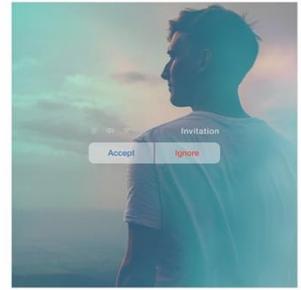


Fish with Me

Throughout the gospels, there are many places where Jesus calls or invites us to something, but He leaves it up to us to decide whether we'll accept His invitation or ignore it. Let's look at five invitations Jesus extends and ask ourselves how we'll respond



INTRODUCTION

In the story of Jesus' encounter with the fisherman, Simon (Peter), we see that Jesus invites us to fish with Him. This means that as disciples, we are called to be "fishers of men," sharing the Gospel and making more disciples of Christ.

STARTER QUESTION

Consider your own life and spheres of influence. What would fishing with Jesus look like for you?

INTO THE WORD

1. In Matthew 14:14-21, Jesus multiplied two fish and five loaves of bread from the disciples so that they were able to feed 5,000 people. Through the grace of God, the disciples had a great impact on the crowd that day despite having little to offer on their own. What are some promises God gives us in His Word that He will do the same for us?
2. One of Jesus' disciples was nicknamed "Doubting Thomas" for his skepticism of Jesus' resurrection (see John 20). However, Thomas acted boldly prior to this, offering to travel with Jesus and even to die with Him without full knowledge of His mission (John 11:16). How can we serve God despite our questions and doubts as exemplified by Thomas?
3. Do we as saved sinners really "make" anyone a disciple? Who is it that really does the work, through our obedience, of making disciples? Consider Acts 4:33, 2 Corinthians 12:9, and Ephesians 3:7 in your answer.

APPLICATION

4. As believers, we see in the Bible that the Lord has called each of us to witness to others and to share the Gospel. In what ways does the Lord "call" each of us to do this?
5. What role does trusting God play in sharing our faith with those who have yet to accept Jesus as their Savior? To what extent does our understanding of God's Word and His sovereign plan either limit or multiply our work as we "fish for men?"
6. Is there an area of your life right now where Jesus is asking you to trust Him and "drop your net?" What is holding you back?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your Son, who invites us to become His disciples and allows us to be adopted into Your family. We ask that You give us the strength and the courage to boldly share our faith with those around us. Despite the chaos of this world, we know You are still building Your church. We pray that even in our

weakness, reluctance, and inadequacy, You would use Your church to do Your will on earth. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

SUGGESTED ANSWER GUIDE FOR SELECTED QUESTIONS:

Question 1:

1. He comes alongside us, calms our fears and feelings of inadequacy, and comforts us in all our affliction. (2 Corinthians 1:4 ESV)
2. He gives us strength to persevere, we need only ask. (Isaiah 40:29-31)
3. He places us where He needs us and supplies our needs when we are lacking. (Psalm 37:23-34 ESV)

Question 2:

Pastor David said that reluctant faith does not disqualify us from becoming disciples. God will make known to us what is necessary for the mission with which He tasks us. For example, Jesus shows Thomas the holes in His hands, which is enough to make Thomas believe and share his belief with others (John 20:24). However, Jesus does not give Thomas or any of the other disciples step-by-step instructions. Each disciple doubted at different points, but it did not stop them from boldly proclaiming the Gospel. We should look to our faith and trust God's provision when we lack understanding or have doubts.

Question 3:

In Luke 5, we see that Jesus is first teaching from the Word. He then teaches by using fishing as an illustration. In the disciples' own strength, their efforts had been fruitless all through the night. As Peter trusts Jesus and obeys Him, he hands over the results to the Lord and allows Him to do a great work through the "unqualified" men that Jesus called (Acts 4:33).

We cannot do anything in our own strength or wisdom (2 Cor. 12:9), but as we hand over control to God and trust Him, His power fills us, and His grace is sufficient for His callings and our every need (Eph. 3:7).

Question 4:

The Lord does not call the qualified, He qualifies those whom He calls (through the power of the Holy Spirit). It is God's loving plan that every believer uses their God-given gifts and talents to serve Him and others. We are to rely on the Lord and allow Him to work through us to share our story, the Gospel, and to glorify His name (1 Cor. 22; Isaiah 6:8). This may include our personal testimony and the ways in which God has changed our heart, circumstances, or relationships (Ezekiel 36:26; Jer. 29:11). Jesus will speak through us and give us the wisdom and words to be an effective witness to Him (1 Peter 4:11).

Question 5:

As we trust the Lord to work in and through us, believers can hand their thoughts, words, decisions, and actions over to God (Proverbs 3:5-6). The seeds we plant in the minds and hearts of those who need Jesus are ultimately grown and harvested by the Lord alone. We are to remain faithful to God in answering His callings on our hearts to proclaim the Gospel (Gal. 6:9).

Some of the ways we can be effective "fishers of men" include claiming God's promises to believers in His word, glorifying Him and giving Him credit when He grants us victories in this life, radiating his love by loving others, sharing our faith in Christ and the hope of eternal life, and praising Him for the strength He gives us by living in our hearts (1 John 4:4).