

CHAPTER 5

Overview of Luke 5

Chapter 5 contains a list of firsts. Jesus has returned from His first preaching trip to Judea and is once again teaching in Galilee, the land of the Gentiles. We will now witness the call of His first apostles: Peter (and Andrew), James and John, and Levi (Matthew). We will also witness Luke's first mention of Jesus healing a Jewish leper, something that the rabbis taught could only be done by the Messiah. Following that story will be the healing of a paralytic, only this healing will have a twist. In addition to the healing, the man's sins will be forgiven, and Jesus will be accused of blasphemy. Lastly, we will see the first real conflict with the Pharisees and scribes. They will accuse Jesus and His disciples of associating with the wrong kind of people; specifically, tax collectors and "sinners."

What to look for in Luke 5

1. As you read each paragraph ask, "How is God speaking to me personally through His word?"
2. Look for Jesus' encounter with Simon Peter. There will be more to this encounter than just a great fish story!
3. Look for Simon's reaction to Jesus' miracle with the fish, both in words and in action.
4. Identify two healings and note the significance of each.
5. Look for the call of Levi and how he responds to Jesus' call.
6. Look for Jesus' first run-in with the Pharisees and the scribes, and what they accuse Jesus of doing.
7. Look for the love theme that runs throughout the entire chapter.

1 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;

2 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.

3 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.

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

5 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."

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

5:1-3 In the first part of this chapter, Luke emphasizes Jesus' teaching ministry. Word spread about His miracles in Capernaum, which is near the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. He has now gathered a crowd anxious to know more about Him and His message. The "lake of Gennesaret" gets its name from a small fertile plain on the northwest corner of the lake. Because the lake is located in Galilee, it is often referred to by its other name, the Sea of Galilee. It is called a "sea" because of its size, about 13 miles long and 8 miles wide. (In the OT, it was called the "Sea of Chinnereth." The Romans called it "Lake Tiberias." It is the largest freshwater lake in Israel, and the lowest freshwater lake on earth.)

Jesus, knowing that sound travels better over water, gets into a boat and is taken a little way offshore so that He will be better heard by the large crowd. Jesus was teaching "the word of God," though Luke does not elaborate on what exactly Jesus is teaching. The lesson here is that Jesus considered the word of God the most important thing He could give His followers.

In **verse 2**, Luke introduces his readers to "Simon." Simon is his Hebrew name; Peter is his Greek name. Simon is obviously the owner of a small

7 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.

8 But when Simon Peter saw *that*, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!"

9 For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken;

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."

11 When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.

fishing business, as he owned two boats. Each boat was about 8 meters long (a little over 25 feet); thus, room for sail, four rowers and fishers, a helmsman, and nets. These boats could hold up to 15 people. Simon Peter, like most of us, was busy trying to make a living and run a small business.

The lesson here is that Jesus used whatever means was available to reach as many people as possible with the word of God.

5:4-7 Jesus instructs Simon to "put out into the deep water." Deeper water yields bigger fish and more abundant schools of fish. Obviously, Peter and his crew had been out during the night fishing with lanterns. Peter, the experienced fisherman, indicates he's already been fishing in the deeper water, without much luck. Nevertheless, he yields to Jesus in spite of his doubts. The result is a great haul of fish. (The lesson here is that without Jesus, all our efforts can prove for naught, but with Jesus, our efforts eventually bear fruit.) Note, too, that Peter "signaled to their partners." Peter and his partners, James and John, will become partners in a new and greater venture of helping others experience God's love. That "the nets began to break" is a picture that gathering in the lost will result in stretching the resources of the church to the limit.

5:8 It is quite likely that Simon had already heard of this man Jesus and, perhaps, had even heard Him teaching. He may even have been present when Jesus taught in the synagogue in Capernaum. Prior to the great catch of fish, however, Simon probably had the perspective, "Jesus is a fine teacher, but I don't have time to get involved." It is the response of many who are locked into their profession. However, when Jesus' ministry actually affected *him*, he had a change of heart. And, his reaction was not just to say, "Thank you, Jesus. That was very nice of You." Instead, Simon, aware of his spiritual imperfections, "fell down at Jesus' feet" (an act of worship), and acknowledged that he was unworthy to have received His blessings. Undoubtedly, some of Simon's remorse may have been his initial doubting of Jesus. Note, too, that Simon did not say, "I must be a really bad fisherman," or, "That was terrific! Can I learn how to do that?" The first thing Simon did was to acknowledge his sin. All who come to Christ, in order to receive the full benefit of His blessings, *must first acknowledge personal sin*. Unfortunately, many Christians today pass over the issue of personal sin and skip ahead to the blessings and benefits. By doing so, they miss the number one reason Jesus came into the world, and fail to grasp the beauty and wonder of His grace.

5:9-11 Jesus' response to Simon was like that of the angels who appeared to Zacharias, Mary and the shepherds—"Do not fear." Jesus did not come into

12 While He was in one of the cities, behold, *there* was a man covered with leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”

13 And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” And immediately the leprosy left him.

14 And He ordered him to tell no one, “But go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

15 But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and large crowds were gathering to hear *Him* and to be healed of their sicknesses.

16 But Jesus Himself would *often* slip away to the wilderness and pray.

the world to judge the world, but to cast out all fear. Jesus then gives Simon a new purpose for living—“catching men.” Initially, Simon probably had no idea what Jesus meant by that; he would eventually understand the significance at Pentecost. The greatest gift the church can offer new converts is to give them a greater purpose for living.

When Peter, James and John come ashore, they obviously leave their work to the hired hands and begin following Jesus. This is the first use of the term “follow” by Luke. It will occur a number of times throughout the gospel narrative and will come to have great meaning. It will describe those who are committed to Jesus and begin to follow or, sadly, those who hear Him, decide not to commit to Him, and choose not to follow.

(On a somewhat humorous note, Mark records in his gospel [3:17] that when James and John left their nets to follow Jesus, their father, Zebedee, was quite unhappy about their leaving him with all the work. Therefore, Jesus later gave James and John the name “Sons of Thunder.”)

5:12 The next encounter Luke records is one of the most compassionate stories in the gospels. Leprosy is a hideous, contagious skin disease that is spread by physical contact with the person infected. It affects nerve endings in the skin and can result in terrible deformities and loss of limbs. There was no medical cure for it in Jesus’ day; therefore, lepers were considered “unclean” and colonized into camps away from uninfected people. The Jews knew well about Miriam’s sin against Moses, and therefore leprosy was considered the result of sin and a curse from God. Lepers were ostracized from society, unable to enter temple grounds, and left to fend for themselves, most ending up as scavengers for food and clothing. They were the most unloved people in Israel. This man is “covered” with leprosy. Whether his leprosy was the result of personal sin or not, leprosy is the universal biblical picture of sin. So there are two levels of meaning here: one is the physical level that prevents the man from becoming a functioning and accepted part of society, the other is the spiritual level that prevents the man from having a personal relationship with God. Being a leper meant that you were loved by neither man nor God. Obviously, when someone “covered with leprosy” approaches, the crowd scatters and he has immediate access to Jesus. This is a beautiful picture that the greater the sin the greater the grace. The leper prostrates himself before Jesus, a sign of complete submission, and states, “Lord, if You are willing, you can make me clean.” Notice that he does not say, “You can heal me.” Obviously, the man’s main concern is that he is unclean from a spiritual perspective. Jesus, out of his

love for the man, recognizes *both* his spiritual and his physical needs.

5:13 Notice that Jesus “touched him.” He did not have to touch the man to heal him—He touched him to show that He loved him. It is an ultimate act of love. According to the law, touching the man would make Jesus Himself unclean. Jesus has no fear of being infected and knows that more than anything, this man needed to know that someone loved him enough to touch him. Touching the unclean is one of the most loving things any person can do. Therefore, God was visibly and physically extending His love to this poor man. The leprosy affecting him left immediately; this could not be faked and all who witnessed it were amazed.

Rabbinical teaching of the day stated there were certain types of miracles that only the Messiah could do; that is, the performance of these miracles would help the Jews identify the Messiah. These were known as Messianic miracles, and are based primarily on Isaiah’s prophecies. One of those miracles was healing a Jewish leper, something that had never been done in Israel. (Miriam’s healing was before the law of Moses was completed, and Naaman’s healing was the healing of a Gentile leper.) This is the first of the Messianic miracles that Luke records.

(The exact number of miracles required of the Messiah varies with the interpreter. There are four miracles that are usually agreed on, miracles that could be performed only by the Messiah: 1) the Messiah could heal a Jewish leper; 2) the Messiah could heal a mute demon; 3) the Messiah could heal a man born blind, and; 4) the Messiah could raise someone who had been dead four days. Even though Jesus fulfilled all of these miracles, most Pharisees and scribes failed to accept Jesus as the Messiah, a shocking violation of their own teachings.)

5:14 Mosaic law dictated that one had to prove his leprosy had left him by being inspected by the priests. The apparent contradiction here is that not all skin diseases were leprosy, and therefore, some skin diseases that looked like leprosy would occasionally turn out to be something else. Therefore, some skin diseases were healed, but leprosy was never healed; that is, true leper could never be healed. The offering was a thank offering to God for the cleansing. It would also later serve as proof that a true leper had been healed—the priests had received the offering.

5:15 Teaching and healing—this summed up Jesus’ earthly ministry.

5:16 This is the second time Luke mentions that Jesus had to leave everyone in order to spend time with God. And where did He go to do this? “In the wilderness,” the very place where He was tempted

17 One day He was teaching; and there were *some* Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting *there*, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and *from* Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was *present* for Him to perform healing.

18 And *some* men *were* carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed; and they were trying to bring him in and to set him down in front of Him.

19 But not finding any *way* to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, into the middle *of the crowd*, in front of Jesus.

20 Seeing their faith, He said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven you.”

21 The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, “Who is this *man* who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?”

22 But Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, “Why are you reasoning in your hearts?”

23 “Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins have been forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’?”

24 “But, so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,”—He said to the paralytic—“I say to you, get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home.”

25 Immediately he got up before them, and picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God.

26 They were all struck with astonishment and *began* glorifying God; and they were filled with fear, saying, “We have seen remarkable things today.”

and where demons were thought to dwell. But the point here is that in order for Jesus to have an effective prayer life, He had to get away from the crowd and the business of the day.

5:17 This verse opens in response to Luke’s observation in verse 15: “But the news about Him was spreading.” The Pharisees and teachers of the law obviously came to see what all the commotion was about, but not necessarily to learn from Jesus. Notice that in every verse where Luke writes of teaching and healing, the teaching always comes first. Note, too, that this is Luke’s first mention of the Pharisees—the heavyweights of the law of Moses are now a part of the picture.

5:18-26 This section will contain another proof that Jesus is the long awaited-for Messiah.

Jewish homes were often rectangular with an open courtyard in the middle. A protruding overhang or thatched roof helped shade the courtyard and keep out the rain. These men dug through the roof and lowered the man using ropes, a risky maneuver in itself. It was ingenious, however, and some bold and creative thinking went into finding a way to lower the man directly in front of Jesus. Notice that the text says, “Seeing *their* faith....” *The healing that follows is not dependent upon the paralytic’s faith, but the faith of those who loved the man enough to take him to Jesus.* Jesus then makes a remarkable statement: “Friend, your sins are forgiven.” The Pharisees are correct in their assertion that only God can forgive sins, but can’t bring themselves to consider that Jesus may indeed be God in the flesh. Jesus then asks a rhetorical question; that is, a question that has an obvious answer. “Which is easier to say...?” The point is clear. It is a lot easier to say “Your sins are forgiven” because how would anyone know if they are forgiven or not? But to say, “Get up and walk” is a lot harder because an observer will instantly know if healing has taken place, and if the healer is the real deal. If the man doesn’t get up and walk, then Jesus is a fake. If he *does* get up and walk, then Jesus is the real deal and therefore His other words about forgiveness must also be true. Now, this does not mean that the man’s paralysis was a result of sin. It simply means that, as a sinner like all men, Jesus is able to forgive sins. The event is loaded with irony.

This healing embodies many spiritual lessons. First, it is a picture that sin results in spiritual paralysis. Man cannot help himself and free himself from sin. Second, it is a picture of the resurrection. He who is paralyzed by sin is lowered down, and then raised up by the One who is able to forgive sins. Third, it is a picture of the church. Those who cared enough for the one paralyzed by sin brought him to

27 After that He went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, “Follow Me.”

28 And he left everything behind, and got up and *began* to follow Him.

29 And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other *people* who were reclining *at the table* with them.

30 The Pharisees and their scribes *began* grumbling at His disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?”

Jesus. Fourth, those whose sins have been forgiven bring glory to God.

5:27-28 Tax collectors, called “publicans” in the KJV, were Jews employed by the Romans to exact taxes on the Jews. By keeping taxes high, the Romans could keep the oppressed people poor and therefore incapable of equipping an opposition army. Those Jews who collected the taxes were considered traitors and conspirators, and therefore hated by other Jews. The Pharisees labeled them “sinners” in that they were unclean by association with Gentiles. They were considered on the same level as prostitutes and pimps. Note, therefore, the similarities between the outcast Levi and the outcast leper. Additionally, tax collectors often defrauded the people by collecting more than what was required, therefore enriching themselves at the expense of those who were already poor. The Romans, of course, looked the other way.

Only God could see what was good in Levi, whose Greek name is Matthew. Regardless, when Jesus calls Levi to “Follow Me,” Levi immediately leaves his position and begins following Jesus. One wonders what Peter, James and John thought about Jesus calling a tax collector to become one of His disciples.

The lesson here is quite wonderful. Love opens the door for *anyone* to follow Jesus. The depth of people’s goodness or badness is measured only in their response to Jesus. Those who are truly bad and do really bad things will most likely not follow Jesus (e.g., an evil dictator). Those who are bad and try to cover it up by appearing to do good things will also not follow Jesus (e.g., the Pharisees, or any religious hypocrite). Obviously, those who are good and do good works in love will most likely respond positively to Jesus and follow Him (e.g., Peter). And, as in Levi’s case, those who are essentially good but doing bad things may end up following Jesus because they realize they have a spiritual need. The point here is that *no one* should automatically be counted out from following Jesus, as many prison ministries attest.

Finally, this is the second “Follow Me” call. So far, everyone called has followed. Unfortunately, Luke will record that not everyone called to follow will indeed heed the call.

5:29-32 Levi the tax collector is using his personal—but probably illegally gained—resources to hold a banquet for Jesus. Obviously, Levi’s only other friends are also tax collectors and their associates, most of whom were of dubious reputation. There may have women present, and most of them would probably be considered “loose women.” Jesus and His disciples are invited to attend

31 And Jesus answered and said to them, “*It is* not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick.

32 “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

33 And they said to Him, “The disciples of John often fast and offer prayers, the *disciples* of the Pharisees also do the same, but Yours eat and drink.”

34 And Jesus said to them, “You cannot make the attendants of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you?”

35 “But *the* days will come; and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days.”

36 And He was also telling them a parable: “No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and puts it on an old garment;

the reception. It is a strange mix, to say the least. One cannot underestimate the risk that Jesus’ followers are taking for associating with those who were unclean and hated as much as the tax collectors and their associates. There were probably those who felt Jesus was being used and manipulated by Levi; that is, Levi’s motivation is for some sort of personal gain: “See, even a holy man thinks I’m okay.” Or, holding a reception for Jesus might be helping him to feel important, or make him think his sins are not so bad after all. Some would no doubt accuse Jesus of being naïve or irresponsible to validate the life of a tax collector. However, there is no indication that Levi ever returned to his former profession after his call to follow Jesus. No matter what the crowd might be thinking, Jesus seems to have had no problem associating with “sinners.” Why? Because His love for the lost was greater than the criticism of the crowd. Jesus’ answer to the complaint of the Pharisees and scribes is heavy with irony. The Pharisees think they are “well” and believe Jesus is talking about them when He refers to the “righteous.” In reality, they are as sick as those attending the reception, only they do not know it, which makes their sickness worse. The tax collectors are sinners (“sick”) and they know it. But they are not so sick as to deny their need for the forgiveness of sins.

Note, too, the word “grumbling” in verse 30. Though the Pharisees were questioning among themselves when Jesus healed the paralytic, this time they are grumbling out loud. This word has overtones of ridicule and condescension. The relationship between Jesus and the Pharisees is now in conflict, and hostility is just over the horizon.

Lastly, note once again the emphasis on repentance. Jesus does not say that His call is to heal everyone or shower everyone with Millennial blessings. He has come to lead sinners to repentance. This call should be the primary mission of the church.

5:33-35 The conflict that arose at Levi’s reception continues into the next paragraph. This kind of conflict is ageless and propels itself into the church today. It is a conflict of religious activity verses spiritual freedom. Paul will write about this conflict in Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 14. Anywhere there is religious law, customs or mores, this conflict will raise up its ugly head. There are those who judge a person’s spiritual maturity based on whether or not they adhere to a certain set of rules, follow an unwritten code of behaviors, participate in rituals, or advocate spoken or unspoken social standards, most of which are arbitrary. And then there are those whose spiritual walk and maturity is not based on keeping a set of rules, but on something much

otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old.

37 “And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined.

38 “But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins.

39 “And no one, after drinking old *wine* wishes for new; for he says, ‘The old is good enough.’ ”

harder—living by a greater principle to guide every situation individually. For the law-keeper, everything is black and white. There is no gray area, for gray areas are subject to interpretation, and only those in power can make the proper interpretation. For the freedom-seeker, however, every situation *is* gray; that is, the action is contingent on the context. In this case, Jesus is informing the Pharisees that one’s behavior is based—not upon a rabbinical standard that never changes—but on a greater principle that takes a different form in different situations. That Jesus’ disciples “eat and drink” fits the context of Jesus’ earthly ministry. With Jesus physically present, it is as if there is a wedding reception in progress. But there will come a time when prayers and fasting are more appropriate, that time being His death and ascension.

Obviously, Jesus is not advocating lawlessness. He is inferring that there is a principle greater than the spiritual disciplines of fasting and praying. That principle is like a river running through this entire gospel—it is the river of love. God cares for the lost, and He cares so much that “...He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

5:36-38 To illustrate Jesus’ point, He now alludes to that overriding principle of love, without actually saying what it is. This is the first of Jesus’ parables in the Gospel of Luke, and they are appropriate ones indeed. A parable is a story that teaches a spiritual lesson. It could be true but isn’t necessarily true. It can be understood by those who choose to believe, but is considered nonsense to those who don’t want to believe or don’t care. The key words in these parables are “new” and “old.”

There are actually three parables here, but they all illustrate the same common-sense truth. The first parable involves clothing. If you patch old material with new, the new will shrink when it is washed, and therefore tear. The same principle is true of the second parable involving wine skins. Unfermented grape juice was always put in fresh new wine skins so that as the juice fermented, the skin would expand. If the wine-dresser tried to ferment grape juice in an old wine skin that had already expanded, then it would burst because it had already been stretched. The third parable had to do with the wine drinker himself. Aged wine is better than wine that has not aged.

The point of all three parables is the same: you cannot patch something old with something new. It just doesn’t work. The spiritual lesson, of course, is pointing to the new covenant. What Jesus is bringing to the world is new, and it cannot be fit into something that is old. Applied to the complaint about the disciples eating and drinking, Jesus is alluding to

the new principle coming that will completely eliminate the need for the Old Testament law. This will not only shake the foundations of Judaism to the core in Jesus' earthly ministry, but it will become a huge issue in the ministry of the apostle Paul.

5:39 This last statement (the third parable) is actually a condemnation of the Pharisees. It seems at odds with the two other parables because, normally, aged wine is better than new. But Jesus is not talking about aged wine; He is talking about wine that has soured and turned to vinegar by oxidation. Jesus is actually saying to the Pharisees that they are so used to drinking the vinegar of the law that they will probably never change to the new, fresh wine. Why? Because in their eyes "the law is good enough."

Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. In this chapter, Jesus calls for two individuals to follow Him—Peter and Levi. Describe the response of each. Notice that Peter had an emotional response and Levi had a social response. But both had one thing in common. What was it? When Jesus called you to follow Him, how did you respond? Now, the greater principle here is that *Jesus bids us to come and follow Him every day*. In what specific ways do you respond to His call?
2. What lesson did you learn about Jesus' miracle in catching the fish? How do you plan to apply that lesson to your life? Is there something you need to do to increase the catch? What events in this chapter represent pictures of the church?
3. What does the leper symbolize? Are there people in your world who are outcasts of society? Would you be willing to “touch” them? Remember that there are many ways to “touch”: prayer, financial support directly, or financial support of those who do the actual physical touching.
4. There is a powerful love theme coursing throughout this chapter. Can you find all the instances where Jesus' love manifests itself? Determine how God's love is the central motivating factor behind Jesus' earthly ministry. How will this message affect your relationships today?
5. How does sin paralyze one's spiritual life? Can sin also paralyze emotional life? Social life? Relationships? Is there any sinful act in your past that is paralyzing some part of your life? Can you identify it? If so, are you willing to repent of it and start walking anew?
6. What part of the story about the paralyzed man represents the church? How does that principle affect your life?
7. Are you a law-keeper or a freedom-seeker? Or do you try to walk a thin line between both? If you do not have a set of rules and laws to guide your moral and ethical behavior, what principle do you use? Have you been able to discern that principle thus far in the Gospel of Luke?

The Disciplex's Commentary
Fill-in Outline for the Disciple
Luke 5

5:1-3 – There is no mention of miracles or healings here—just Jesus teaching _____

5:4-11 – This is the first mention of the making of _____ (note the relationship with 1-3)

Note vs. 5 & 8: in verse 5, Simon calls Jesus “Master”; in v. 8, he calls Him “ _____ ”

Most important thing Simon *says* in verse 5: “ _____ ”

Most important thing Simon *does* in verse 11: he “ _____ ”

5:12-16 – The healing of the leper is a picture of cleansing from _____

5:17-26 – The healing of the paralytic is a picture that Jesus frees us from sin, because sin _____

5:27-32 – The calling of Levi (Matthew) and his reception—Jesus is calling _____

5:33-39 – The illustration of the wine skins is a picture of the _____

The Discipler's Commentary

Answer Outline for the Discipler

Luke 5

5:1-3 – There is no mention of miracles or healings here—just Jesus teaching *the word of God*

- *The “Lake of Gennesaret” is also called the Sea of Galilee, as detailed in the commentary.*
- *An interesting question to ask is “What exactly was Jesus teaching?” Of course, the answer is “the word of God.” But what does that mean? Was He teaching the Old Testament Law and/or Prophets? Most likely He was teaching parables about the kingdom of God, or the substance of what He taught in the sermon on the mount. If it were the latter (and probably was), then Luke is saying that Jesus’ teachings are equivalent in authority to the Old Testament.*
- *Ask the disciple, “What is the most obvious application here?” It should be clear: the most important thing a pastor or teacher can do for God’s people is to give them “the word of God.”*

5:4-11 – This is the first mention of the making of *disciples* (note the relationship with 1-3)

- *Remember, the disciples has only read the text, not the commentary. So ask the disciple why Jesus chose to teach from a boat? How does that affect sound when no loud speaker is available?*
- *As a great learning tool, have the disciple recall the story after reading it aloud. See how much he or she remembers, and ask, “What stands out in your mind after reading the story?”*

Note vs. 5 & 8: in verse 5, Simon calls Jesus “Master”; in v. 8, he calls Him “Lord”

- *What is the difference between “Master” and “Lord”? The Greek word for “Master” means “chief, commander,” or “the one in charge.” The Greek word for “Lord” is “kurios” which, in this context, refers to God. Peter is actually saying that Jesus must actually be God in the flesh.*

Most important thing Simon says in verse 5: “I will do as You say.”

- *Help the disciple see that Peter is skeptical that Jesus, an itinerate preacher, has the knowledge and experience to know where to fish or how to catch them. Therefore, Peter is willing to do as Jesus says in spite of his skepticism.*
- *Help the disciple make an application. One application is that we trust God in every situation, even though we don’t know how He could possibly make things work out. We simply say to God, “I will do as You say,” even though we may not have an answer or the knowledge of what to do.*

Most important thing Simon does in verse 11: he “left everything and followed Him”

- *First, it might be important for the discipler to point out Peter’s response in verse 8 when, after doing as Jesus says, he catches a great haul of fish. He knelt before Jesus and acknowledged that he was a “sinner.” Make sure that the disciple understands that unless a person sees himself as a sinner before God, he can never appreciate what Jesus has to offer; that is, the forgiveness of sins.*
- *The second point is also important—Peter’s proactive response. Realizing who Jesus was, “he left everything and followed Him.” It will be important for the disciple to attempt to make a personal application here. The main application is this: there should be a profound course correction in life. To leave “everything” may mean leaving a bad habit, an ungodly relationship, a value system that is more of the world than the kingdom of God, or even leaving a lifestyle that is inconsistent with God’s plan. In some cases, men and women have left secular employment to become missionaries, ministers or Christian workers. Ask the disciple what he or she has left, or plans to leave.*

5:12-16 – The healing of the leper is a picture of cleansing from *sin and restoration of righteousness*

- *The discipler will need to explain the significance of leprosy in Israel. Almost all skin diseases were classified as “leprosy,” whether it was true leprosy or not. (True leprosy is caused by an organism called bacterium lepromatosis. Psoriasis, dermatomyositis, and eczema are examples of other skin diseases that would have been classified as leprosy.) Because leprosy is a chronic condition that never heals spontaneously and always gets worse, a leper could never be declared “clean.” By being declared clean by*

the priest, the leper could return to his family, associate with society, become employed, and reenter the temple grounds for worship.

- *As stated in the commentary, leprosy is a picture of sin. It is incurable and completely deforming, and one cannot make oneself “clean” (that is, righteous). Only the Messiah, Jesus, can take away the sin (unclean) and make one righteous (clean) and restored to a right relationship with God.*

5:17-26 – The healing of the paralytic is a picture that Jesus frees us from sin, because sin paralyzes us

- *The discipler may have difficulty understanding the subtleties of Jesus’ initial response, “Friend, your sins are forgiven you.” The discipler may have to explain the phrase, “Which is easier to say....” Once the disciple understands Jesus’ clever question, he should then be introduced to the four lessons given at the end of the section in the commentary. The key lesson is this: sin paralyzes spiritually, physically, emotionally and relationally, but when our sins are forgiven, we are given new life.*
- *For the more advanced discipler, the discipler may want to teach through Romans 6:1-11.*

5:27-32 – The calling of Levi (Matthew) and his reception—Jesus is calling sinners, not the “righteous”

- *The discipler may need to explain the role of tax collectors and why they were so hated by other Jews, especially in regard to collecting more than the tax money itself. (This will prepare the disciple for understanding Jesus’ encounter with a tax collector named Zaccheus in chapter 19.) He or she may also need to explain why Jesus’ association with tax collectors and their kind was so unsettling to the Pharisees and religious elitists.*
- *Help the disciple see why Jesus’ statement that He came to call “sinners to repentance” and not the “righteous” is so ironic. The point here is that those who consider themselves righteous and in no need of repentance will never be able to see a need to follow Jesus. It is those who are willing to take a good look at themselves spiritually and recognize their need for forgiveness that will realize their need for salvation through the One who can forgive sins.*

5:33-39 – The illustration of the wine skins is a picture of the new covenant

- *The discipler may need to explain the difference between the old covenant, based on the law of Moses, and the new covenant that will be instituted by Jesus the night before His crucifixion (the Last Supper). The sign of the old covenant is the Sabbath; the sign of the new is the Lord’s Supper (Communion, Mass). The old covenant was conditional based on keeping the law; the new covenant is unconditional offered by grace through faith. The old covenant was fulfilled at the cross; the new covenant began with the arrival of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The old covenant is summed up in the Ten Commandments and the statement, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deut. 6:5). The new covenant is summed up in the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8). The old covenant is characterized by obedience (Deut. 30:2); the new covenant is characterized by love (Rom. 13:10).*
- *The discipler may need to explain the meaning of the three parables given at the end of the chapter, especially the irony hidden in the last.*