

All That Jesus Taught Bible Study- Part 9

by Zac Poonen

The key to becoming a fisher of men is to follow Christ and obey his commands, recognizing our limitations and seeking to do God's will.

Duration: 25:46

Scripture: Matthew 28:19

Topics: "Discipleship", "Evangelism"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of following Jesus' command to make disciples and teach them to obey all that Jesus commanded. It highlights the need for true discipleship, not just head knowledge, and the significance of seeking to love one another as Christ loved us. The focus is on becoming fishers of men by following Jesus, listening to His guidance, and presenting transformed lives as an offering acceptable to God.

Transcript

We continue our study today on all that Jesus taught, basing our study on in obedience to Jesus' command in Matthew 28, verse 20, where he told us to go into every nation and teach people to actually do all that Jesus commanded. Not everybody in the world, but disciples, we've got to preach the gospel, forgiveness of sins to the whole world. But when it comes to all that Jesus taught, we have to teach that to the disciples.

It's no use telling worldly, unconverted people all that Jesus taught. He said, first make them disciples, Matthew 28, 19, and then teach them to do all that I have commanded. If you don't make a person a disciple, it's pointless trying to teach him all that Jesus commanded.

It will be just head knowledge, which he has no interest in following. We have multitudes of Christians today who sit in churches, listening to all that Jesus commanded, who have no interest in following it, no interest in doing it. Their leaders don't do it, and they don't do it.

That's not what Jesus is speaking of here. The church can become strong, the church that the gates of hell will never prevail against, never overcome, if we first make disciples, and then teach them to do, not teach the world, but teach these disciples, who have forsaken all to follow Christ, teach them to do every single thing that Jesus commanded. I believe God wants little groups of people like this, New Testament churches, all across the world, everywhere, and the mark of this New Testament church should be that

they do everything that Jesus commanded.

For example, that they seek to love one another as Christ loved them, so that all people will know that they are Christ's disciples. This is God's will. And this is why we've been looking at the things that Jesus taught, beginning in Matthew chapter four, where we've been concentrating our studies the last few sessions.

We look now at Matthew chapter four, and verse 19, we looked at it partially in our last study where Jesus turned to Simon, Peter, and Andrew, and told them, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. We looked at what that command, follow me, implies in our last study. We want to look at the rest of that verse now, what Jesus taught.

Let's read slowly. I feel that many Christians don't read the Bible slowly, they don't meditate on it, they don't think about the words, and therefore they miss what God has for them. Much more important than your going through the Bible 50 times in a year is the Bible going through you once a year.

I don't want to get into the Guinness Book of Records as to how many times I've read through the Bible, or how many verses in the Bible I have memorized. I'm not in a competition with anybody on those issues. It's good to read through the Bible many times.

It's good to memorize huge portions of scripture, if you can apply them in your life, claim those promises, obey those commands, otherwise it's worthless. It's head knowledge which can only puff you up. But much more important is to let the Bible go through you.

One of the prayers that I have prayed myself, and I continue to pray is, Lord, before I leave this earth, here's a good prayer for you to pray too. Lord, before I leave this earth, I want to obey every single commandment that you have given me to obey, especially in the New Testament. There are many commands to Israel in the old covenant that are not for me, like sacrificing lambs and keeping the Sabbath day, etc.

But every command that is meant for me in scripture, I want to obey 100% before I leave this earth. And secondly, Lord, before I leave this earth, I want to claim every promise that you have given in the New Testament for me. There are promises to Israel, which I'm not interested in claiming, there are promises to Abraham, which I'm not interested in, but the promises for me, the child of God, every single one of them, whether in the Old Testament or New Testament, I want to claim them before I leave this earth.

Isn't that a good prayer to pray? Why should I leave this earth ignoring certain sections of scripture, ignoring certain commandments, ignoring certain promises? I want to claim all of them before I reach heaven so that I can stand before my Lord not having despised a single commandment or promise of His. How do you think you will feel when you stand before the Lord and you discover that you have neglected a lot of His commandments, maybe the small ones, and neglected to claim some of His promises, which made your life unnecessarily miserable on earth? I think I'd feel terrible if I stood before the Lord like that. I don't want to.

So that's why we want to read carefully a simple statement like this, I will make you fishers of men. Who's going to make you a fisher of men? Christ. No man can make you a fisher of men.

You can go to a Bible college and spend years there, that won't make you a fisher of men. You don't become a fisher of men by studying the Bible. No.

You don't become a fisher of men by hearing a missionary challenge and raising your hand or coming forward and kneeling down and consecrating your life for God's work. No you don't. If you want to be a fisher of men, the Lord says, you follow me.

Not even study the Bible, follow me. Those early Christians didn't have a Bible. How could they be fishers of men? By following Jesus.

It's more important, now you've got to understand me right here. I believe in studying the scriptures, we started with that, man shall live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. But you don't become an idolater, idol worshiper of the Bible.

Don't become a bibliolater. The Bible is meant to help us to follow Jesus better. The Holy Spirit uses the word to show us the glory of Jesus Christ.

So follow me is the way to become a fisher of men. And who's going to make you a fisher of men? Not some missionary Bible training institute. Jesus Christ himself.

God may use men, but ultimately it's Christ who wants to have a personal relationship with you and he alone can make you a fisher of men. Now what does it mean to be a fisher of men? To pick up just like fishermen go into the seas or into the rivers, let down their nets to pick up fish and bring them to the shore. To bring them from one surrounding into another.

A fish is not naturally comfortable on earth, it's comfortable in the sea. And a fisherman is picking up that fish from there and bringing it to earth to a completely different environment from what it was in. It's very important to understand.

It's not like capturing a lion or an elephant and putting it in a cage. Because that's still, a lion is used to the jungles and to live on the earth, not in the sea. But when you catch a fish, it's being taken out and put into a completely different environment.

I mean, land and water are like opposites. So to be a fisher of men, a real fisher of men in its full meaning, would be to go to people who are in the water of this world and pick them up from there and bring them into a completely different environment, which is the kingdom of heaven. Now if you haven't brought a person out of the kingdom of this earth into the kingdom of heaven, you haven't really brought that fish out.

You got to sort of kept that fish in your net perhaps, but it's still in the water. You haven't really brought it out. You haven't been a fisher of men.

Which fisherman just catches the fish in the nets and leaves them in the net, still in the water? The fish are very comfortable in that water. But you bring them out to the earth and you see how fish behave when they are on land. They are flapping around and saying, hey, I'm not very comfortable here.

When a person is transported from the things of earth to heaven, it's a different environment altogether. Just like it is for a fish when he comes from water to the land, when we are transported from the kingdom of earth to the kingdom of heaven, until we realize that this is our natural environment. The Holy Spirit makes us comfortable in the kingdom of heaven.

So don't feel that you have completed your job and you're a fisher of men just because you made a hundred people say, Lord Jesus, come into my heart. Unfortunately, that's what's happened. They haven't

meditated on what it means to be a fisher of men.

And that's because other human beings and teachers have made them fishers of men, not Christ. If Christ were to make you a fisher of men, it would be on the same principle that he preached a few verses earlier, just two verses earlier, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. I will teach these fish to turn around and seek for the kingdom of heaven to a completely different environment than they were in.

That's what a fisher man is doing. He's taking a fish and taking them from the sea to the land. And I must take people out of the kingdom of the earth into the kingdom of heaven, out of the kingdom of the devil into the kingdom of God.

And it's only Jesus who can make us fishers of men. Nobody else can do it. And it's not just the evangelist who's a fisher of men.

No. Evangelist is doing part of that job. The prophet, the apostle, the teacher, the shepherd, the pastor has also got to complete that job of making these people really comfortable in this kingdom of heaven.

So what a job it is. It's a complete task to take a person out from the sea to the land, out from the kingdom of earth to the kingdom of heaven. So the way to do it is to follow Christ.

If I follow Jesus, I will do that just like the way he did it. Let's take an example. He took 11 people.

Well, he called 12 people to be his apostles. But he succeeded with only 11 of them to transfer them to the values of heaven's kingdom. One of them dropped out, which teaches us that despite our best efforts, some will still drop out when we seek to lead people into God's kingdom.

We're not discouraged by that because that happened even in Jesus' church. Even if somebody steals money in your church, don't get discouraged. In Jesus' church, somebody stole money.

Judas Iscariot. So we're not talking about perfect 100% success with all those we work with. Jesus did not have perfect success with all those he worked with.

He always said he was ears to hear. Let him hear. He doesn't force people to enter his kingdom.

He did not force Judas Iscariot, and he will not force anybody. So don't get discouraged if you find some people drop out. It doesn't matter.

Paul once said that all those in Asia forsook him. Second Timothy 1. He once looked at his co-workers and said in Philippians 2 verse 19 onwards, I don't have anybody like Timothy. All seek their own.

But he was not discouraged. He knew that the way to life was narrow and few would find it. Jesus knew that.

He taught that in Matthew chapter 7, and the apostles knew it, and I know it. But we work with everybody, but recognize all the time that only few will really make it. Only few will find the way to life because most people are just not interested.

They want the things of heaven and the things of earth, and they end up like Judas Iscariot or like those people who turned away from Paul. But if we are faithful with our job, there will always be a remnant that really becomes a part of the kingdom of heaven on earth and becomes a very powerful church as a

witness for Christ on this earth. They may not be large in number.

In fact, they will not be large in number because the way to life is narrow and very few find it. So the Lord is the one who makes us fishers of men. It's very important to understand that.

I think of the picture of Jeremiah 18 where the Lord told Jeremiah to go to the potter's house. And there he saw the potter taking clay, just mud, and making a beautiful vessel out of it. And it's amazing how experienced potters can make beautiful vessels out of just ordinary mud.

And we are also mud. And the Lord takes us and by the power of his Holy Spirit, transforms us into a servant of God, a fisher of men. Now, most people in the world are fishing for money.

They're looking around for opportunities just like fishermen go around looking, searching all over the waters. Where can I catch fish? Not here, not here, not here. Oh, here, there's plenty of fish.

And that's the way most people live on the earth. Where can I make more money? Where can I make more money? Here perhaps, over there, over there, over there. Now, when a person begins to seek God's kingdom first, his mindset changes.

He thinks of where can I make more people into members of God's kingdom, more Christ-like. Where can I bring the unconverted person to Christ? Where can I bring that person who's converted but not yet a disciple into discipleship? Where can I make that disciple who's just sitting there lazily to obey every single thing that Jesus commanded so that he's transported completely into the kingdom of heaven? And he's following in Jesus' footsteps. And then I can reproduce myself in another generation where he begins to follow Jesus.

First, I begin to follow him. And then as I fish for these men and transform them into people who follow Jesus, I produce another generation. I believe that's what we should do with our own children.

Every true disciple of Jesus should desire that every one of his sons and daughters also become followers of Jesus so that Jesus can make them. I can't make them fishers of men, but Jesus can make them fishers of men. There are many preachers who promote their own children to follow in their footsteps.

I'm not talking about that type of nonsense. Only Jesus can make anybody a fisher of men. If Jesus can make me a fisher of men, I can never make my children fishers of men.

But Jesus has to make them. I can encourage them to follow Jesus. And Jesus has to make them fishers of men.

Jesus has to make them his servants. I cannot do that no matter how much I try. It's very important to recognize this difference.

But we must seek to train our children and those, the younger generation we minister to, to follow in Jesus' footsteps and to say, Lord, please make them fishers of men as well. Make them people who will draw others out of this world and bring them into your everlasting kingdom. So in this process, there's something that we have to learn.

And that is from the examples that Jesus himself, that are given in the Gospels, how Jesus himself taught through action, how those fishermen could fish. He taught them once at the beginning of his ministry and once at the end of his ministry. It's very interesting to see that.

We read of Jesus cleansing the temple twice. Once at the beginning of his ministry in John chapter 2 and once at the end of his ministry as well. In the same way, we find him teaching the disciples this truth by illustration.

Once at the beginning of his ministry in Luke chapter 5 and then at the end of his ministry in John chapter 21. So let's look at them. In Luke chapter 5, how he taught them to catch earthly fish as a principle by which we could learn how he makes us fishers of men.

In Luke chapter 5, we read that Jesus was standing by the seaside in the lake of Gennesaret, Luke chapter 5 verse 1. And he got into one of the boats, verse 3, which was Simon's. And he asked him to push a little way out from the land. This time he was in the boat.

And now he sat down in the boat and began teaching. And when he had finished his teaching of the multitudes, he said to Simon, Hey, let's get some fish now. I borrowed your boat.

I'd like to pay you for it. I wasn't that decent of Christ. He said, put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.

And Simon answered and said, Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing. That's a principle we need to understand in serving the Lord. If you work hard all your life without the power of the Holy Spirit, you'll discover one day when you stand in heaven that you've caught nothing.

Even if you yourself are in the boat and you're saved. Do you want a life like that? I certainly don't want it. That's why I want to learn to listen to Jesus.

And to listen to the word of God, the voice of God and the Holy Spirit. So Jesus says to him, put out your nets for a catch, go into the deep water. And Simon was willing to respond.

He says, even though we've caught nothing at your bidding, verse five, I will let down the nets. This is the first principle. Lord, I'm not going to go by my human reason.

I'm going to do what you say, even though my human reason says it's a waste of time. Because you tried all night. In the same area, you went to every single spot in this lake and you didn't get any lake.

Imagine how many hours in the night they would have toiled. Seven, eight hours, they got nothing. They're absolutely sure there's nothing down the ship.

The fish are probably deep down in the bottom, not coming up to the level of the nets. But at your bidding, I'll do it. Lord, if you told me to do it, I'll do it.

And so they went out. And when they did this, they enclosed such a great quantity of fish that their nets began to break. And they had to signal to their partners, verse seven, in other boats to come and help them.

And they came and filled up both the boats. This is like a picture of churches cooperating together, who are eager to bring people into God's kingdom, completely into God's kingdom. And saying, hey, come.

I can't do all this myself. Come, let's cooperate and fill both boats. And even they began to sing.

Imagine getting such a catch. And when Simon Porter saw this, he knew it was a miracle. He knew that was not something accidental.

It was an absolute miracle that he fell down at Jesus' feet and said, oh, Lord, I'm a sinful man. Depart from me. You're too holy for me.

Because amazement had seized him, verse nine, at the catch of fish they had taken. And then James and John, who were partners with Simon, were also there. And Jesus said, don't fear.

From now on, you'll be catching men. Here's the same principle he was applying to catching men. Recognize that you cannot do it on your own.

That all your labor will amount to zero. That's the first thing to recognize. And then bow your head before God and say, Lord, I don't want to do my will in my life.

I don't want to serve God according to my plan. I don't want to go to this part of the lake or that part of the lake according to my choice. You tell me where to go, and I'll go.

Is that the way you seek to serve the Lord? Then you will accomplish God's will. It's one of the great blessings I've discovered, particularly in the last 36 years. As I've sought to listen to where does God want me to go.

I don't go everywhere people invite me because I say that may not be where God wants me to go. People can think that, oh, if I, I'm a gifted brother, so if I speak somewhere, Brother Zach, if he speaks somewhere, it'll be a blessing. Not so.

I cannot be a blessing except where God sends me. I cannot catch fish unless God tells me to go. So that's the first thing we need to understand.

And the second is when the Lord tells you to go, despite what all your feelings and your reasons say, go. And you'll find, as I found many, many times, God has a purpose in sending us there. The other example is in John chapter 21.

At the end of Jesus Ministries, the one miracle that he did after the resurrection, the last miracle that he did, the last thing mentioned in John 21, we read that this time he was not in the boat. The disciples were in the boat. They had toiled all night, John 21 3, and again caught nothing.

A repetition of the lesson they learned three years earlier at the beginning of Jesus Ministry. And then Jesus stands on the shore and says, have you guys got any fish? He says nothing. Okay.

Cast your net on the right side of the boat. And they were not able to fill. They were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish.

John 21 6. There again, the lesson is the same. We toil all night without seeking the Lord's will, you know, because we do our own will. It says in John 21, Peter said, I am going fishing.

And the other said, we will also come with you. John 21 3. And they went out doing their own will and caught nothing. And a little later, not some years, some hours later, when Jesus comes in the morning after they come to an end of themselves, very often the Lord has to wait until we come to an end of ourselves.

And he asked, have you caught anything with all your labor and you're doing your own will? No. Look at the quality of your converts. They are defeated.

They fight with each other. They love money. They don't do anything that I've commanded.

Is that the type of fish you're going to present to me? The apostle Paul said he wanted to present to God an offering that is acceptable to God. Are the type of believers you converted in your church acceptable to God? Are they people fight and quarrel with each other? How are the married couples in your church? How are the children being brought up in your church? These are the questions. Are they acceptable to God? Paul says in Romans 15, I want them to be acceptable to God.

So the type of fish that we offer to God, just like, you know, when we invite some important person for a meal in our house, we present the best before him. It's very important also as we present to God. Paul says in 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, sorry, chapter 11, he says, I want to present you as a pure virgin to Christ in the final day.

2 Corinthians in chapter 11, he says in verse 2, I want to present you one day as a pure virgin to your husband, Christ. And that's why I work with you. I work with you.

In Colossians, he says, in Colossians chapter 1, he says, I want to present every man, verse 28, perfect in Christ. And to this end, Colossians 1, 29, I labor. So what does it mean to catch fish, to present the best possible fish to our Lord? Going out, laboring, working with others, not by ourselves, working with other members of the body of Christ, cooperating, we doing our part, they doing their part, so that finally we can transport people from the kingdom of earth into the kingdom of heaven and present to God an offering that's acceptable to him, as Paul says in Romans 15, and a pure virgin to be the bride of Christ.

Let's labor for that. And the way to do it is to follow Jesus Christ and allow him to make us like a potter makes a clay, clay into a beautiful vessel. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, as we bow before you once again, we ask you to make us also true fishers of men who will fulfill your purpose on this earth. We humbly ask in Jesus name. Amen.

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