

Luke's Ancient Biography of Jesus

Notes on Lesson Five: Rabbi

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Luke 5:1-11 and Luke 5: 27-32

Central Message

Jesus had “large crowds” of disciples, but he chose only twelve of them to be his apostles, which means “ones who are sent out.”³³ Jesus did not look for the religious leaders. He wanted people who were ready to learn from him, like Simon Peter and Levi. The religious leaders, on the other hand, argued with Jesus. They thought they were close to God because they did all the right things. This is not the message from Jesus.

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 righteous³⁴, but sinners to repentance.”³⁵

Life Application

Jesus 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 celebrate³⁶ our new life.

Community-Building Activity and Introduction³⁷

School Days

Preparation: Write the instructions on a board, or print the worksheet or cover page from the supplementary materials. If you use the instruction strips, copy and cut enough strips for each person.

Instructions: Answer one or more of these questions: What are you studying in school? What did you study in school? What kind of work did you do before this year? Do you plan to continue working in that field? Why or why not? If you could study anything you wanted, what would you study?

Teaching Notes: Let them choose one or more of the questions to answer. They will have their own way of telling about their school experience, which will probably

³³ In other words, he chose twelve to train as leaders, to continue the work.

³⁴ Righteousness usually means “right with God,” “acceptable to God.” Jesus has a different meaning for the word here. Can you guess it?

³⁵ Repentance is a complete turn away from sin and toward God.

³⁶ Levi celebrated by having a dinner party with Jesus and his friends.

³⁷ The community-building activities and the introductions are often combined in the lesson notes because sometimes the introduction is first, and sometimes the activity is first.

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combine some of the questions. This might be something you will want to share as a large group. When you are finished with the community-building activity, read the introduction in the workbook together.

Lesson Notes

Note: Plan the timing of this lesson so you are able to cover both sections. I have included my own thoughts and interpretations for your benefit, but be careful to allow the students to do most of the sharing. When you are prepared, you will find just the right opportunity to insert a nugget of truth here and there. It is good to teach as Jesus taught, helping people to see the truth for themselves.

Part One: Simon the Fisherman Luke 5:1-11

Preparation:

Note that the numbers below refer to the numbers in the workbook.

- 1.2. The “look over” activity appears quite simple, “Underline all the words that refer to water or fishing.” However, there are two reasons for this activity. First, they will learn about the setting and context before they read. Secondly, some fishing terms, such as “a catch”, might be unfamiliar to a second language learner who has spent his/her time in academic books.
3. What do we know about Simon and his partners? There can be a variety of answers. They were fishermen who were washing their nets after being out all night without catching anything. They were on the shore, and we can imagine that they were listening to Jesus. The students may also notice their responses to Jesus. The next question will discuss Peter’s response.
4. This is a good activity to do in pairs. Listen to their responses in the chart. There is little need to add to their insights unless they are mistaken. This is an exercise in observation. (If they are mistaken, gently lead them back to the text.)
 - A. Jesus got into Simon’s boat and asked Simon to push it away from the shore. It does not say that he asked if he could get in the boat. That might imply that he knew it would be OK. Simon’s response is to do what is asked, although we are not told that directly.
 - B. Jesus asks Simon to go out into the deep water and let down the nets for a catch. Simon, the fisherman, complains that they worked all night and didn’t catch anything. He is probably tired, and probably also implying that this is the wrong time of day to catch fish.

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However, more importantly, he obeys just because Jesus requested it.

- C. There are so many fish that the boat begins to sink. We are not told that this is a miracle, but since it was Jesus' idea from the start, we can certainly imply it. Peter was astonished. Jesus calls it fear. (See verse 10.) Peter's response is to fall at Jesus' knees and to say, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" (Note the detail. You may even want someone to illustrate that action.) Peter sees God is with Jesus, and it causes Peter to see how far he is from God. This is a natural response, and a good one.
- D. Jesus tells Peter not to be afraid. "From now on, you will be catching men." The meaning of this phrase is discussed in question 6, but you could discuss it now.
5. This is an interpretation question. What does it mean? What do they think? There are questions later in the lesson that come back to why Jesus chooses people, so the important aspect of this question is to notice specifically why Peter was chosen. It is **probably not** because he is a fisherman. It **cannot** be because he is a sinful man. What do we see in Peter that would make him a good student of the great rabbi - teacher? Jesus is looking for someone who wants to learn from him. Peter may not have a lot to offer Jesus at first, but he obeys Jesus, even though he does not understand. He falls at his knees, even though he is afraid. He proves that he is a good choice, for when Jesus calls him, he leaves everything and follows him.
6. Jesus is going to train his followers to be leaders. They will bring people "in" to God. The students will understand this better as they read the gospel, for this is Jesus' goal as well; he came to save people. As he quote Isaiah in Luke 4: 19,, "...to announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people." A good way to illustrate "to save" is to imagine a lake with someone drowning. Other religions try to teach that person how to swim, but Jesus jumps into the water and rescues the person. (You will discuss Jesus' goals again at the end of the lesson.)

Part Two: Levi the Tax Collector

Luke 5: 27-32

Preparation:

Note that the numbers below refer to the numbers in the workbook.

- 1.2. The topic changes in Luke 5:30. Noticing the change in topics will help them pay attention to the new topic.

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3. Levi was sitting by his tax booth. What *do they think* he was doing there?
4. Jesus, Pharisees, teachers of the law, and the disciples
5. He got up, left everything, followed him, held a great banquet, and invited (we assume) a large crowd of tax collectors and others. Ask the students questions to help them imagine all this. What *do you think* he left? Why *do you think* he invited these people?
6. You will find the answers in the LINK section.
7. (Your copy of the workbook has Luke 5:31. Please include 5:32) Write the following words on a card or the board and ask them to discuss the double meaning. healthy, doctor, sick, righteous. The “healthy” and “righteous” are those who think they are righteous and close to God. The sick are those who know they need God, who know they are sinners. Jesus will not save (heal, change) someone who does not think he needs to be saved (healed, changed). Jesus ends with a statement with one meaning: “I have [come to call] ...sinners to repentance.” Discuss briefly the clear meaning of these words as well. Sinners are those who are away from God because of their sin (and in this case, they are people who know they are sinners), and repentance is the act of turning back to God and asking him for forgiveness.
8. What is Jesus’ purpose? Luke 4:43 says, “But he said to them, ‘I must preach the Good News about the Kingdom of God in other towns also, because that is what God sent me to do.’” Ask them what they remember from the previous lesson. Ask them what the Good News is. One way to define the Good News is to reword Luke 5:32. Jesus came to call sinners to repentance. How does he do this with Peter and Levi? He calls them to follow him, but he does it in very personal ways. He meets Peter at the sea, in his fishing boat, and talks about the kingdom in fishing terms. He does not want Peter to be afraid. He does not tell Peter that he has to change, he says “don’t worry; you will...”.change. He meets Levi where he works, even though the Jews thought tax collectors were all sinners. He goes with Levi to his house, and eats with him and his friends (an important sign of being friends). We are not told that they repent, but we can see that they left everything and followed him.
9. We can guess that Levi knew that he needed God because he was a tax collector, and because he welcomed Jesus.

LIVE If you were Jesus, what kind of people would you choose? With this question, we return to the idea of a teacher choosing students or a leader choosing

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followers. These disciples will become the leaders of the church. Would the students really choose poor men with no formal education and no important position in society? At first, they may say “yes,” but get them to think about it.

Read the “consider” section to the class. If the spirit is right, pray with the class. This is a good week to follow up with the responsive ones, and to ask them if they would like to follow Jesus. I believe they can respond to what they know, even if they still have questions. They can give what they know of themselves to what they know of God.

You might challenge them to memorize Luke 5:31 and 32. It is a key verse in Luke, and we will talk about it again next week.

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Workbook One: Exploring the Identity of Jesus

Rabbi

In the last lesson, Jesus amazed all the people. He taught in the synagogues, healed the sick, and cast out demons. Other teachers of the day, called rabbis, spoke the words of other teachers from the past, but Jesus taught with his own authority.

In this lesson, Jesus invites two men to follow him. It was a great privilege to be a rabbi's student, or disciple. The disciples will be with Jesus every day, watching him and learning from him. As we read the gospel, we will often ask,

“What is Jesus teaching the disciples?”

Community Time



School Days

Answer one or more of these questions:

1. What are you studying in school?
2. What did you study in school?
3. What kind of work did you do before this year?
4. Do you plan to continue working in that field? Why or why not?
5. If you could study anything you wanted, what would you study?

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