



Looking Inwards (15 mins) *Caring For Each Other*

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an **opportunity to share**, not something you have to do, however, 'it's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:*

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins) *Concern For Others*

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours; or church, which you would like to share (please be careful not to pass on anything that is **confidential** or which you think the person/people concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

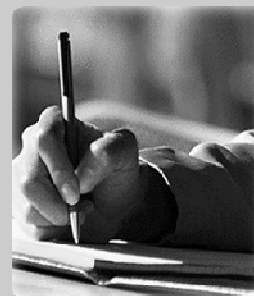


HG30: Living With Jesus (1/5) *A New Way Of Life*

Luke 5:1-11

Home Group Study Notes

9th May 2010 - Revd Paul A. Carr



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!

Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources that might be helpful.



Welcome/Ice Breaker (10 mins)

By the time your Home Group meets, a General Election will have taken place and, quite possibly, a new Government will have been formed and we could even have a new Prime Minister. Is it right that Christians should be involved in Politics? Why? Why not? (*Don't spend too long on this issue!*).



Looking Upwards (10 mins) *Worship*

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise, or listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers; etc.





Looking Upwards (40 mins) *Bible Study*

Read through the text for this study, Luke 5:1-11, and any references given below, alongside those in the sermon notes, then answer the following questions - you may find it helpful to read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss your answers with your Home Group.

1: Paul described his feeling of being ‘deskilled’ at one point during his time at Theological College. In what way can you identify with this in your own Christian life? What might it take to enable you to ‘move on’ if you still feel that way?

2: James and John left their father in the boat to follow Jesus (Mark 1:20). To what extent has your faith impacted on your family relationships?

Share your memories and feelings of an experience when you found yourself: “... in the awesome presence of holiness.” (On a personal note: Have you ever honoured those feelings and experiences?)

We can't run away from Jesus - I know that and I'm sure you do too. The answer, however difficult it may be to swallow, is to submit to his will.

Just as those four fishermen dropped everything to follow Jesus, so must we prepared to surrender all. How strong is your desire to be what Jesus calls you to be? How strong is your desire to be a fisher of men? I'm not sure if any of you have ever noticed what's embroidered onto my Preaching Scarf - but it sums up, to me, the purpose of being church.

It never ceases to amaze me, how so few Christians seem excited by the prospect of sharing their faith. Strange isn't it - how in many areas of life people can get really excited by different things. You'll never find a football fan who can keep quiet about the last game they saw, or about how their favourite team or player is doing - or not doing in the case of ‘The Hammers’. You'll never find a music fan who can keep quiet about the latest CD they've bought, or a TV addict keeping quiet about the latest twists and turns in the soaps. But isn't it strange, how so many Christians are unaccountably shy and who struggle to talk honestly and openly about their faith, about what the Lord has done for them and the difference he has made to their lives.

Conclusion

Strange things start to happen when we follow Jesus. Our lives get turned upside down. Following Jesus messes everything up! It's inconvenient. We become de-skilled. He shakes us up and changes us. We are challenged about our values and priorities. It's a dangerous thing to follow Jesus. We are challenged about our commitment and willingness to serve and, it ends up costing us. It could cost us our possessions, our savings, our homes, our jobs ... sometimes; we even end up in (full-time) ministry.

When I was at College, I studied the forbidding subject of Christian Doctrine and Theology which is, quite simply, examining the Doctrine and Theology of the Christian faith! It's a study of what we believe and why and covers Church history and engages with some of the great thinkers and contributors to what the Christian church stands for today. It's quite a complex subject and I don't pretend to grasp even half of what I was taught! Anyway, one of the core books we used was called ‘Dogmatics’ written by the Swiss theologian Karl Barth! And, in the introduction to his book, Barth summed up, very simply and profoundly, all that the study of Christian Doctrine and Theology would bring to our attention, in the words of a children's song. You may even be familiar with the words:

♪ *Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to him belong, they are weak but he is strong. Yes Jesus loves me, Yes Jesus loves me, Yes Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so.* ♪

And that, according to Karl Barth, is all we need to know!

Jesus calls us to share this love with those that nobody else wants to, or can, love. Jesus calls us to reach out to the lonely, to the hungry, to the sick, to the ones in prison, to the disabled, to the forsaken, to the needy, to all of those people who need to hear that someone indeed does love them and can make a difference to their lives.

Jesus went into Galilee preaching the gospel of Good News that the kingdom of God was at hand. He asks us to go into all the world with that same message, the message of the good news of God and that his kingdom is at hand. Jesus calls us to a life of conviction, to a life of urgency, to be willing to leave everything behind and follow him.

Following Jesus Shakes our lives (vs6-9)

One glimpse of Jesus' holiness made Peter aware of his own sense of inadequacy and unworthiness. I'm sure he thought he'd seen everything Lake Galilee had to offer, but this was beyond his understanding - it was supernatural - a miracle. Understandably, perhaps, Peter's response was one of fear, vs8: *Go away from me Lord, I am a sinful man*. Even though Jesus tried to calm them by telling them not to be afraid, vs10, fear is a legitimate response to holiness. Remember how Isaiah, in 6:5, responded when he was in the presence of God? *Woe to me, I am ruined for I am a man of unclean lips*.

Peter found himself in the awesome presence of holiness. Has that ever happened to you? Have you ever experienced the presence of God in such a powerful, mysterious, moving way, it rearranges your perspective on life and your sense of purpose as a Christian? It may have been in church when the power and presence of God was so overwhelming - as it was for me at when I went to the Brownsville Revival in Pensacola, Florida in the late 1990's. It maybe when you've been out walking in the hills or walking through the woods with the bluebells in full bloom. It may be sitting by a waterfall or gazing at the wonder of the stars. Experiences like that always challenge our perspective and have a lasting impact on our lives and faith. Those are the times when we can hear God speaking to us and calling us to follow Him. It maybe to another job, or it may be for a particular task, sometimes it's a challenge about how much we love him.

We all experience such dramatic moments in our lives which bring us closer to God, to what He is doing and what He wants to accomplish. That can be a wonderful experience, but it can also be scary - especially if we begin to count the cost! Why not take some time, later today, to recognize that some of what you've experienced in God's presence - church or otherwise - has been deliberately put in your path by God himself. Ask yourself if you've ever honoured those feelings and experiences? After following Jesus' call Peter would barely leave Jesus' side for three years. But it's not only Peter who feels renewed through meeting Jesus, it spreads to his friends and colleagues as well. That is how the kingdom of God grows - not because Christianity changes the way we come to church, but because it changes the way we go about our everyday lives.

Following Jesus changes our lives (vs10-11)

Jesus sees the potential that we often don't, but he needs a willing heart to work in and through.

The former British Olympic Heptathlete, Judy Simpson, once said: *I am a Christian because I don't believe I could be the best I can without Jesus. If you say to yourself, 'I want to be the best ever person and I want to earn lots of money' that's fine! But ... I don't believe that actually makes you a very good and whole person. I have found that because I believe Jesus' claims and everything I do is to give him glory. I actually perform better trying to do other things. And, even if the things don't happen, I can cope with those disappointments better. I don't think I could do half the things with the confidence I do if I wasn't a Christian*.

Seeing Jesus transform his everyday life made Peter realise the enormity of who he was dealing with. The experience may have terrified him, but it was the kind of fear that left him thrilled at the prospect of more. And those fishing skills weren't going to go to waste; they were going to be used in a new way. Jesus gives Peter, Andrew, James and John an invitation to follow him, vs10: *Don't be afraid, from now on you will catch men*.

And, as inadequate as they felt, they'd seen enough to pull up their boat, leave everything and follow him. They'd given up the security and stability of a job, and a home, to accompany Jesus on his mission. For most of us, the call to follow Jesus may not be quite that sudden or direct. But what happens after we say: *I believe. I want to follow you*. How many of us have made promises to follow but never moved very far?

4: Read the quote from the former British Olympic Heptathlete, Judy Simpson. In what ways might your experience be similar to Judy's? In what ways might yours be completely different?

5: Is the Christian faith as simple as the Theologian, Karl Barth, suggests it is in the words of the children's song: *Jesus loves me ...?*

6: How do you interpret Jesus' words in Luke 5:10, when he said: "... from now on you will catch men?" If we are to be a healthy church 'growing larger through mission' is a key factor for all of us. What, therefore, might Jesus' words mean to you?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



HG30: Living With Jesus (1/5) *A New Way Of Life*

Luke 5:1-11

Home Group Sermon Notes

9th May 2010 - Revd Paul A. Carr

Introduction

And so we begin a new series for our Home Groups this morning entitled: *'Living With Jesus'* which explores some of the highs and lows of Peter's experiences of following Jesus. There's no doubt that so many of us identify with his impetuous and vulnerable personality and his abiding tendency to 'get it wrong more than he got it right.' This is the disciple who denied Jesus three times, yet, the one whom Jesus said would become the rock of the church. The story of Peter's life is one that gives many of us hope in our faith that, despite how many times we may 'get it wrong' our God, in his love and mercy, continues to bless us and use us as his 'hands and feet' in this world to spread the life changing good news of the Gospel.

The Calling of Peter and the First Disciples

Some of you may remember the old Sunday School song that was based on this passage: *I will make you fishers of men*, it's a bit of a corny, dated chorus nowadays. When I sang that as a child I used to visualise going around with a big net and throwing it over people to bring them into church - reluctant or otherwise. It may not be quite what Jesus had in mind, but that's something of what we are going to be thinking about this morning.

One of the interesting, if not encouraging, things about the people Jesus chose to be his disciples, were how ordinary they were - as diverse a group of men as you could meet - not too unlike us! (Listen (on line) to the assessment of the apostles by a fictitious Management Consultant Firm which gives us some insight into just how different they were).

[We don't know how well those first disciples knew Jesus when He called them to follow him. Peter and Andrew had certainly met him before (John 1:40-42 and Luke 4:38). And, in view of Jesus' early ministry it's quite likely that James and John would have known about some of the miracles Jesus performed.] These four fishermen recognised Jesus' authority and responded to his instructions, firstly about catching fish and then about following him.

Following Jesus Inconvenience our lives (vs1-3)

It's true. Here they were trying to bring their night's work to a close; when a crowd overruns the place; a preacher finds a use for their boat for which it was never intended and, to cap it all, this landlubber of a carpenter has the audacity to tell them how to fish. Jesus calls us to follow him in everything we do, in every aspect of who and what we are, secular, religious, or otherwise, from Monday to Saturday, not just the religious bit neatly marked Sunday! All of our ambitions, hopes, and plans, may have to be reorganised when we choose to follow Jesus. This story shows us something of what can happen when ordinary people let Jesus have complete control of their lives.

Following Jesus Enhances our lives (vs4-5)

When I first went to Oak Hill Theological College I went through an experience of, what you may term, de-skilling. It's a feeling, similar to that when someone is made redundant or finds themselves unemployed or retired. At times, it seemed that everything I'd achieved/acquired, over 33 years, all my skills and gifts and attributes, overnight, became inconsequential. It was a very humbling experience, in fact, it was probably one of the most difficult times I've ever been through in my life.

It was as if my very identity was being stripped away. But, as time passed, and as the Lord began to teach me, shape me and mould me some of those skills and attributes slowly began to make sense once again as I began to realise that what makes me, me, and what I am as a person, is exactly what Jesus wants to work in and through. If we allow Jesus to have control over our talents, time, ambitions, we can rest assured that he will turn them into something better than we'd ever imagine. God gives us a new way of living our lives, as he did to:

- **Moses:** *the shy introvert who stuttered and stammered, had little self-confidence, who thought he had no leadership qualities, yet delivered God's chosen people from Egypt.*
- **David:** *a humble shepherd boy until God called him to be the greatest king Israel had ever known.*
- **Paul:** *who persecuted the early church, until God struck him down on that Damascus road and called him to be one of the greatest missionaries the Christian world has ever seen.*

Peter, along with Andrew, James and John had spent an unproductive night fishing on lake Galilee. They'd come home empty handed - a bit depressed, perhaps, because it was their livelihood - and so there may have been an understandable note of exasperation in Peter's voice when he replied to Jesus, vs5: *Master we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything.* It would have been perfectly reasonable for these seasoned fishermen to ignore Jesus' command. After all, what would a carpenter from Nazareth know about fishing? How could Jesus possibly know more than them? Fishing was their livelihood. Their knowledge of the lake, its tides, rocks and shallow waters had been passed down from generation to generation. It was/is a well known fact that in the sea of Galilee, you caught fish at night in the shallow water, not in the daytime in the deep water. What Jesus asked Peter to do in vs4 was contrary to all of his training and expertise. I can't help wonder if there might have been some Jewish proverb that flitted through his mind, something about grandmothers and eggs!

Very few of us have the experience of an absolute novice coming up to us, telling us how to do our job - unless of course you're manager of the England football team or a Rector! But it's frustrating isn't it? And don't you just hate it when these people are right? People who know something about everything? I know as a teenager I struggled with the fact that my dad seemed to have the answer so many of life's questions - I guess it was called experience! Needless to say I rebelled against what he had to say ... until I was in my early twenties, buying a house, preparing to be married, thinking of joining the Prison Service - when I suddenly realised that he talked a lot of sense and I gratefully received his words of wisdom I'd so flippantly rejected as a teenager.

However he felt, Peter obeyed Jesus: *because you say so I will let down the net* - this was his first act of faith. Peter was willing to submit to the authority of Jesus and obey what he said, despite the fact he didn't understand, or even agree on all that He was being asked to do. As it was, Peter and his companions caught so many fish they were afraid the net would break. Peter had been willing to submit his area of expertise to Jesus and the result was a miraculous catch. It's difficult to tell if Peter found that experience pleasant or painful, but the fruit of his submission was there for all to see. Obedience brings results.