

Luke 5**The First Disciples****Callings, Miracles, and Teachings: Navigating through Luke 5**

Luke 5 illuminates Jesus' transformative power, His divine calling, and HIS revolutionary teachings. His interactions challenge conventional religious practices and perspectives, reorienting them towards grace, mercy, and faith. As modern-day disciples, we are invited to trust in His power, respond to His call, extend His compassion, and embrace the newness of His message.

The Calling of the First Disciples (Luke 5:1-11)

On the shores of the Lake of Gennesaret, Jesus encounters Simon, James, and John, professional fishermen. After a miraculous catch of fish, Jesus calls them to be His disciples, promising that they will catch men.

The Cleansing of a Leper (Luke 5:12-16)

A man with leprosy approaches Jesus with faith, and Jesus compassionately heals him, instructing him to follow the Mosaic law regarding his cleansing. The news about Jesus continues to spread, attracting large crowds.

The Healing of a Paralytic (Luke 5:17-26)

In Capernaum, Jesus heals a paralytic, first forgiving his sins, which causes a controversy among the Pharisees and teachers of the law. The crowd marvels at the display of God's authority.

The Calling of Levi (Luke 5:27-32)

Jesus calls Levi, a tax collector, to follow Him. At a feast in Levi's house, Jesus interacts with tax collectors and sinners, leading to a dispute with the Pharisees about His association with such individuals. Jesus responds, stating He came to call sinners to repentance, not the righteous.

Question about Fasting (Luke 5:33-39)

Jesus is questioned about why His disciples do not fast as John's disciples and the Pharisees do. He responds with the parable of the bridegroom and the patch of unshrunk cloth, emphasizing the newness of

His message and mission.

Luke 5 presents a series of remarkable events and teachings in Jesus' ministry. From calling His first disciples to performing miraculous healings, Jesus challenges religious norms and provides insights into the nature of His mission. The controversies aroused by His actions and teachings spark profound reflections on the newness of His message.

Themes

Divine Calling
Power of Faith and Healing
Controversy and Clarification
New and Old Teachings

Topics

The Calling of the First Disciples
The Cleansing of a Leper
The Healing of a Paralytic
The Calling of Levi
Question about Fasting

People

Jesus
Simon Peter
James and John
The leper
The paralytic and his friends
Levi (Matthew)
Pharisees and teachers of the law
John's disciples

Locations

The Lake of Gennesaret
Various towns
Capernaum
Levi's house

ST JOSEPH THE WORKER
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH



Luke 5

Jesus Calls His First Disciples

¹ One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret,^[a] the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God.

² He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets.

³ He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

⁴ When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon,
**“Put out into deep water,
and let down the nets for a catch.”**

⁵ Simon answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.”

⁶ When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break.

⁷ So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

⁸ When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!”

⁹ For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken,

¹⁰ and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee,

Lk 5:1–11

Because of the crowds surrounding Jesus as he taught them God’s word beside the lake, Jesus chooses Simon Peter’s fishing boat to teach from and asks Simon to push it a little way out from the shore. Peter calls Jesus “Master.” Even though the fishermen have not caught anything all night, the basis for Peter’s obedience is Jesus’ word (v. 5). The references to the breaking nets, the request for help, and the sinking boats full of fish emphasize the great catch of fish. The size of the catch highlights Jesus’ knowledge and power over creation. When Peter sees such a miraculous catch of fish, he falls before Jesus and requests separation from the presence of Jesus because he recognizes he is a sinful man. Such a response is common when the Bible describes an appearance of God himself (Isa 6:5,8; Eze 1:28; 2:3; Rev 1:17). Peter rightly, though with much more to learn, recognizes he is in the presence of the Lord. Jesus’ reply to Peter includes a prohibition not to fear and a promise concerning a change of vocation. Peter will be involved in fishing for people from now on. At this assurance and promise from Jesus, Peter and others, including James and John, demonstrate the priority of Jesus in their lives by following him.

Simon's partners.
Then Jesus said to Simon,

**“Don't be afraid; from now on
you will fish for people.”**

11 So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Jesus Heals a Man with Leprosy

12 While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. ^[b] When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.”

13 Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said.

“Be clean!”

And immediately the leprosy left him.

14 Then Jesus ordered him,

**“Don't tell anyone, but go,
show yourself to the priest
and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded
for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.”**

15 Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses.

16 But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man

17 One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick.

18 Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus.

5:12–16 By his powerful word Jesus heals a man with a serious skin disease. Like Peter, this man too falls before Jesus and calls him Lord. The man assumes Jesus' ability to cure his uncleanness; his request focuses on Jesus' willingness. Jesus' touch shows his compassion and authority over uncleanness. At Jesus' word the man is cleansed; the leprosy instantaneously leaves him. The man is then told to give positive testimony to the priests of Jesus' power over uncleanness. The more the word spreads about Jesus, the more the crowds come to him in order to hear him speak and be healed of their illnesses, and the more Jesus withdraws and prays. Luke often refers to Jesus praying (3:21; 6:12; 9:18,28–29; 11:1; 23:46).

5:17–26 Jesus forgives sins and demonstrates his authority by healing a paralyzed man with his powerful word. In Luke's Gospel, the Pharisees are typically hostile to Jesus (cf. 5:21,30; 6:7). The emphasis in Luke 5:17–19 is on the lengths the friends of the paralyzed man take in order to get him to Jesus. The men lower him through the clay tiles of the roof. The dramatic moment is highlighted by the fact that the man ends up right in front of Jesus in the middle of the people in the house. Jesus responds with an emphatic statement of forgiveness. The objections of the Pharisees and teachers of the law focus on Jesus' identity (“Who is this?” v. 21; cf. 7:49; 8:25; 9:9,18,20). They understand Jesus' pronouncement as not simply a declaration that God forgives the man's sins but as a declaration that Jesus himself

¹⁹ When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

²⁰ When Jesus saw their faith, he said,

“Friend, your sins are forgiven.”

²¹ The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

²² Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked,

“Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? ²³ Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? ²⁴ But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

²⁵ So, he said to the paralyzed man,

“I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.”

²⁶ Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God.

²⁷ Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, “We have seen remarkable things today.”

Jesus Calls Levi and Eats with Sinners

²⁷ 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,

²⁸ and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.

²⁹ Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them.

³⁰ But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?”

³¹ Jesus answered them,

“It is not the healthy who need a doctor,

for he who is healthy does not need a doctor, but the one who is sick does. They think Jesus is speaking blasphemies because no one is able to forgive sins except God. Jesus is regularly described as knowing the thoughts of people, indicating divine knowledge (6:8; 7:39–40). The commands to get up and walk (5:24) are, on one level, harder miracles for Jesus to perform because the evidence of healing is immediately obvious and verifiable. To forgive sin, however, is ultimately harder because it is something only God can do. The Son of Man, as the one with divine authority to judge and rule, has the authority to announce the end-time verdict of forgiveness (Da 7:13–14). Jesus will demonstrate he already has the authority to render this verdict, before the final judgment. In Luke 5:25 the fulfillment is highlighted with the repetition of the commands from verse 24 to “get up,” “take,” and “go.” The man immediately stands up, takes, and goes. The man and the people (who have seen Jesus’ knowledge, power, authority, and forgiveness) appropriately respond with praise to God.

5:27–32 The initiative and authority of Jesus are highlighted here as Jesus sees Levi and commands that Levi follow him. The identification of Levi as a “tax collector” anticipates the following discussion (vv. 29,30). Levi first expresses his commitment to follow Jesus by holding a great banquet for him. A large crowd of “tax collectors and others” were at this banquet reclining with Levi and Jesus. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law, who in this instance were also Pharisees, complain to Jesus’ disciples and thus indirectly to Jesus at this point. Disciples of Jesus, a larger group than the apostles, are granted entrance into the kingdom and insight into Jesus’ teaching. They are to be characterized by adherence to Jesus’ teaching, and they are to prioritize Jesus above all else. In response to the complaint from the Pharisees about eating and drinking with such sinners, Jesus declares

but the sick.

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

Jesus Questioned About Fasting

33 They said to him, “John’s disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking.”

³⁴ Jesus answered:

“Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? ³⁵ But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast.”

³⁶ He told them this parable:

“No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old.

³⁷ And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined.

³⁸ No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins.

³⁹ And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say, ‘The old is better.’”

Footnotes

- a. [Luke 5:1](#) That is, the Sea of Galilee
- b. [Luke 5:12](#) The Greek word traditionally translated *leprosy* was used for various diseases affecting the kin.

the purpose of his mission with the image of a doctor and the sick, describing himself as the physician for humanity. Jesus has not come for the purpose of calling “the righteous.” Rather, he has come for the purpose of calling “sinners to repentance.” In this context, “sinners” refers to everyone since all need to repent. “Righteous,” like “the healthy” (v. 31), therefore, must refer to those who mistakenly think they are righteous. Thus, Jesus’ encounter with Levi exemplifies his compassion for and fellowship with sinners as well as his purpose in turning sinners from their sin to follow him.

5:33–39 The next objection contrasts the fasting of John the Baptist’s disciples to the “eating and drinking” of Jesus’ disciples. Jesus answers his critics with a question that anticipates the answer “no.” The significance of Jesus’ arrival is such that it would be as inappropriate for his disciples to mourn as it would be for wedding guests to mourn in the presence of the bridegroom during a wedding. Jesus’ reference to being “taken” alludes to his death and focuses on the grief and accompanying fasting that will follow his death (24:17; and joy in 24:41,52). In keeping with this emphasis on the significance of his arrival, Jesus gives a short a proverbial saying. Though there is continuity (both the old and new are garments), what Jesus brings is not just more of the same. The arrival of God’s salvation and decisive forgiveness brings an end to the previous institutions that were a temporary anticipation of God’s saving rule. The new is not just a patch that can be added to the old. On the other hand, the old with its constraints is not able to contain the new. However, those satisfied with the old forms and institutions do not even see the need for the newness that Jesus brings.

Bible Study Questions

1. How does the miraculous catch of fish demonstrate the divine power of Jesus, and how does it impact Simon Peter and his companions?
2. What can we learn from the leper's approach to Jesus, and Jesus' response to him?
3. In the healing of the paralytic, how does Jesus demonstrate His authority to forgive sins?
4. How does Jesus' call and interaction with Levi challenge the societal and religious norms of the time?
5. What does Jesus' response to the question about fasting reveal about the nature of His mission?
6. How does Jesus' response to the Pharisees regarding his association with sinners challenge our own attitudes towards marginalized or stigmatized individuals?
7. How does the parable of the new cloth and the old garment inform our understanding of the relationship between Jesus' message and the Old Testament law?
8. What are the implications of Jesus' call to "catch people" for our understanding of discipleship?
9. How does the faith of the paralytic's friends contribute to his healing, and what does this teach us about intercessory prayer?
10. What does Jesus' instruction to the healed leper to follow the Mosaic law tell us about His respect for established religious practices?
11. How does Jesus' interaction with Levi challenge us to examine our own prejudices and preconceptions?
12. How do the miracles in this chapter affirm Jesus' divine authority?
13. In the light of the calling of Simon Peter, James, John, and Levi, how should we respond to Jesus' call in our lives?
14. How do Jesus' actions and teachings in this chapter redefine religious and social norms?
15. How does Jesus' response to the Pharisees' criticism provide guidance on dealing with criticism or misunderstanding in our lives?
16. What insights does Jesus' answer to the question about fasting provide for our spiritual disciplines?
17. How does the healing of the leper and the paralytic inspire us to approach Jesus in faith, regardless of our circumstances?
18. What does the calling of the first disciples and Levi teach us about Jesus' inclusive invitation to follow Him?
19. How can the stories and teachings in this chapter help us better understand and share the gospel with others?

20. How does Jesus' response to the criticism of His associations inform our interaction with different groups of people today?