Let's Go FISHING

THE MAKING OF A DISCIPLE

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LET'S GO FISHING: THE MAKING OF A DISCIPLE
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Introduction

VBS for Teens, Adults, or Both

How can your VBS boost its outreach? Let teens and adults enjoy the fun too!

A youth and adult Bible study introduces unsaved VBS family members to the Savior and makes them feel welcome in the church's fellowship. It helps saved family members of VBS kids grow in Christ and all church members to get involved in VBS.

As the Bible study progresses, class members will often begin to feel like friends!

TIPS

- Invite friends and neighbors. If your church keeps track of visitors for children's awards, adults and teens could count as visitors.
- Make this Bible study a friendly time to explore God's Word. Have refreshments available and help newcomers feel welcome.
- Take extra care to avoid embarrassing anyone who is new to church. Avoid questions that will divide the class into "knowledgeable" and "ignorant."
- Have Bibles on hand for those who don't bring one. Involve everyone who wants to read Scripture without pressuring anyone to read.

- Help all members of the class, whether adults or teens, see how they can apply God's Word to the problems they face in everyday life.
- Keep going after VBS! Before VBS ends, make plans to get together for lunch, ice cream, or a similar outing. Be intentional about reaching out and helping visitors make friends from your church.

NEW FORMAT OPTIONS

This book provides material for at least two options for the group's structure.

OPTION 1: Offer separate classes for youth and adults. An advantage of this approach is the ability to speak to each group's unique issues. Simply choose from activities that are designated for each group in the book.

OPTION 2: Combine youth and adults. Advantages of this approach are plugging teens into the life of the church, giving them the opportunity to learn from adults' experience, and giving adults the opportunity to learn from teens' trend awareness. Include at least one activity per day that the whole class will enjoy.

BONUS: Consider using this Bible study before VBS as a tool for preparing the hearts of VBS workers, both teens and adults.

INTRODUCTION TO *LET'S GO FISHING*

OUR CULTURE LOVES CELEBRITIES. We follow them from afar. But what if you could meet a famous person? Is he or she a real person who hungers, thirsts, and sometimes wakes up with bedhead?

The apostle Peter helps us know what it would be like to meet Christ Jesus, the most famous person in history.

When Jesus met Peter, Peter was about as real a person as anyone could get. He was an ordinary guy working an ordinary job. Like ordinary people, he had his pat-on-the-back moments—and he had moments when he wanted to hide under a rock.

Watching Peter gives us insights we can use every day. Let's jump in the boat and discover how real people can follow Jesus in real life.



Under Construction

Luke 4:31–41; John 1; 3:16, 17

L1 WARM-UP

YOUTH ACTIVITY: ROUGHING IT

BEFORE CLASS: Write a list of comforts that students might enjoy at home, e.g., air-conditioning, electricity, a bed, showers, bathrooms, good food, TV, video games.

> **ACTIVITY:** Have all students stand. As you read each listed item, ask the students to sit down if they would not be willing to give up that comfort to go on a camping trip.
>
> **DISCUSS:** Ask for volunteers to share why they would or wouldn't give up those comforts.

Before we're ready to give up something, we must be convinced the sacrifice is worth making. Today we'll learn of a man who gave up everything to follow Someone Who was worth everything.

ADULT ACTIVITY: NEXT SUBJECT, PLEASE. . .

> **ACTIVITY:** If you're willing to share, choose one of two options.

Option A: What was one of your most embarrassing moments while you were growing up—something you can laugh about today?

Option B: What's the funniest antic you've ever seen a pet do (or funniest cat or dog video you have watched)?

After volunteers share, vote for the funniest story.

Embarrassing events aren't much fun when they happen. But they can sure be funny later! Sometimes these moments can even be good teachers. What kinds of lessons can we learn from our embarrassing experiences?

L1 WORKSHOP

Maybe you've had one of these thoughts before.

FOR TEENS: "I hope my friends don't judge me for what I was like in junior high!"

FOR ADULTS: "I hope other coworkers don't judge me for what I was like when I first started in my job!"

Thankfully, there's something called maturity. People grow up. We are all "under construction"—works in progress from start to finish!

A MAN OF CONTRASTS

READ: Luke 4:31–41.

The New Testament records several events in the life of the apostle Peter. He enjoyed phenomenal victories. But if he was sitting in a room, sharing stories with people, he would probably win "the most embarrassing moment" competition every time. Peter was truly a man of contrasts.

The Bible lets us see these contrasts up close. Christians often jokingly refer to Peter's big mouth. Some have even said he had "foot-in-mouth" disease, and in some ways, that's true.

But let's be fair to Peter. What about us? Have we ever tripped and fallen in a big way? Do we have embarrassments we'd like to forget? What about sins or indiscretions? Have we ever struggled to trust God or had a half-hearted faith?

All of us are under construction. Sometimes shopping centers will hang signs that read, "Please excuse our mess while we make improvements." The work dust shouldn't come as a surprise.

What improvements was Jesus trying to make to Peter? In the Bible's accounts of Peter, a couple of key themes surface again and again.

- *Jesus wanted Peter to know Who He really was and to love Him more deeply.*
- *Jesus wanted Peter to learn to trust and follow Him because of knowing Him.*

It's fun to imagine Peter in Heaven asking God, "Do You seriously need to include that story about me in the New Testament?" The Bible lets us see a close-up of Peter's life so we can learn from him.

Maybe Peter's life stories are there to help millions of others, like us, grow in their faith and knowledge of Jesus.

A MAN CALLED BY JESUS TO KNOW AND LOVE HIM

READ: John 1:29–34 and 40–42.

From wet cement to a rock

John 1:29–42 records the first time Peter met Jesus. From the beginning, Jesus clearly had big plans for Peter. He looked at him and asked, "So, you're Simon, huh?" He didn't even give Peter time to respond.

Jesus said that Peter would be known as Cephas, "a stone." In modern terms, Jesus gave him the nickname "The Rock."

This nickname demonstrated that Jesus had a great deal of confidence in Peter. However, over the next three years, Peter would show himself to be more like wet cement than a solid rock.

Wet cement has great potential—it just needs to mature. Just think of the ups and downs of Peter's life as a disciple. In the Bible,

- no other disciple is addressed more than Peter, yet no other disciple is rebuked more than Peter;
- no other disciple proclaimed loyalty for Jesus as boldly as Peter, yet no other disciple denied Jesus as publicly as Peter did;
- no other disciple received stronger praise from Jesus, yet no other disciple was told, "Get behind Me, Satan," as Peter was; and
- no other disciple put his foot in his mouth like Peter did, yet God used no other disciple to preach as powerfully as Peter preached.

Jesus intended to transform Mr. Wet Cement into Mr. Rock. It would take time, but God completed the good work He had started in Peter (Philippians 1:6). God sees potential in people that the world fails to see. That should encourage us!

Different agendas

When Peter's brother Andrew met Jesus, he described Him with a special title—"Messiah" (the Hebrew term for "Christ," John 1:41). Israel had been waiting for the Messiah for hundreds of years.

The prophetic books of the Old Testament speak gloriously about the time when Messiah would come. He would establish an earthly kingdom headquartered in Jerusalem. He would reign as king over Israel and the whole planet. He would make Israel prominent again, and that was the part most Jewish people of Jesus' day focused on. Every Jewish person in Israel longed for this day.

After Peter met Jesus and received the nickname "The Rock," no doubt he was thrilled. He probably thought, "I must be extraordinary! Maybe Jesus wants to give me a special place of authority to help Him rule the planet."

We can't be too hard on Peter. Early in Jesus' ministry, most people in the vast crowds who followed Him did so because they wanted to ride His

coattails into power or prosperity. Like everybody else, Peter had his own agenda for following Jesus Christ.

Even today, people have their own agendas for following Jesus. They like the idea of Jesus because they believe He'll make their lives better, give them better luck, or make them rich and prosperous. But that's not why Jesus came.

John 1:29 tells us that Jesus came to take away sins. John 3:16 and 17 say He came so that whoever believes on Him would have everlasting life.

Jesus did not come for us to have our best life now. He came so we could enter a close relationship with our Creator and be restored to His original design of being perfectly satisfied in Him.

A MAN WHO LEARNED (SLOWLY) TO FOLLOW JESUS

Who was the apostle Peter? Religious art depicts him as a robed saint with a crucifix and holding a scepter in his hand. That couldn't be further from the truth.

Peter smelled like fish. He was an average guy working a blue-collar job. Peter was a fisherman by trade, along with his brother, Andrew. They operated a normal family business. Peter was about as real as it gets.

Sometimes it's easy to forget that the people we read about in the Bible were real people just like us. In fact, God specializes in using ordinary people to do extraordinary service.

Peter and Andrew lived in Capernaum, the key town on the northern tip of the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum is a well-preserved historical site in Israel today. Even the ruins of the synagogue in Capernaum are still visible.

Jesus read from the Old Testament scrolls at that site. Today visitors can stand in the very place that the Son of God read the Scriptures! It is a captivating experience—but not as captivating as personally witnessing Jesus teach and heal there.

Simon Peter had a front row seat for witnessing Jesus' ministry. What many believe to be Peter's personal residence in Capernaum was located a stone's throw away from the synagogue, and the ruins of that house are still visible today. Jesus was a frequent guest in Peter's home.

From Luke 4:31–41, we learn that Peter was married and had a family, for he had a mother-in-law. Peter may even have had kids.

Just about everyone can relate to Peter in some way.

Do you ever feel too rough for Jesus to transform? Be encouraged! Jesus took a rough fisherman who most would have overlooked, Peter, and turned him into The Rock, a leader of Christ-followers.

While we may not find ourselves sharing the gospel with thousands of people, Jesus can make us strong and steady, too, as we follow Him. That's easy to do when the path is easy, but more difficult when it's not.

In the next four lessons, we will investigate what it meant for Peter to follow Christ at times when the trail got rough—and what it means for us to follow Him.

> **PRAYER:** Dear Lord, please help me to find my ultimate satisfaction in following You. Show me anew the meaning of the gospel. Through this study, please show me that it's worth it to follow You.

L1 WORKOUT: ADULTS

Some questions are for personal reflection. Answers to others are at the end of this chapter.

1. What does the nickname “The Rock” tell you about Jesus’ expectations for Peter’s life and ministry?

2. Peter made some colossal mistakes, but God used him anyway. How has God used you despite your sins and imperfections?

3. How do the things that Jesus said and did on earth challenge your own perspective and behavior?

4. Why do you think we experience feelings of guilt and shame when we do or say sinful things?

5. If you reflect honestly on the motives of your heart, can you detect any wrong or misplaced motivations for following Christ that might be similar to those of the crowds that followed Jesus in His early ministry on earth?

6. How can a person know that he or she is a true follower of Christ who has genuinely believed on Him? (See p. 74.)

MEMORIZE: John 3:16, 17.

L1 WORKOUT: YOUTH

Some questions are for personal reflection. Answers to others are at the end of this chapter.

1. What are some wrong or mistaken ideas that other people your age have about Jesus Christ?

2. How do you respond to the feelings of shame that you experience when you do something embarrassing or even sinful?

3. Is it possible for someone to know that he or she is a true follower of Christ who has genuinely believed on him? If so, how? (See p. 74.)

MEMORIZE: John 3:16, 17.

YOUTH ACTIVITIES

OPTION 1: THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE

MATERIALS

- *Paper; colored pencils; image of a forest creature.*

ACTIVITY: Give students a sheet of paper and colored pencils. Give one of the leaders an image of a forest creature without showing the image to the students. Ask the leader to describe the image in vague terms, encouraging the students to draw the closest replica possible to the actual image. After several minutes, the leader reveals the image the students were supposed to draw, and then they all reveal their drawings.

ASK: How did your perception of the information you heard affect the image you drew?

It's easy to allow our perception of people and circumstances to affect our judgment of situations. Today's lesson explored the need for us to have the correct perception of Jesus and Who He is.

OPTION 2: WHO, ME?

MATERIALS

- *Note cards; pens or pencils; bucket.*

It's important to tell others about Jesus. When Peter cleaned his nets that day, as he had always done, little did he know that in a few hours Jesus would call him to be a "fisher of men." That meant instead of leading fish to

his boat, Peter would lead people to Jesus so they could have a relationship with Him.

> **TIP:** ***Students may need some examples, so the leader should come prepared with a few. Possibilities include negative peer pressure, being preoccupied with activities, feeling like you don't know enough about the Bible, and not wanting to offend someone.***

ACTIVITY: Give each student a note card. They should answer the following question on their note cards without letting anyone else see their answers.

- *What is one challenge that teens must overcome to become successful "fishers of men"?*

A leader should place the note cards into a bucket while quickly and silently checking each answer, then mix them up. Student volunteers then take turns pulling one note card from the bucket and reading it. The leader should write the answers on the board.

As you go home after VBS, think about this question: Are you prepared to tell others about Jesus and how He can forgive them?

YOUTH GAMES

OPTION 1: FORGIVENESS VOLLEYBALL

MATERIALS

- *Volleyball net or dividing line; water balloons filled with water.*

ACTIVITY: Group the players into two teams. Each team stands on one side of a volleyball net or dividing line. Give a water balloon to one player. The object of the game is to toss the water balloon back and forth across the net and keep the

water balloon from breaking by gently catching it. If a team lets a water balloon break, the opposing team gets a point. The first team to get ten points wins.

What happens if you drop a water balloon? It usually breaks, right? Jesus knew Peter would "drop the water balloon," but Jesus still loved him. He shaped Peter's life so He could use Peter. Jesus wants to do that with you too.

OPTION 2: CATCHING FISH

ACTIVITY: In a large game area, designate all players except one as fish. The player who is not a fish is the fisher.

This game is played like tag. One person, the "fisher," tries to tag the other players as they try to escape. When a "fish" is tagged, that player also becomes a fisher and helps catch the other fish. The goal is to be the last fish caught. Play until all fish have become fishers.

VARIATION: When a "fish" is tagged, that student joins hands with the other "fishers." The fishers must move as a group. This makes catching the loose fish more difficult.

Jesus told Peter that he would fish for people. That didn't mean Peter would go around tossing his fishing net over them. What Jesus meant was that Peter would tell others about Jesus and help them become followers of Him.

Answers to WORKOUT: ADULTS

1. Class discussion. It's encouraging to know that we don't have to be spiritual giants for God to use us. He uses anybody who trusts Him and is willing to be used by Him.

2. Personal reflection.

3. Personal reflection.

4. We experience shame for at least three reasons. First, God has given each person a conscience that judges between right and wrong (Romans 2:15). Second, the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin (John 16:7, 8). Third, we sometimes feel shame over an embarrassing situation though we haven't done anything wrong from God's perspective.

5. Personal reflection.

6. See p. 74 for an explanation of the gospel—the good news about how to have a true relationship with God.

Answers to WORKOUT: YOUTH

1. Class discussion. Possible answers include that Jesus will make you prosper financially, materially, or both; that Jesus will take away all your sickness; that Jesus died for your sins but you must add to His death by your good works; that God is only love (not holy, just, and wrathful against sin).

2. Personal reflection. God is always willing to forgive and give people a new start. It doesn't matter where you've been or what you've done. In the power of the gospel, God can still use you!

3. See p. 74 for an explanation of the gospel, the good news about how to become a true follower of Christ.