

LifeGroups 2.9—Compelled by Love Luke 5:1-11

Introduction

- [Slide #1] So we've been talking about the mission Jesus launched for nine weeks now. The mission Jesus launched is different than church. It's different than Sunday morning. I hope that's sinking in. I hope that you are starting to see how maybe we're really good at doing the church thing and we're equally good at leaving the mission for someone else to do. Again, when I say mission I'm not talking foreign missions. The mission Jesus launched is a responsibility of every follower of Jesus without exception. In God's eyes, there's no such thing as a believer or a church not on the mission. You are saved, redeemed, bought at a price to be on the mission Jesus launched. It's a non-negotiable. For me. For you. For your kids. And if you're not on the mission as an individual or as a church you're either spiritually dead or dying and on your way to being spiritually dead. You should want to be on the mission Jesus launched more than anything else. Seek first his kingdom. Because that's where Jesus already is working.
- So here at Grace the way we are going to be on the mission Jesus launched is by deploying small, mobilized bands of people, witnessing communities called LifeGroups. The LifeGroups are nothing more than small micro churches on the mission Jesus launched. They are not bible studies. They are not places where we soak up comfortable warm religious fuzzies. They are places where the kingdom of God becomes tangible and real as Jesus' followers live out as the church all of the stuff we've been talking about for the last nine weeks.
- Before we look at Luke 5 I want you to flip to Matthew 9. In **Matthew 9:10** we have a vivid picture of what LifeGroups are to be. *While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples.* That's LifeGroups. You have three things. Jesus. His followers. And those who would normally never set foot through the front doors of a church building on Sunday morning. If that's not happening in your LifeGroup you need to go to your LifeGroup leader and ask why not. If you are hindering this from happening in your LifeGroup then you are just like the Pharisees and you are hindering the mission Jesus launched.
- What I'm asking you to do, how I'm asking you to live and think about church is not that radical. But it is different.
- A few years back **Pennzoil** had a marketing campaign that highlighted a feature of their oil and its ability to separate into what they called tiny micro-beads. Maybe you'll remember this. Micro-bead technology they called it. The commercial showed the inside of an engine and a piston moving back and forth and it showed the Pennzoil separating into these beads, into little tiny expressions of Pennzoil oil, which made it easier for the oil to flow more freely over the surface of the engine. Pennzoil's point was that their oil, which could scatter then re-gather, scatter then gather, scatter then gather was better at dealing with friction than other oils that didn't have that ability. That's a picture of the church. Gather then scatter. The whole gathered body—large

and cumbersome—it's hard to get the whole thing on the mission. It's far easier to scatter, spread out, disperse to accomplish our purpose and then gather again to celebrate what God has done.

- Listen to how author [Neil Cole](#) puts it in his book *Organic Church*. Cole describes why Satan fears small churches more than mega churches. Think LifeGroups.
- He writes, "While doing some teaching in Japan, I had a dream that Heather, my daughter, started a church. In the dream, a room was full of young people who were all seriously worshipping God. When I returned from the trip, I mentioned it to her just to let her know that she was on my mind and in my dreams while I was away. The next day she said, 'Dad, my friends all want to do it!' 'Do what?' I asked. 'Start a church.' I told her that she would have to do most of the work, and I would coach and lead only a little. She said that was fine. The next day she arranged a house to meet in, picked a night of the week, and found a worship leader; flyers were soon being passed out to friends on campus."
- "After the church had been meeting for several months, I met with these students and we all sang praises to the Lord. I felt the Lord's pleasure. I asked the students what was the biggest church they had ever been to. Living in Southern California there are many options of mega churches, and a number of churches were mentioned, ranging in size from two thousand attendees to more than fifteen thousand."
- "I then told them that I think Satan is more intimidated by this little church of fifteen high school kids than by any of those Godzilla-sized churches. They all sort of chuckled and looked around the room at one another with smiles. I showed them why I thought this way: 'How many of you think you could start a church like one of those mega churches?' No one raised a hand. I asked, 'How many of you think you could start a church like this one?' and all raised their hands. I asked them to look around the room at all the raised hands, and I said with a new found soberness, 'I assure you, Satan is terrified by this.'"¹
- This is how we need to think. This is what LifeGroups are all about. It's about every single one of us getting serious about planting dozens and even hundreds of small micro-churches all over the area. We gather then scatter. Gather here. Then scatter for mission. All over the area. All over this region. You can do this. All of you. I don't care if you're in high school or if you're eighty-five you can do this.
- What I want to do this morning is talk about is the kind of obedience it will take in order for this to happen. Turn to [Luke 5](#). The miraculous catch of fish and Jesus' call to be catch men and women. It all starts with obedience. The point of this story, which happens early on in the mission, is that...[\[Slide #2\]](#)

Proposition

- **Our obedience can result in remarkable things for the mission**
- Look at [Luke 5:1](#). *One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, he saw two boats, left there by the fisherman, who were washing their nets.*

¹ Cole, *Organic Church*, p. 211-212.

- We know from the previous chapter, **Luke 4:31**, that this event took place near the seaside town of Capernaum. Capernaum was a town on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee or Lake Gennesaret as Luke calls it. It was a densely populated town, as are all picturesque sea-side towns. Great views of the water.
- Jesus is at the lake teaching because it was probably the one place in the area that could accommodate the gathering of a large group of people. Imagine the landscape gently sloping toward the lakefront. With Jesus on the shore by the water and the people on the hill crowded around him it's the perfect natural amphitheater.
- What do you think Jesus was talking about that would have drawn such a crowd? He's telling people about the kingdom. Matthew says in **Matthew 4:23** *Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom.* The kingdom of God is like this. The kingdom of God is like this. The kingdom is good news for people. Everywhere Jesus or his followers go and speak about the kingdom the crowds gather. Great lesson for us. Think about what it would mean for you to ditch the Christian-ease and speak with words and pictures that describe the kingdom. People are attracted to the kingdom.
- At any rate, the crowd gathers to hear Jesus and the crowd is so big that standing on the shore to speak to them won't work. Voices carry better over water, right? So Jesus, along with Simon Peter and a few others set out in Simon's boat a bit from the shore so that Jesus can teach all who've gathered. **Verse 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.*
- Notice the shift? In **verse 3**, the focus of this scene shifts from the crowd to Simon. From **verse 3** on the story is now about Simon. And right up front, right away, Simon is confronted with a choice. Be responsible and take care of the nets, wash the nets, clean the nets, or get in the boat with Jesus. What does he do? Take care of the nets? Be with Jesus. Take care of the nets? Be with Jesus. If Simon doesn't get in the boat he misses out on something. Can we agree on that?
- Jesus is asking you to get into the boat with him. Some of are so busy being quote unquote responsible that it's keeping you from beginning a great adventure with Jesus. Get in the boat. Seek first his kingdom.
- Look at the text. I want you to notice how Luke intentionally points out the fact that Jesus picked Simon Peter's boat. Of all the boats on the shore Jesus picks *the one belonging to Simon* Luke says. Simon and his friends, all fishermen, they were the ones on the shore untangling their nets, washing them to prevent them from rotting as **verse 1** says. Jesus goes out of his way to choose Simon's boat because he wants Simon in the boat with him. Jesus is scripting this perfectly, intentionally to teach Simon and the other disciples their first lesson about what it means to be on mission with him. It's the lesson of obedience.
- Look at **verse 4**. Simon, having gotten into the boat with Jesus, is given a command. *When [Jesus] had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch.*

- Now to us Jesus' request doesn't seem like a big deal. But this was a huge request, an unreasonable request for Simon. Why? Because Simon knew this lake. He'd fished it his whole life. Fishing's was his trade. He made his living as a fisherman. If he didn't catch fish his family starved. He knew how to catch fish. When to fish for them. Where to go. And this landlubber, this carpenter Jesus tells Simon to put out for deeper water? Who does he think he is? What does Jesus know about fishing? You can sense Simon's frustration with the request. [Verse 5](#). Look at the text. He's respectful but a little put off. *Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything."*
- Not only is Simon tired from working all night, fishing all night. See, Simon knows something. He knows you just don't head out to deeper water to catch fish in the daytime on the Sea of Galilee. The kind of fish they would have been fishing for, a Tilapia-like fish, was in deep water during the night and schooled up in the shallows to feed during the day. Simon's thinking that Jesus' request is more than unreasonable, it's absurd. *Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything.* Don't make us go back out there. Every serious Galilean fisherman knows that you don't catch fish in deep water during the day.
- But even more ridiculous is the fact that they're not properly equipped to catch fish in deep water. They don't even have the right kind of nets on board. The deep water nets are on the shore being washed and dried. The nets they have on board are the day-time shallow water nets. Jesus' request to put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch is unreasonable, absurd, and in Simon's mind, I think, a waste of time.
- And therein lies the lesson.
- If you want to be on the mission Jesus launched it will mean obeying Jesus' unreasonable request. If you want to be on the mission count on Jesus asking you to do something, many things that won't make sense. In order for us to do what I think God is asking us to do as a church we are going to have to listen to what Jesus says and ignore what we think to be the unreasonable absurd nature of what he asks of us. Jesus wants followers who are obedient and **obedience can result in remarkable things for the mission.**
- This story is not just about fishing. Jesus is teaching Peter some elementary, foundational things about his upcoming future as a catcher of men and women. The mission is all about obedience. Look at Simon's response. It's beautiful. *But because you say so, I will let down the nets.* Simon disregards the absurdity of the circumstances and takes Jesus at his word. He ignores the ridiculous nature of Jesus' request and he obeys. I want to suggest to you it will take the whole church, every single one of us operating with this simple, trusting obedience for us to faithfully carry out the mission Jesus has launched.
- Let me summarize the mission Jesus launched for you this way. You and I as followers of Jesus will be continually confronted with a never-ending series of unreasonable requests in our quest as catchers of men and women. From the world's perspective, what Jesus might ask us to do in order to reach the fish will seem unreasonable. Foolish. It will require the sacrifice of some family, home

responsibilities. But if we are going to reach the fish, find the fish, catch the fish we are going to have to trust Jesus' directions. Because if we don't listen and go where he says to go we'll never get to the good stuff, to the catch. [Verse 6](#) never happens if Simon doesn't listen to Jesus and go where he's sent.

- Look at [verse 6](#). This is a lesson about fishing for men and women what we can expect when we listen and obey. *When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break.*
- Peter and his help drop their nets just once and catch so many fish that the nets literally burst at the seams. They call for backup help, [verse 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.*
- For a moment I want you to think about the magnitude of what happens here. Consider for a moment that an average night's catch on the Sea of Galilee produced one to two hundred pounds of fish. From what we know about fishing on the Sea of Galilee to catch just an average amount meant raising and lowering about 500 feet of net, ten to fifteen times over the course of a night. Simon and his partners catch much more than this with just one lowering and raising of their net. Enough fish to almost sink two twenty-seven foot Galilean fishing boats—equipped with twin MerCruiser inboards. Just kidding. The boats had sails and oars. And the catch happens in deep water, the place where the fish aren't supposed to be.
- Look what Simon's response. [Verse 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, Simon's partners.*
- This Jesus. You take him at his word when he asks you to go where the fish are, even if it's unreasonable, and amazing things will happen. Simon knows this lesson isn't about the fish, maybe the largest catch ever on the Sea of Galilee. It's about his willingness or lack of willingness to be obedient to Jesus. *When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"*
- Second half of [verse 10](#). *Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." 11 So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.* This lesson is about the mission. Jesus is preparing them to listen to him, to obey and go and seek after people. Nobody waits for the fish to jump in their nets.
- At the peak of his success as a professional fisherman Jesus invites Simon leave everything to become an amateur fisher of men and women. Just as a fisherman gathers fish into the nets Jesus tells Simon to do the same with people; gather them in to be part of God's kingdom. Being a fisher of men and women isn't about tricking or deceiving people like we do with fishing now. We trick the fish to bite a hook. We deceive the fish to take the bait. In Jesus' day fishing was about nets and gathering. Jesus commissions Simon to gather people into the kingdom.
- I think the promise is that, like Simon, if we will just trust Jesus and go where the fish are, where the people are, even if that request seems unreasonable, we can expect an

ingathering of people. And the ingathering may be great enough that the nets might break. And the boats might sink. What a great problem to have. But it's all dependent upon obedience.

- Simon learns this first lesson. He gets it. He sees the connection between Jesus' words, his obedience and the future ingathering. How do I know? Because right on the spot he leaves what he has; his nets, the boats, everything, to follow Jesus and be on the mission. And not just Simon, the lot of them. *So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.*
- Seriously, what makes a man or a woman leave all he or she has to follow Jesus? Two things. Jesus himself. And the promise of an even greater catch, a greater ingathering than a bunch of fish. I mean, come on now, who wouldn't want to be a part of this massive ingathering of people into the kingdom? What Jesus says here doesn't just apply to the disciples and bible times. It's a lesson for now, for us on the mission. This is about you and your obedience and the kind of ingathering into the kingdom that Jesus wants to have through you. If you would just trust him.

Conclusion

- One of the most famous writers of outdoors fishing literature from the last century was a guy by the name of [Alfred Miller](#). His pen name? [Sparse Grey Hackle](#). I don't know if I've ever heard of a better pseudonym, a better pen name than Sparse Grey Hackle. Miller or Sparse Grey Hackle once wrote this, "If fishing interferes with your business, give up your business."
- In a simplistic way that's the message of [Luke 5](#). Being on the mission Jesus launched is about priorities and the kind of obedience that is needed from you and me in order for us to be fishers of men and women. If you want to see an ingathering you've gotta be obedient to the voice of Jesus calling you to go to the places where the fish are—even when it doesn't make sense.