

I. Fishing & Following

A. Jesus' #1 expectation

- "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. *Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:17*

B. Following is a command

- The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." *John 1:43*

C. Followers can be a surprise

- 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, ²⁸and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. *Luke 5:27*

D. Following is an adventure!

- Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. *Luke 9:23*

E. Following can be uncomfortable

- A man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." *Luke 9:57*

F. Following requires tough choices

- He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."⁶⁰ Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." *Luke 9:61*

G. Following requires commitment

- When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." *Mark 10:21*

H. Following has a reward

- Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?" *Matt 19:27*

II. It Starts & Ends with Fishing

- "Jesus said, Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch people." ¹¹So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him. *Luke 4:11*
- "Then cast your net on the other side of the boat and you will find some fish." *John 21:3*

III. What happens when we don't fish?

This is the last study guide I will prepare for you as your Sr. Pastor. What a joy it has been to lead you into spiritually and biblically feeding yourself on God's Word through these study guides. If you are new to bible study, the Gospel of Mark is the best book to start with. May God bless you as you continue to grow through God's Word.

Monday - Yesterday we learned Jesus' public ministry started (*Luke 5:1-11*) and ended (*John 21:3*) with fishing. Notice how similar are the stories. Some critics of the church say this is further proof of the contradictions within the gospels – that Jesus' closest friends could not even get the time and the timing of the story straight. However, the stories – which may well speak of the same episode - were just seen from different perspectives and placed over time in different time slots. Following Jesus is what it is all about (verse 11)...but read prayerfully Simon Peter's words in verse 8, feeling unworthy of following Jesus. Have you ever felt that way?

Tuesday - Fishing as an occupation was rarely seen in Old Testament times because the Mediterranean coast was controlled by the Philistines and Phoenicians. The Israelites depended largely on foreign trade for their fish (*Nehemiah. 13:16*). Two Old Testament texts (*Song of Solomon 7:4; Isaiah 19:10*) speak of fish pools and fish ponds, possibly an indication of commercially raised fish or of fish farming. By the time of the New Testament commercial fishing businesses were conducted on the Sea of Galilee by fishermen organized in guilds (*Luke 5:7, 11*). Fishermen were hard workers, crude in manner, rough in speech and in their treatment of others (*John 18:10*). Fishermen owned their ships, took hired workers, and sometimes joined to form companies (*Mark 1:20; Luke 5:7*).

Wednesday - The Bible contains numerous figurative uses of fish and fishing. Human helplessness is compared to fish taken in a net (*Ecclesiastes. 9:12; Hab. 1:14*). Fish caught in a net symbolized God's judgment (*Psalms. 66:11; Ezekiel. 32:3*). Jesus mentioned fishing when He called disciples to be witnesses (*Matthew. 4:18-19*). Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to a net thrown into the sea and loaded with fish of many varieties (*Matthew. 13:47*). In early Christian churches, the Greek word for fish (*ichthus*) came to be interpreted as a cipher for Jesus. The first letter of each of the Greek words for "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior" spell *ichthus*. We do not know when this cipher was first used; but once the identification was made, the fish became a standard Christian symbol.

Thursday - The use of 'fishing' in the New Testament was to get people to be 'followers' of Jesus. Conversely, if you were a 'follower' you became a 'fisher' ... of people. Read *Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:17*

Friday - Yesterday we see that once we become 'followers' it is our task to become 'fishers' of others. What makes following hard for you? *Mark* lifts up two obstacles: *Mark 8:34; Mark 10:21*; What does it mean to 'take up our cross?' What responsibility are we willing to shoulder? Are we expected to "sell all that we own and give it to the poor" today ... or might the bible message be to look for ways to sacrifice and re-prioritize our lives if we are to be true followers of Jesus?