23:23 and Luke 11:42.

8. Compare Jesus words in Luke 5:31, 32 with Luke 4:43. (See Lesson 1.6.)  
What is Jesus' purpose? How does Jesus fulfill (do, accomplish) his purpose in this story?

9. Why *do you think* Jesus chose Levi and not one of the Pharisees?

### **LIVE** What you Learn

#### **Discuss:**

Do you agree with Jesus' choice of disciples? If you were Jesus, what kind of people would you choose?

#### **Consider this:**

Jesus had "large crowds" of disciples, but he chose twelve of them to be his leaders. He called them apostles, which means "ones who are sent out." Simon and Levi were included. Jesus called Simon "Peter," the "Rock." Levi, also called Matthew, is the writer of the first gospel.<sup>17</sup>

The Pharisees thought that if they obeyed the law, then God would forgive them. This is not the message from Jesus. Jesus came to save us, like a doctor saves a sick person. He is able to change us and bring us close to God. It is not because we are good enough, but because we are forgiven. First we have to "fall at Jesus' knees" (5:8) as Peter did. Then we, like Levi, can celebrate<sup>18</sup> our new life.

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<sup>17</sup> Luke 6: 12-13, 17. On the name "Matthew," see Matthew 9:9 and 10:3.

<sup>18</sup> Levi celebrated by having a dinner party with Jesus and his friends.



## The Final Word

These were some of Jesus' last words to his followers:

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Matthew 28: 18-20 NIV

## Following Jesus: A Personal Story

I am from China. Before I came to States, I studied in one of universities in Beijing. I was a self-centered person, spending most of my time studying alone. I was a good student in my professors' eyes because of my good performance in my studies. When I was recommended to join the Communist Party while I was in college, I didn't think too much about the purpose of doing that, except considered it as an honor.

I came to States to visit my husband two years ago. I felt very lonely and lost when I just arrived at States because I didn't have any friends and couldn't understand people. I had tried to apply to some universities in the States, but hadn't got any response, so I also felt so anxious and upset about my future. A week later, I heard that there was a very good church around where I lived and I decided to go there to have a look because I had never been to church when I was in China.

The first day when I went to the church, I was so impressed by the music (later on, I found out they were hymns) that my anxiety was totally gone. I love music and I felt the hymn is the most beautiful music in the world. Also because people in church were very nice to me, I decided to continue to go there.

Several days later, I happened to meet a lady called Ruth (not her real name) who also went to the same church. This dramatically changed my life later on. Ruth took me to a graduate Christian meeting. In the meeting, I was so moved by the speech of the speaker and the genuine love that people showed towards each other that I realized there was something missing in my life. I wrote a letter to Ruth the next day:

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*Dear [Ruth],*

*I greatly appreciate your kindness. I spent a memorable night yesterday. I am impressed by what you said in public last night. I was born and spent my childhood in a small city, and have several good friends there. But when I went to college in Beijing, I felt I would never make friends like before because most people only care about their own business. In China, all the students live in the dorms.*

*I had thought because we were of the same age, we would get along well. But I was disappointed that my dorm mates always quarreled because of some trivial things. So after that time, I was absorbed in my studies. Although I got satisfactory scores in my major, I felt my life was incomplete because I did not have true friends. There is a proverb in China that says, "The gentleman's friendship is as light as water." Is that right? I often ask myself. To tell the truth, I went to church last week because the people there were very kind to me, and I felt their love was true. Now I see what makes you and them so nice and why you treat everyone sincerely. I will read the Bible you gave me carefully. I am an introverted girl but it feels very pleasant to talk with you. It is unusual to me because I always feel there is a gap between people of different ages.*

*I wish you and your family a good weekend.*

*Lois (Not my real name)*

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With the help of Ruth, I started to study Bible. The more I studied Bible, the more I realized God's unconditional love for me - and my own sin. I started my new study several months later. I felt very happy because I found the peace and joy in my heart and I didn't feel lonely anymore. I knew that there is someone I can always talk to and depend on whenever I need - Jesus Christ. I got baptized several months ago because I wanted to submit myself totally to Jesus Christ as my Savior. Although I will still meet with many difficulties and feel discouraged sometimes, but I believe God will carry me through all the difficulties.