



God with Us

 illuminate

Episode four

Episode four
Jesus and
the Fishermen



How to use these studies

The study in front of you now is adapted from the 2014 Illuminate material. It is designed to be used by youth & young adult groups, small groups, or families to journey together through the Gospel story over the course of a year.

Illuminate Camp is based on a practice of 'storying', recapturing the stories behind the Bible texts we have heard so many times. It is an inherently community-based practice, involving reading the narratives together and participating in discussion as a group. The aim is to hear the stories as if it was the first time; to try and put aside the years of knowledge you have accumulated and hear them fresh.

To get the most out of these studies, we recommend the following process:

- Get a group of friends to journey through these stories together. These studies are also ideal for family groups. (While it is possible to do these studies solo, we cannot oversell how much better they will be if you do them as a group)
- As a group, read aloud the original Bible texts, based on the references below.
- As a group, read aloud the Illuminate re-write.
 - ◇ As you hear the story, make notes of things that stand out to you and questions that you have.
- If possible, read the original texts again, perhaps in a different translation.
- Discuss the stories as a group. Use the supplied questions as a guide, but don't be afraid to follow the discussion. Explore the stories wildly, asking every question that comes to mind.
- Pray together. Included in each study is a small Experience station that can be used as a guide for prayer and reflection, either as a group or individually.

We hope that you find this material as encouraging and stimulating as we did on camp. If you were on camp to hear these stories, we hope you find something new this time through. The Gospel stories are rich and complex, and no two times reading them are ever the same.





Episode 4: Jesus and the Fishermen

Intro

Do you know why Batman has Robin? It's because writing one character on their lonesome is really difficult to do well. A sidekick adds opportunities for dialogue, banter, discussion, and clarification that just don't come when all you've got to work with is one bloke in a bat suit sitting atop a gargoyle.

In the Gospel narratives, the disciples fill that same narrative role. Jesus, like Batman, knows what he's doing. He could go through a story without saying a word, without explaining a thing, because why would he; he already knows! But adding a sidekick into the mix gives the writers opportunities to clarify things, to add depth and explanation to their narratives. The sidekick getting things wrong, or being fuzzy on the details, means the writers can bring the readers up to speed without awkward breaks in the narrative.

All the disciples are Jesus' sidekicks, but I think Simon Peter is the perfect solo example of the flawed, enthusiastic, utterly human follower of God. Peter becomes a focal character for these stories because he is us. He is the broken human being, just trying to sort out how to follow Jesus. He doesn't understand things. He makes mistakes. So, when we modern disciples have the same misunderstandings, and make the same mistakes, we can turn to Peter's story. It's a vital story for understanding not only the history of the Church, but the narrative arc of the Gospels themselves.

Access a video version of this introduction at vic.youthvision.org.au/GodWithUs



Bible References

Luke 5:1-11



Story

A young man named Andrew had been one of John the Baptist's disciples. He had seen Jesus' baptism, witnessed the Holy Spirit rest on the man's head. When Jesus returned to Galilee, Andrew had followed. He had seen more miraculous signs in the towns around the lake, and eventually worked up the courage to approach Jesus.

"Who is it you are looking for?" Jesus asked when Andrew approached.

"Rabbi," Andrew said nervously, inclining his head on the honorific, "where are you staying?"

Jesus' expression didn't change for a moment, until it broke into a smile. "Come," he said, "and you will see."

The sun was high in the sky. On a nearby beach, a fisherman named Simon sat against the shady side of his boat, pulled up on the sand, with a net across his knees. His calloused fingers worked deftly, pulling out seaweed and driftwood that had tangled in the fibres. He worked on his nets as well as many artists worked on their tapestries. Fishing was what he did best. In fact, it was all he knew. He had never excelled at anything else. But he was a good fisherman, and proud of that.

He yawned hugely as he worked, the long hours spent on the moonlit sea catching up with him. He half-closed his eyes, navigating the nets by touch alone. Then he heard someone shout his name.

He turned to see his younger brother Andrew making his way through the shrubbery around the banks of the lake towards the beach, leading a man Simon did not recognise. Simon hefted his nets over his shoulder and took a few steps up the beach to meet the man.

As Simon stood beside the boat, his business partners, the brothers James and John—big broad men with thick beards and booming voices, nicknamed in the town of Bethsaida as the Sons of Thunder—approached from their own work. They leaned on the side of the boat and watched Andrew lead the stranger around the low bushes at the edge of the sand.

"Brother," Andrew shouted excitedly. "We've found him!"

"Who?" Simon asked, looking past his exuberant brother to the man who stood a respectful distance away from the other men, watching them keenly.

Andrew placed his hand on Simon's arm and pulled him in close to whisper, "The Messiah. The Anointed One."

Simon hissed and shoved Andrew away as though burned. "Don't let anyone hear you say that," he said sharply. "Men have been crucified for less."

Andrew glared back at him. "Not all of us have lost hope, brother."

Simon grabbed his little brother by the collar. "Do you remember Matthias? And Simeon, whose father owns the bakery? They thought they found the Messiah too, and they ended up hanging from crosses outside Jerusalem alongside their pretender with the crows fighting over their eyes. I'll not have you running off and joining some harebrained revolution! Keep it up and it'll be you with the nails in your hands."

Andrew pulled himself away as the stranger approached. He smiled warmly at Simon. "Greetings, Simon son of John."



Simon glanced at Andrew, who shook his head wide eyed. Simon scowled at this stranger who knew his name, but the man continued undeterred.

"I have a mind to sail the lake. Would you indulge me?"

Simon shrugged. "Not much point, sir," he said respectfully, but firmly. "There won't be fish to catch at this time of day."

"Not fish, sail," Andrew interjected. He turned to the stranger. "We'd be happy to take you out, sir."

Simon's scowl deepened, but he ignored the smirks of James and John and began heaving the boat back into the water. Andrew helped the stranger aboard and then aided his brother pushing the boat off the sand. Once it bobbed in the shallows, Simon threw his nets into the hull and climbed in. He rowed them out onto the lake in sullen silence.

The sun was beating down on their backs as they got further out. Simon wasn't used to the light, and in his current state of tiredness and irritability, it was all he could do not to snap at the stranger.

"Where to, boss?" he asked.

The stranger looked about, over the gentle rise and fall of the lake surface. "Here should be fine," he said. "Let down your nets for a catch."

Simon almost laughed, but managed to turn it into a cough. "You clearly don't know anything about fishing," he said as kindly as he could. "Let me fill you in. I've been out here all night and I didn't catch a thing. And now the sun's up, there's basically no chance of catching any fish; they're all down there in the dark." He looked carefully at the stranger, but his expression didn't change. So Simon sighed. "Right. Whatever you say, boss."

Simon stood and unwound the long rope that he had laid coiled on the floor of the boat. He tied one end securely to the side of the boat and slowly began swinging the net above his head. With a sidelong look at the stranger, Simon opened his hands and let the net fly. It was a careless cast, completely without aiming, but then there was nothing to aim at. The net sank out of sight into the inky depths of the lake, dragged down by the weights tied around its edges.

Simon dusted his hands. He shot a glance at the stranger. The man had not removed his eyes from Simon the entire time the net was being cast. Simon looked away.

Then the boat lurched to the side. Simon staggered, finding his feet in a heartbeat, but grunting in surprise as he did so. He looked at the rope tied to the side of the boat, and saw how it stretched tight into the deep water.

The stranger just sat there and smiled, even as the boat lurched again.

"Andrew!" Simon snapped. His brother bounded over to Simon and they both seized the rope and hauled. Their muscles knotted as they pulled on the rope, eventually managing to pull the woven bag to the surface. It was full of wriggling fish, throwing themselves against the sodden ropes to try and escape the harsh sunlight.

"Impossible," Simon breathed.

As he and Andrew gave a final heave to pull the net into the boat, the ropes snapped from the weight of fish, spilling the catch over the bottom of the boat. Andrew laughed with surprise. The stranger smiled, ignoring the scaled bodies that flooded his ankles.



“Impossible,” Simon repeated. “This can’t... it shouldn’t...”

“I told you,” Andrew whispered. “We’ve found him.”

Simon fell to his knees in the middle of the boat, heedless of the fish. He looked at the stranger. “Go away from me, lord,” he pleaded. “I am a sinful man.”

The stranger held out a hand. “You think you know yourself, Simon son of John. You think you know the way of the world. But the world is about to change. And I have chosen you to be a part of it. My name is Jesus. You shall be called Peter. Come, follow me.”





Questions

- Which part of the story stood out to you? What made that stand out?
- Who did you relate to in the story? What was it about them you related to?
- Is there anything about this story that you hadn't considered before?
- What is a disciple? Are you a disciple?
- Having met Jesus, Andrew was eager for Simon to meet him too. Have you ever felt that same enthusiasm? What has that looked like for you?
- Sometimes it is hard to feel that enthusiasm. Why do you think that is?
- Why did Jesus change Simon's name? In what ways did he change his life?
- If you were Jesus and you had to pick five disciples from anyone in the world, who would you pick and why?
- Why do you think Jesus chose Peter to be a disciple? What qualities make a good disciple?
- Peter was confident in his own abilities as a fisherman. What bearing did this confidence have on his interaction with Jesus?
- What kinds of dreams might Peter have had before meeting Jesus? What happened to those dreams/skills/passions once he started following Jesus?



If you were a camper on Illuminate...

- What do you remember about hearing this story on camp?
- Compare that to your response hearing it now. How is your reaction different? Did you notice the same things? New things?



Experience

You will need:

- Paper and pens
- A fishing net (optional, can easily be replaced with a simple bowl or box)

Use the paper and pens to write down the things you are good at and/or are passionate about. Then place them in the net as a symbol of handing those things over to God to use for his purposes. Reflect on the following phrases (either printed for participants to read, or spoken by the group leader).

Simon Peter was a skilled fisherman. He knew his craft well. Jesus gave him an opportunity to use his skills for a new purpose.

For Simon Peter to follow Jesus, it meant giving up control of his dreams. He allowed Jesus to dictate the course of his life. And Jesus gave him opportunities to do things Simon Peter would not have dreamed of before.

Offer your skills to God. Don't hold tight to your dreams, let God hold them for you.

Pray together, asking God to guide your dreams and to use your passions for his purposes.



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