

believe

A STUDY OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN



Swimming and Rowing to Jesus

John 21:1-14

Main Point: Followers of Jesus follow Jesus!

Doing anything apart from Jesus often reveals what we can't do (1-3).

We don't know what prompted the disciples' fishing trip. Perhaps the disciples got impatient, bored, or doubtful while waiting on the Lord to show up in Galilee. In any case, they made their own plans. Peter led the charge, but the others willingly followed. Their plans were simple: Go fishing. So they got a boat, and they went fishing. There's a lot of speculation on whether they went to pass the time or to go to work. Scripture doesn't give us the answer, so we don't know. Either way, they were being disobedient. Jesus told them to go to the mountain and to wait for him there. Instead, the disciples decided to do their own thing. They made their own plans, and although they fished at night when the fishing was best, they didn't catch anything. Their plans, which didn't include Jesus, didn't work out. What an important lesson for the disciples of Jesus still today. Doing anything apart from Jesus often seems to reveal what we can't do, which is God's grace in leading us back to where we need to be, following Jesus!

1. Have you ever grown impatient waiting on the Lord? Perhaps you've grown bored with waiting and decided to come up with your own plans for your life? How did that work out for you? What did the Lord do to bring you back to a place of obedience to him?
2. Do you know someone who has moved away from following the Lord and is now trying to move in their own direction? How could you share this story and your testimony with them this week? What would that look like? Will you pray for them and the opportunity to encourage them to come to Jesus?

Listening to and obeying Jesus leads to what only God can do (4-6).

It was sunrise the next morning. The disciples had fished all night and hadn't caught any fish. Jesus was on the shore about 100 yards from them as they approached the shore in their boat. In the haze of the early morning, the disciples didn't know who he was. Jesus called them "children." It was a way he had referred to them before. It would be an odd way to refer to a group of men that one didn't know well and have a relationship of authority over. Then Jesus asked them a question, and the way that he asked the question made it clear that he knew the answer: "Don't have any fish, do you?" The disciples didn't have any fish, and strangely – even though they hadn't recognized him yet – they did what Jesus then told them to do. At the command of Jesus, the disciples put their net over the side of the boat one last time, and instantly, the net was filled with fish. In fact, there were 153 of them. This moment surely brought back memories of Jesus' call in Peter's life, and at that moment, they recognized Jesus! What an important reminder still today. While doing our own thing often reveals what we can't do, listening to and obeying Jesus leads to what only God can do!

1. Have you ever listened to and obeyed Jesus – even when it didn't seem to make sense to you – and then were able to see God do something that only he can do? Take a minute to think about and to share some testimonies.
2. What are some things that Jesus calls us to do that don't seem to make sense to the world? Take time to find some specific commands in Scripture. Why would God ask us to do things that the world says won't work? Out of the commands that you identified, is there anything that you need to obey in your life today?
3. Perhaps one of the strangest things God calls us to do is to repent from sin and believe in Jesus, trusting that this response to the gospel brings salvation and sanctification. What's your testimony of seeing God do what only he can do in your life, which was only possible because of your response to his call to repent and believe in Jesus?

Coming to Jesus is always met with his love and provision that's undeserved (7-14).

With the realization that Jesus was there with them, Peter stripped down and swam to shore as fast as he could. The other disciples rowed the boat as quickly as they could to the shore, and when they got there, Jesus invited them to bring their fish to his fire and to sit and eat with him. None of the disciples dared to ask who he was, since they all clearly knew that it was Jesus. They sat, and they ate with the Lord. What a powerful picture of God's grace and love in Jesus. Instead of scolding them for not being on the mountain waiting for him, he welcomed them, and fed them. He spent time being there with them, as the smell of the charcoal fire filled the air and surely reminded Peter of the night he denied Jesus three times. The disciples only faced frustration when they didn't listen to and obey Jesus, but Jesus didn't abandon them. Jesus pursued them. He reminded them of the blessing of obedience in their lives, and he prepared them for another reminder of his grace and his call for their lives. What a picture of God's grace in his love and provision through Jesus that's so undeserved.

1. Do you know someone who has drifted away, doing their own thing instead of following God? Pray for them right now, asking the Lord to come to them and to call them to himself. Consider sharing pastor Joel's sermon on this passage with them this week, letting them know how God used his Word in John 21 in your life.
2. Are you the one in the boat? Why? How did you get there? Will you swim or row to Jesus today? Share with your small group, and allow them to pray with you today.
3. Perhaps you're in your own boat and have always been there. You've never really followed Jesus in your life. He the Lord's invitation to come, sit, and eat. He is the bread of life and the living water. He is your Savior and Lord. Decide to follow Jesus today!