



14: JK ROWLING, COLONEL SANDERS, STINKY FISH AND FRIED CHICKEN (Luke 5:1-11)

When I was twenty years old, I was a year and a half removed from partying very hard for four and a half years. I had been in a few relationships with girls who had cheated on me. I had almost failed out of High School, then failed out of college, then left the state to go to a junior college on academic probation, recovered my GPA, and transferred back to Kent, Ohio to go to Kent State University. I was starting to mend many of the broken pieces of my life, but was still *majorly* unsure of my future and purpose on earth.

I read through the gospels and the New Testament for the first time in a liberal religion studies class, and for the first time I realized that there was a God who created me, loved me, and sent His Son Jesus to die to forgive me of all of my sins, past, present and future. From that point forward I knew I needed to serve Him with everything I was and immediately wanted to be in ministry for the rest of my life. I had no idea what I was getting into, but was always an extreme, intense person. That call into ministry from that period in my life where Christ fully transformed me never left me, despite the many bumps in the road and mistakes I've made since then!

My story isn't the same as everyone's story. Some may be called by God to start a business, start and love a family, work in the nonprofit realm, work in corporate America, or leave their native country to go to the mission field.

But I do know that everyone who is truly a disciple of Jesus experiences the power of a calling.

And I would take it further to say that those of us who have been called into being disciples of Jesus Christ also experience a ***fine tuning*** of that calling.

In the beginning of my call into ministry, naive and eager, I got immediately involved in volunteering wherever I could, and taking a ministry internship as early as I could, three years after I had my first encounter with Jesus.

I had no idea that I had so much immaturity for Jesus to crucify in me!

Through my twenties, I worked in three different ministry scenarios that didn't work out, continually going back into working as a barista, guitar teacher, and pizza delivery guy all throughout. I did full time ministry during that time, I did bi-vocational ministry during that time. Sometimes I had no ministry job during that time but was working full on in other vocations. I pursued a seminary degree during that time also and finished it over the course of seven years as I was busy working and being married.

By my early thirties I underwent ordination. Throughout my thirties I worked in three different unhealthy ministry environments. I served in urban, suburban and rural contexts yet realized I had a full calling into an urban environment at the age of thirty five. I worked in youth ministry, music ministry, discipleship, and outreach. I was part of a few multi-site churches. I worked in small churches. I did church planting and replanting. I made mistakes. I apologized. I went through the school of hard knocks.

And now, at forty two, I've been leading an urban church for four years. It's been the hardest role yet. Those four years saw COVID, death threats, people leaving and joining our community, stress beyond anything I'd experienced before, and our church community becoming independent of the megachurch that originally planted us as a campus.

Like the call to salvation, receiving a calling into discipleship can definitely be both a moment and a perpetual process!

In Luke 5, we see how Jesus called the disciple Peter into full on service to Him. We see the beginning of this calling. Check it out, starting in verse 1;

1 As the crowd was pressing in on Jesus to hear God's word, he was standing by Lake Gennesaret. 2 He saw two boats at the edge of the lake; the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. 3 He got into one of the boats, which belonged to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from the land. Then he sat down and was teaching the crowds from the boat. (Luke 5:1-3)

The crowds were pressing around Jesus at the Sea of Gennesaret (Sea of Galilee). Gennesaret (or Ginnesar) was a village located next to Capernaum, so Jesus was likely within its vicinity.¹ On the shore were some fishermen, cleaning their nets. To avoid the crush, Jesus decided to get on Simon's boat and pushed out from the shore a little so that he could address the crowds. Jesus' teaching had become popular. If this was an average ancient fishing boat, it would have been twenty to thirty feet long.²

Jesus' commission to us and His example of ministry wasn't "Go, therefore into the world, build and buy buildings, hire a staff, get a band, get a sound system, and get as many people to come to the presentation you put out there on Sunday as you can!" It's not wrong to have buildings, hire staff, have a great worship band with a good sound system, and have people attend services on Sundays. But it's not the main point of Jesus' ministry at all. Just read Matthew 28:18-20 for the real commission Jesus gave us. He didn't care about teaching in a building. He taught wherever and whenever He had the opportunity. He sought to draw genuine disciples of Himself to Him. Disciples of Jesus ought to follow the leader and point people to the leader!

The gospel, the message of the Kingdom, and the truth of God's Word is just as relevant to the marketplace, the street, the home, the gutter, the field, and the technological realm as it is to the pulpit! I love that Jesus didn't limit His ministry to "religious spaces" like so many people leading His community of followers often do! He wasn't staying put in a silo saying "come to me", He was following the commission He would later give in Matthew 28:18-20 to **go** into all realms of culture and society and **proclaim** the Good news! A stinky fishing boat was just as important as a synagogue! Spaces of danger, hostility and resistance were just as important as spaces of safety. And we'll certainly see why as the scene unfolds. Jesus was about to have a pivotal moment where He would call one of His key leaders to follow Him in this context of a rank fishing vessel...

¹Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Lk 5:1). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

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4 When he had finished speaking, (Jesus) said to Simon, “Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch.” 5 “Master,” Simon replied, “we’ve worked hard all night long and caught nothing. But if you say so, I’ll let down the nets.” (Luke 5:4-5)

After teaching, Jesus told Peter to head out and go fishing. Note the irony. Here was a carpenter’s son and itinerant preacher telling a fisherman it was time to fish! Conditions were certainly not right for fishing, as Peter noted. Not only was it still daylight, since Jesus had just finished preaching, but the previous night had been a waste. Nevertheless, at Jesus’ word, Peter agreed to cast the nets.³

Tony Evans notes that when we see these **two clues** in our lives, we should suspect that we are in the vicinity of receiving something **very special from God**.

Clue number one that we’re in the vicinity of receiving something special from God is this: When God is not allowing anything that we do to work. Perhaps we feel that we have done everything we can—we’ve gone job hunting, read the books, gone to counseling, but things still aren’t working. When this happens, it’s likely that we, like Peter, are exactly where God wants us to be.⁴

And why is this? Is it because God is some sort of twisted masochist who likes to watch us suffer and struggle? No, He’s not. Really, it’s that we just naturally lack wisdom and understanding. God is absolutely abounding in wisdom and understanding. After all, He is the author of all wisdom and understanding! When we’ve exhausted our resources, abilities and knowledge, we’re in a very ripe place to prayerfully surrender our rights to Him. This is exactly where He wants us. Why? Because then He can fully work in us and in our situation to bring about the objectively right results that He intended for us all along!

Clue number two that we’re in the vicinity of receiving something special from God is this: What God asks us to do doesn’t make sense. What Jesus asked Peter to do didn’t make any sense either! Talk to any fisherman who has worked on the Sea of Galilee, and they will tell you that putting a net into the deep waters in the daytime is not the way to catch fish. What Jesus asked Peter to do contradicted his experience, knowledge, and training.⁵

A few short years after her graduation from college, author J.K. Rowling’s worst nightmares were realized. She once wrote this;

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“I had failed on an epic scale. An exceptionally short-lived marriage had imploded, and I was jobless, a lone parent, and as poor as it is possible to be in modern Britain, without being homeless. The fears that my parents had had for me, and that I had had for myself, had both come to pass, and by every usual standard, I was the biggest failure I knew.”⁶

And then J.K. Rowling decided to start writing some books. You may have heard of them. I’m sure nobody thought that this was a good idea at the time, and probably most people in her life were just urging her to settle for some basic job to survive.

But now we know her to be the author of the Harry Potter series, one of the most successful book series in history.

Sometimes God calls us to do things that don’t make sense at first! This is how Peter felt about letting down these fish nets. It defied everything he had known before.

Between 2015 and 2018, I worked at Progressive Insurance. I quickly moved up the chain from a claims customer service rep, to a small claims adjuster, to a ridesharing claims adjuster for Uber in Texas, to a commercial claims adjuster for semi truck accidents. By the summer of 2018, I was in with the management of the commercial claims department and moving towards my next move up the chain into being a supervisor myself. During most of this time, from April of 2016 to the summer of 2018, I was working part time at the Chapel in Kenmore as a worship leader also.

And then, in the summer of 2018, First Glance Urban Youth Center, where the Chapel in Kenmore met, was looking for someone to do Donor Development for 20 hours a week. I had no experience in Donor Development but I prayed about it, talked to my wife Sarah extensively about it, and could sense the Lord urging me to apply for the job.

First Glance offered the job to me, and to make it financially work for our family, it would mean that I’d have to quit Progressive, become tri-vocational, and;

- Take a job at Artisan coffee, 25 hours a week
- Continue to work at Chapel Kenmore, 15 hours a week
- And take on the First Glance Donor Development job for 20 hours a week

It would end up being 60 hours a week of work. I would take a 20K a year pay cut, and lose all our family’s insurance benefits. Back then, our daughter Charlotte was six, our

⁶ <https://www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/10-famous-failures-that-will-inspire-you-success.html>

daughter Brooklyn was three, and Sarah worked a variety of part time jobs coaching ice skating and hosting. This would be a big leap. It didn't make sense, but I could sense the Lord was calling me into it.

I had no clue that by September of 2018, a generous donor at First Glance would raise the funds amongst his friends to buy me out of my job at Artisan Coffee, and pay me for 32 hours a week in Donor Development at First Glance, putting me 100% into the Kenmore neighborhood of Akron, Ohio bi-vocationally.

I had no clue that by September of 2019, the leader of the Chapel in Kenmore, my friend who I'd started it with, would leave, and I would be the only logical and available option to replace him during a shaky season for our church community.

Through His Word, God calls us to action in our specific circumstances, but our instincts and experience may tell us that obeying won't work. We have to remember that our instincts and experience have been distorted by sin. We can't see things perfectly. We lack information. Our understanding is flawed. We must depend on the almighty God who is all knowing and can accomplish the impossible.⁷

I'm not telling you to do something **stupid** for Jesus, but I **am** telling you that if you've fully verified that the Holy Spirit is asking you to do something that defies all your past knowledge and experience, but it totally makes sense in the aspect of it honoring Him, **JUMP IN!**

CAST YOUR NET! If you're standing in Christ **TAKE THE RISK!** Just make sure it's a risk for Christ and not something you've cooked up in your brain! Leave behind the toxic job for a ministry calling! Get out of the unhealthy relationship! Cut the unhealthy people that are bad influences out of your life! Go on the diet! Start the workouts! Have the hard conversation! Pursue the God-breathed dream that He's inspired you to pursue! Jump into the passion that He's lit up in you! Reach out to the people or the people group that He's called you to reach out to! Take violin lessons! Listen man I don't know what it is that's brewing inside of you but if it's from the Holy Spirit listen to it!

Cause when you cast your net for Christ, He's gonna bring about some results you wouldn't have imagined!

6 When they (cast their nets), they caught a great number of fish, and their nets began to tear. 7 So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them; they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. (Luke 5:6-7)

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The effort was successful, almost too much so. The boat overflowed with fish and began to sink. Peter called out to James and John for help. The nets were breaking, and fish were spilling out everywhere. In the rush, something profound dawned on Peter. What had taken place was no accident; only an agent of God could have produced such a catch in the middle of the day.⁸

Health and wealth people would use this passage to say that if we take faith filled risks, God is going to hook us up with large houses, fat paychecks, Gucci shoes, movie theaters in our houses, full court basketball courts in our basements, BMW's to drive, and maybe even a restaurant named after us. But that's not what the fish represent here.

If we obey God in the faith filled risks of casting our nets when all doesn't make sense, God will produce Kingdom results. Are Kingdom results things that we can get for ourselves? Real Estate? Cash? Swag? Entertainment? A whip to roll around in? **NO**. Kingdom results and Kingdom rewards are the changed lives of people around us for eternity! ***That's the real gift!***

8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus's knees and said, "Go away from me, because I'm a sinful man, Lord!" 9 For he and all those with him were amazed at the catch of fish they had taken, 10 and so were James and John, Zebedee's sons, who were Simon's partners. "Don't be afraid," Jesus told Simon. "From now on you will be catching people." 11 Then they brought the boats to land, left everything, and followed him. (Luke 5:8-11)

Jesus basically told Simon Peter, who had toiled for years in the profession of being a fisherman, that, despite providing a miraculous buttload of them, these fish were **nothing**- Peter was going to fish for people from now on. And Peter, along with some with him, left everything and followed Jesus into the wild ride of discipleship and mission.

Given the relatively small size of the villages on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee (e.g., Capernaum, Gennesaret), their residents would have been aware of Jesus' ministry (4:37). In addition, John's Gospel records that Peter learned of Jesus from his brother Andrew, who was a disciple of John the Baptist (John 1:38-41). Peter was probably also familiar with the events recorded in Luke 4:31-36 and could have been present to observe the exorcism. He certainly knew of Jesus' power to heal, due to the miracle involving his mother-in-law (4:38-39). In addition to hearing Jesus' teaching,

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Peter had observed Jesus' messianic power and was ready to obey His call to discipleship.⁹

Simon Peter had all sorts of evidence and experience that led him to this decision to leave all and follow Christ. He had witnessed firsthand many things that Jesus had done! As impetuous and wild as he was, he wasn't just making some impulsive, weird decision! However, the sacrifice he made was a huge one- to leave behind all he knew to follow the Messiah.

Peter bowed before Jesus. In words full of respect and awe, he asked Jesus to depart. The premise behind this remark was that a man of God surely would want to have nothing to do with an everyday sinner. Peter did not feel worthy of Jesus' blessing or of making such an acquaintance. He believed that God worked with and used only the pious. It was too dangerous to be a sinner and to be in God's presence. What Peter did not realize is that admitting one's inability and sin was the best prerequisite for service, since then one can depend on God. Peter's confession became his résumé for service. Humility is the elevator to spiritual greatness.¹⁰

Humility is always the elevator to spiritual greatness. It's upside down from all that makes sense to us.



Y'all know what Kentucky Fried Chicken is, right?

KFC founder Colonel Sanders was born in 1890 in Henryville, IN. When he was six years old, his father passed away leaving Sanders to cook and care for his siblings. In seventh grade, he dropped out of school and left home to go work as a farmhand. Already turning into a tough cookie.

⁹Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Lk 5:8). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

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At 16, he faked his age to enlist in the United States army. After being honorably discharged a year later, he got hired by the railway as a laborer. However, he got fired for fighting with a coworker. While he worked for the railway, he studied law--until he ruined his legal career by getting into another fight. Sanders was forced to move back in with his mom and get a job selling life insurance. And guess what? He got fired for insubordination. But this guy wouldn't give up.

In 1920, he founded a ferry boat company. Later, he tried cashing in his ferry boat business to create a lamp manufacturing company only to find out that another company already sold a better version of his lamp. Poor guy couldn't catch a break. It wasn't until age 40 that he began selling chicken dishes in a service station. As he began to advertise his food, an argument with a competitor resulted in a deadly shootout. Four years later, he bought a motel which burned to the ground along with his restaurant. Yet this determined man rebuilt and ran a new motel until World War II forced him to close it down.

Following the war, he tried to franchise his restaurant. His recipe was rejected 1,009 times before anyone accepted it. Sander's "secret recipe" was coined "Kentucky Fried Chicken", and quickly became a hit. However, the booming restaurant was crippled when an interstate opened nearby so Sanders sold it and pursued his dream of spreading KFC franchises & hiring KFC workers all across the country.

After years of failures and misfortunes, Sanders finally hit it big. KFC expanded internationally and he sold the company for two million dollars (\$15.3 million today). Even today, Sanders remains central in KFC's branding and his face still appears in their logo. His goatee, white suit and western string tie continue to symbolize delicious country fried chicken all over the world.

At age 90, Sanders passed away from pneumonia. At that time, there were around 6,000 KFC locations in 48 countries. By 2013, there were an estimated 18,000 KFC locations in 118 countries.¹¹

Colonel Sanders got humbled over and over and over and over again, and kept pressing forward. Like Colonel Sanders, I think of fishermen in Jesus' day as some of the definite underdogs of society who would have had this sort of "don't give up, don't give in" kind of attitude.

¹¹ <https://www.snagajob.com/blog/post/the-inspiring-life-story-of-kfcs-colonel-sanders>

The Rev. Colby Cuevas, associate pastor at the First United Methodist Church in Tupelo, said fishermen certainly weren't the most polished of individuals.

"In terms of characteristics, the fishermen were gruff and rugged, not social uppities at all," he said. "But they possessed useful skills. They were most likely multilingual and had some degree of business savvy. Most importantly, they were hard-working."¹²

When the hard working, gritty, potentially hard drinking fisherman Simon Peter finally came face to face with the full reality of who Jesus really was, his response was *to fall at Jesus's knees and say, "Go away from me, because I'm a sinful man, Lord!"*

No matter what you're background or story, if you **really** come **face to face** with the **real** Jesus, you will say the same thing.

When humans are confronted with the holiness of God, their sinfulness is exposed. Isaiah was a godly man. But when he saw God on his throne in all his glory and the heavenly beings describing him as, "Holy, holy, holy," Isaiah said, "Woe is me for I am ruined because I am a man of unclean lips" (Isa 6:1-5). Peter saw Jesus for who he really was, and thus saw himself for who he really was.¹³

The beginning of you being a useful vessel for Jesus to use is seeing yourself for who you really are. It's not about beating yourself up and constantly saying how much you suck- that's actually a reverse form of pride. If you do that, it's because you're constantly trying to minimize and diminish your struggle with pride. Take it from me, because I used to think self-effacement was cute and would make people think I'm humble, which is the opposite of humility.

External pride, arrogance, and cockiness are also just silly. People who act like that obviously never live up to all that they say they are.

No. Real humility is neither self-effacement nor cockiness. It is a genuine realization of how amazing and great God is, and how truly human and flawed we are in the light of His eyes. Real humility leads to worship. Real humility doesn't minimize the qualities, gifts and talents that we have, or boast about them. Real humility sees that all we are- strengths and weaknesses included, is our lot given to us by God to use for His service. May we admit all our flaws before God and people, and submit ourselves in service to the Lord of the Universe much in the same way that Colonel Sanders submitted himself

¹²

<https://www.gadsdentimes.com/story/lifestyle/faith/2014/05/08/fish-fishermen-hold-prominent-places-in-sc-riptide/32103995007/>

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in service to fried chicken and mashed potatoes! After all, didn't Jesus tell us that "We are the light of the world? And a city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. In the same way, we are to let our light shine before others, so that they may see our good works and give glory to our Father in heaven." (Matt. 5:14-16)

Jesus also noted that Peter would start catching people. He issued a call to Peter to enter into the process of gathering people and rescuing them from the danger of a fallen world. Unlike fish, which are caught to be flayed and devoured, Peter would catch people and bring them into life. Boats and nets would no longer be his tools; instead, God's word would. Jesus reversed a normally negative figure and made it into a positive one, just as he was transforming Peter's role of service. For Jesus, only sinners who knew they were sinners in need of help could enter His service. Rather than being unworthy, Peter was ready to serve with him.¹⁴

Stop dwelling on how unworthy you are, how flawed you are, how incompetent you think you are, and how sinful you are. It's important to be repentant. It's important to confess sins to God and to others. It's important to apologize when we've blown it. But it can go way too far. We make many humble sounding, pretty little religious excuses for not entering into what God is calling us to do! Some of these excuses are from the devil. Some are concocted right in the flawed laboratory of our flesh and our earthly minds. God has more for us than that! And it's not our worth that makes it possible, it's really Christ's worth in the sight of God, living in us, that makes it **all** possible! Let's wake up, get off of our self loathing butts, and start living for eternity!

The disciples responded to Jesus' call by leaving all and following him. That was the last time they spent the day just as fishermen. Jesus changes people's priorities. A call to ministry transcended their previous vocation.¹⁵

In Christ you are no longer the addict, the jerk, the selfish one, the drunk, the materialist, the lazy one, the angry one, the self righteous one, the violent one, the destructive one, the jealous one, the envious one, the grumpy one, the negative one, the bitter one, the sex-crazed one, the unforgiving one, the gossiping one, the hedonistic one, the unreliable one, the flaky one, the uncommitted one, the mentally unstable one, the elitist one, the know it all one, the disenfranchised one, the disconnected one, the narcissistic one, the gaslighting one, or the self-loathing one!

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“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!” (2 Cor. 5:17) We are new creations in Christ who perfectly obeyed God for us, who died for us, was buried for us, rose for us, ascended for us, and will return for us to bring us into His eternal Kingdom! The old “us” is dead and constantly dying! It’s constantly being crucified on the cross! The resurrected “us” in Christ is constantly taking over our being! It’s constantly manifesting itself and overpowering all that we once were! We can take heed! We can have hope! We can trust! We can step boldly into the call that Christ Jesus has for us and not look back!

Though we will look back from time to time... 😊 And even then, we can continue to trust Him and His lead!