

# How To Qualify To Serve Jesus!

Our study is in Luke 5:1-11, but we will start with the first chapter of John. The gospel of John opens by introducing us to Jesus Christ and to John the Baptist. It is clear very quickly that John the Baptist was not the Messiah because in John 1:19-23 we are told,

*This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." Then they said to him, "Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD,' as Isaiah the prophet said." John 1:19-23 (NASB)*

At some point in John's ministry, he told the crowds that he was not the Christ, Elijah or the Prophet who was to come (Deuteronomy 18:18). Instead he was the forerunner that Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1 prophesied would come. He

was preparing the way for the Messiah. He was calling men and women to repent because the Messiah was near.

In verse 29 we are told that the next day, John saw Jesus coming to him and John said,

*"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" "This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" John 1:29-30 (NASB)*

## FIRST DISCIPLES TO BELIEVE JESUS IS THE MESSIAH.

Here we are told that John declared to the crowd that Jesus was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and then he told everyone who had ears to hear that Jesus was God because he said Jesus had existed before him! In verse 34 John declared Jesus was the Son of God. This reveals that John had insight into Jesus that the others did not have; and others were listening, including his own disciples.

Then verses 35-36 tell us,

*Again, the next day John was standing with two of his disciples,*

*and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. John 1:35-36 (NASB)*



The Greek tense of the word "walked" in verse

36 actually describes Jesus as continuously walking when he declares, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Two of John's disciples hear him speak and start following Jesus. What a thrilling picture! I have often wondered how John was feeling when he saw two of his own disciples start following after Jesus. Even

though we are never told, we do gain an insight into the hearts of these two men. They want to know more about Jesus!

Then verse 37 says,

And Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, “What do you seek?” They said to Him, “Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?” John 1:37-38 (NASB)

The Greek text describes a very dynamic picture that is missing in our English Bibles. The Greek word “saw” in this verse is the Greek word *theaomi*. It has the idea “to behold.” Jesus did more than spin around and look at them. He spun around and stared at them. Now I wonder how these two men felt when Jesus did that? Imagine walking behind Jesus, the one whom John has just declared is the Lamb of God. Then all of a sudden He spins around and stares at you and asks, “What do you seek?” It was obvious they wanted something. But notice they do not answer Jesus’ question. Instead, they replied with, “Where are you staying?” What a curious reply! Maybe they were intimidated. I think they were intimidated. Maybe they were not. Whatever the answer, it is clear they wanted to spend some time with Jesus.

Next we are told that Jesus invited them to come with Him and they were with Him the rest of the day.

He said to them, “Come, and you will see.” So, they came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour [or 4:00 p.m.] One of the two who heard John speak and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. John 1:39-40 (NASB)

Now we learn that one of the disciples was Andrew, Peter’s brother. The name of the second disciple is not given, but we believe he was John since he never refers to himself in his gospel of John by name. He only calls himself “the one whom Jesus’ loved.” I think John used this wonderful phrase to reveal that Jesus loved others. I also think this reveals that John was overwhelmed that Jesus loved him because he often repeats the phrase.

**PETER BELIEVES JESUS IS THE MESSIAH.** The next two verses are extremely important. They say,

He [or Andrew] found first his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which translated means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter). John 1:41-42 (NASB)

So what happened to these two men? After Jesus, John and Andrew spent time with Jesus, they believed He was their Messiah. This becomes obvious when we are told that Andrew believed so strongly that Jesus was the Messiah that he ran off to tell Peter and brought him to Jesus. It is also obvious that Andrew believed Jesus was the Messiah. While we are not told that John believed in Jesus, the context strongly suggests that he did. Also, while we are not told Peter believed Jesus was the Messiah, it is obvious that Peter did because Jesus changed his name from Cephas to Peter. This was a sign of discipleship. This is an exciting event. Imagine, three men believed in Jesus and became His disciples! Three disciples!

**NEW DISCIPLES FOLLOW JESUS.** In verse 43 we are told that on the next day Jesus went into Galilee and met Philip. Philip believed in Jesus and Jesus told Philip to follow Him. Then in verses 45-51 we are told Nathaniel believed in Jesus too! Notice that we are told Jesus asked Philip to follow Him, but the gospel record does not say that of the others. Yet, the context strongly implies that Jesus did ask the other men to follow Him. It becomes obvious in John 2:1-2 that these five men are following because they are now called disciples. John 2:1-2 says,

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. John 2:1-2 (NASB)

Here we are told the disciples followed Jesus to the wedding at Cana of Galilee.

There are two things we need to think about. One is that the word “disciples” is an important word. Sometimes we forget the meaning of this word “disciple.” We read it and miss the meaning, just like we read facts about God and miss the ways of God. The word disciple in the New Testament refers

to anyone who believes in Jesus. Later in the book of Acts, the defining term for a Christian was that he or she was a disciple of Jesus. In Luke 14:26 Jesus defined the characteristics of His disciples to a large crowd. He said,

*If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.*  
Luke 14:26-27 (NASB)

Notice Jesus' definition of a disciple. A disciple is more than a name. It refers to one who follows after Jesus! Christians are Christ-followers. Sometimes we treat "disciple" as if it were just a title. We talk about discipleship as if we just learn about Jesus. But Jesus said that a believer is one who "comes after Me"—that is, follows Him. A disciple is a follower after Jesus.

**DISCIPLES FOLLOW JESUS UP TO JERUSALEM AND SAMARIA.** John 2:12 tells us the disciples were still with Him later at the wedding. The next verse, John 2:13, says Jesus and the disciples went up to Jerusalem. Then John 3:22 says Jesus and the disciples went to Aenon which was near the Jordan River. Then John 4:3 says they went to Samaria to meet the woman at the well next. The point of all that is that the disciples literally followed Jesus to the south and then back up north.

**DISCIPLES DO NOT RETURN WITH JESUS TO CANA OF GALILEE.** After that Jesus and the disciples left Samaria and John 4:46 says Jesus returned to Cana of Galilee, but this time the disciples did not follow Jesus. Now why did they not follow Him? We are never told. John 4:46 just says Jesus returned to Cana of Galilee.

**JESUS GOES TO NAZARETH BY HIMSELF.** Luke 4:16-31 describes the next chronological event in the life of Jesus. He returned to His hometown of Nazareth, but there were no disciples with Him. One could argue that Scripture just does not mention them, but the next chronological event will reveal that they did not follow. They had gone back home to Capernaum in Galilee when Jesus went to Nazareth. We need to ask: why did they not follow Jesus?

**THE SECOND CALL TO FOLLOW.** Matthew 4:13 says

after Jesus left for Nazareth, He went to Capernaum and then resumed His preaching. Capernaum was near to the Sea of Galilee. If we skip down to verse 18, we learn where the disciples went.

*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. 19 And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. Matthew 4:18-20 (NASB)*

We are told that Jesus is walking by the Sea of Galilee and sees Peter and Andrew. Notice, they were not following Jesus. Instead, they had been fishing at the sea. This time they do not find Jesus; Jesus finds them and says, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Now why did He add, "Make you fishers of men?" I think He used that phrase because they were fishermen. He wanted to capture their attention. He was calling them to act like His disciples! I find this absolutely amazing. Jesus could have forced them to obey since He was God. But instead He appealed to them to follow. God appeals to us today to follow! He appeals to you and me! God gave them a choice and He gives us a choice! The question is: are you following Jesus?

Next notice the order of Jesus' statements. Jesus said the disciples had to follow Him before He would "Make them fishers of men!" The order is important. We must not miss the order. They needed to faithfully follow before He would *make* them fish for men! In John 15:4, Jesus said that a branch cannot produce any fruit by itself. All they could do and today all we can do is water and plant. God gives the increase. Now before we leave this passage, please notice that Peter and Andrew were casting nets.

Then Matthew 4:21-22 says Jesus continued walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee and saw James and John.

*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. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed Him. Matthew*

4:21-22 (NASB)

Now notice what they were doing! They were mending their nets. In the previous account, Peter and Andrew were casting their nets and now James and John were mending their nets—casting and mending.

Before we leave this passage, please notice another thing. Jesus *did not call* these two disciples to become His apostles. This passage is not about Jesus calling them to be His apostles. That will occur in a future chapter in Matthew, and in Mark and Luke. Let me repeat. This was not a call to become apostles. This was the same call Jesus gives to every disciple! You see faithful disciples follow Jesus! Can I ask, how are you following?

Next, verses 23-25 tell us that Jesus preached throughout Galilee, Syria, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and beyond the Jordan. He preached in many places, but notice that once again there is no record that the disciples were following Him.

**THE THIRD CALL.** The next chronological event occurs in Luke 5:1-11 which is our passage for this study. Verse 1 says,

*Now it happened that while the crowd was pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret . . . Luke 5:1 (NASB)*

Here we are told that Jesus is standing near the lake of Gennesaret, which is another name for the Sea of Galilee. There is a large crowd around Him and they are pressing against Him in order to hear Him teach.

**FISHERMEN WERE WASHING THEIR NETS.** Verse 2 says,

*. . . 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. Luke 5:2 (NASB)*

Here we are told that Jesus saw two boats near the shore of the Sea of Galilee and some fisherman. Now some people think that this passage describes the same event that occurred in Matthew 4:18-22. But this event and the one in Matthew 4:18-22 are very different. The first reason is that verse 1 tells

us there is a crowd and Jesus is teaching. That did not occur in Matthew 4:18-22. The second reason is that Peter and Andrew were casting nets in Matthew; here all of them are washing their nets. Also, remember that James and John were mending or repairing their nets. So, these descriptions are very different. The events are not the same event. Now keep watching, you will find more evidence that they are very different.

**JESUS PREACHES FROM A BOAT.** In verse 3 we are told that Jesus got into one of the boats and asked Peter to move the boat a little away from the shore.

*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. Luke 5:3 (NASB)*

Now I have a question, “Why did Jesus ask Peter to move the boat away from the shore a little bit?” The answer is that He was being pressed by the people who wanted to hear Him. With the boat a little way from the shore, the people could spread out along the shore and more easily hear Him teach. This was a great idea. So He sat down, the normal position in which the rabbis taught, and started teaching. These details were never given in Matthew 4:18-22. Also, notice that when Jesus asked Simon to move the boat away from the shore, he just did it. This reveals that Peter already respected Jesus. And notice that Jesus found these fishermen again! They were not following Jesus! This is Jesus’ third call for these men to follow Him.

**JESUS ASKS PETER TO FISH IN DEEP WATER.** In verse 4 we are told that after Jesus finished speaking, He asked Peter to move the boat out into deep water and let down the nets.

*When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.” Luke 5:4 (NASB)*

The Greek word for nets here refers to a very large net that was suitable for being dropped into deep water. When the net was pulled up, it would catch fish. But why did Jesus tell Peter to do this? The answer is that Peter only respected Jesus. That is why he had objected.

**PETER OBJECTS TO JESUS' REQUEST.** Verse 5 reveals why Simon Peter objected!

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."  
Luke 5:5 (NASB)

The Greek word that is translated as "Master" is *epistates*. It is not the normal word for Lord that occurs in the New Testament. It just refers to someone whose position is above another person's. It is Luke's substitute for rabbi. The normal Greek word for Lord in the New Testament is *kurios*, but Peter does not use that word here. This reveals that Peter respected Jesus! That was a problem.

So, Peter explained why he objected. He said, "We worked hard the whole night, Master, and caught nothing!" His point was that there are no fish nearby to be caught. I can imagine Peter saying, "We are tired. We wasted our entire night trying to catch something—anything. So, we want to go home, have breakfast and go to bed." Also, they had just washed the nets in preparation for going home, and now Jesus wanted them to try again! I can imagine that Peter was thinking Jesus was only a carpenter, and he, Peter, was the professional fisherman. Peter knew the sea. He made his living by the sea. He, Andrew, James and John ran a fishing business. What did Jesus know about fishing? I wonder if Peter was thinking that he was the professional and Jesus was just an amateur. Did he think Jesus needed to take Fishing School 101 and learn how to fish? Peter is clearly complaining, and we can feel his frustration with Jesus' request.

Now I am sure that some Christians would think that Jesus' request was unreasonable too, if you did not know the rest of the story. Some Christians are willing to serve Jesus, as long as the ministry or service is not too hard! They do not mind serving Jesus as long as it is rewarding! Ministry for Jesus should be convenient. Then Peter did as Jesus asked.

**THE FISHERMAN'S DREAM CATCH.** Verses 6-7 tell us what happened.

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

in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink. Luke 5:6-7 (NASB)

What happened? The Greek tense of the word "break" is in the imperfect tense implying the nets were breaking repeatedly. Most likely in too many places. So, they signaled to the other boat. The other boat came and it was soon filled with fish. The Greek word "filled" has the idea of filled to the top, and soon both boats were sinking. This was one monstrous catch! This was a fisherman's dream catch. Put this one in the Guinness World Records! Now does the Lord Jesus know how to help us fish or does He really know how to help us fish?

**JESUS IS LORD.** Most fishermen would have been thrilled with this catch—jumping up and down and shouting. They would have pulled out the camera and taken photos to show everyone. It would have been bragging time, but not Peter! Verses 8-10 tell us what happened next.

But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!" For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Luke 5:8-10a (NASB)

Watch this! All of a sudden Peter understood better than anyone else that what had just happened was truly a miracle. This was a miracle in Peter's area of expertise. This was a real miracle and Peter knew it! Jesus was not an amateur. Jesus was the professional and Peter was the amateur.

So, Peter fell down at Jesus' feet and said, "Go away from me, Lord, I am a sinful man!" When Peter said, "Lord" he used the Greek word *kurios*. It is not the word that he used earlier for Master in verse 5. That word referred to great respect for a person, but now Peter declares that Jesus is his Lord, that Jesus is God. Why? Because he was finally amazed and saw himself in comparison to Jesus. It is a turning point in Peter's life.

**NOW YOU WILL BE CATCHING MEN.** Now notice verse 10,

And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be

catching men.” Luke 5:10b (NASB)

If we compare this statement to the one in Matthew 4:18-22, this one is different. The first time Jesus said, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” It would happen in the future. But this time Jesus said “You will be catching men.” Why the change?

**THEY LEFT EVERYTHING.** The answer is found in verse 11. It says,

*When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him. Luke 5:11 (NASB)*

We are told that they left everything for Jesus! This has never been said before about these four disciples! Some people think this means these four disciples left their boats, nets and the incredible catch, and came back later. But if we were to take the time to trace Jesus’ steps throughout the rest of the gospels, we would find that the disciples now stay with Him always until His crucifixion. They stay with Him!

What does it mean that these disciples left everything? The answer is given later in Jesus’ ministry, when Mark 10:28 says that Peter reminded Jesus that they had left everything to follow Him. In Luke 18:28, we are told that they had left their own homes in order to follow Jesus. The message of the gospels is that they really did leave everything! If we continue reading in the gospel of Luke, we learn that Jesus did not call them to be apostles until Luke 6:12-16. So Luke 5:1-11 is not about Jesus calling them to become apostles. It was a call to act and live like Jesus’ disciples!

So, why did Jesus call them to follow Him three times? The first time He called them was after they believed. The second time was at the Sea of Galilee in Matthew 4:18-22 and the third time was in Luke 5:1-11. Why He did call them three times? The answer is they were unwilling to leave everything for Him the first two times. So, Jesus kept calling them until Peter learned an important lesson about being a disciple. Disciples follow Jesus!

**JESUS CALLS US TO BE HIS DISCIPLES AND THEN TO MINISTER.** Today, the idea of following Jesus is an abstract thought. But to follow Jesus in Christ’ time involved a rela-

tionship and commitment. They walked together, ate together, ministered together, talked together, listened and spent time together. To be a disciple was a great commitment. Today, the only way we can hear Jesus teach and see His miracles is to study Scripture. He rebukes us for our behavior in the pages of Scripture. He wants us to obey just as the disciples did. Our relationship with Jesus comes through the pages of Scripture, obedience, confession and prayer. That is how we develop our relationship with Jesus. You see Jesus was asking for more than a commitment to a ministry. He asked that they were committed to a relationship with Him and then they could serve Him!

You see, Jesus is calling you to give up everything so that you will seek Him with all your heart. Jesus wants a relationship with you first. It is too easy to be devoted to our ministry and ignore Jesus.

When we became a Christian, we started following Jesus! Then most of us, if not all of us, drift away from Him because we are more interested in something else rather than Jesus. Oh yes, some of us are committed to a ministry, and it makes us feel good about ourselves. We feel like we are serving Jesus. We squeeze the ministry into our busy schedule and we are so dedicated! We tell ourselves that we are serving Jesus! We are so committed that we even neglect time in the Word of God and our prayer life in order to “serve” God! We forget that Jesus added the words “Follow Me” before He said that his disciples would be catching men. You see discipleship starts by following and ministry is an overflow of that heart relationship.

May I add a side comment? It is sad when the spiritual leaders and ministry leaders in a church are so involved in a ministry that they do not have time for Jesus. Yet, that is common. May I be blunt? Jesus is not really interested in your service, if you are not first and foremost actively seeking a relationship with Him! I believe we can be in love with the idea of serving Jesus and not seriously love Him!

**CONCLUSION.** Many years ago, I had been serving God as a layman in a church and I was very busy “serving” Jesus. Then God put me in a hospital with a blood clot in my subclavian vein. I had been working on the foundation of my home and somehow a blood clot formed in my subclavian vein that runs to the heart. The clot was inches from the heart. They ran tests

and at dinner time they gave me a pill that put me to sleep. At about 10:00 p.m. on a Saturday night, the doctor awakened me and told me that he had seen all of the test results. They could not operate because it was too high risk, but something had to occur, or I would die. After reviewing all of the options, they had concluded that a new unapproved experimental drug was my only option. After he told me all the potential side effects from the drug which could possibly lead to my death, he asked me to sign a release form so that they could give me the drug. I was very sleepy, but when I heard all the ways in which I could die, I asked is there another option. He said, "No!"

So and I consented they gave me the drug. I called it liquid Drano. It successfully ate the clot away. After I was released from the hospital, I visited two doctors who had cared for me. Both told me that I should not be alive. Medically, they did not understand why I was still alive. But I knew why. You see, while I was in that hospital all by myself, I knew God was speaking to me. He wanted all of me! He wanted my heart and my devotion first and then I would be ready to serve Him. He wanted both my love and my service. That was His message to the disciples.

That is Jesus' message to you. You may be a leader in the church, or actively involved in some ministry. But if you are not totally dedicated to your relationship with Jesus first, eventually you will not be happy in any ministry.

You see Jesus said that we must follow Him before He will enable us to serve Him. You see, Jesus is seeking your heart first, before He will really use you! We must be willing to give up everything for Him, before He will want to use you! Even if you are 80 years old, Jesus calls us to give up everything and seek a relationship with Him, then He can really use you. Remember Jesus said this in Matthew 16:24,

**Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.  
Matthew 16:24 (NASB)**

And in Hosea 6:6 we are told,

**For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice,  
And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.**

#### **Hoses 6:6 (NASB)**

This verse reveals that if you are so involved in a ministry that you really do not have time for Jesus, then He is not pleased because He wants your heart first.

Biblical discipleship is a committed relationship with Christ. He must be first and your ministry must be second. And if He is first, you will also be serving Jesus! That is, how we are to follow Jesus!

