



PETER



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Lesson 1



Lesson 1: Drop Your Net



Bible Verses:

John 1:42, Matthew 4:18-20, Matthew 28:19-20, John 10:10-11, Proverbs 3:5-6, Ephesians 2:10, Deuteronomy 31:8, Revelation 3:20



Bottom Line:

Jesus invites each of us to drop what's holding us back and go all in with Him.

SUPPLIES

Opening Game:

- 24 small containers (gift bags, boxes, opaque totes, etc.)
- Printed FISH, PRICE TAGS, and FISHING NET (included in files)
- 4 prizes for teams (different levels of prizes from simple to something really great)

NOTES

All Scripture references are taken from the NLT unless otherwise indicated.

OPENING GAME

Drop Your Net

Objective: To demonstrate to students that there are times when dropping something good leads to something better.

Game Prep:

- Print FISH, FISHING NET, and PRICE TAGS (attached) and cut them out.
- Attach one FISHING HOLE to each container.
- Place one fish in each container.
- Display containers at the front of the room.
- Display the four prizes with price tags at the front of the room.
- Pick a number between 1-24 and write it down on a piece of paper.

How to Play the Game:

Students work in teams to “drop the net” on the fish of their choice and determine whether they should throw it back and pick again or keep it to purchase a prize.

SAY: Tonight, we are playing an awesome new game called Drop Your Net.

At the front of the room are twenty-four containers.

Each container has a fish.

Some fish are little and some fish are big, but one fish is the biggest of them all!

And you'll use them to “buy” prizes at the end of the game.

Point to the prizes, game show style, at the front of the room

SAY: First, we need to get into four teams.

Divide your students into teams, however works best for your group.

SAY: Great! Those are good looking teams.

To decide who goes first, I need the youngest team members from each team to step forward.

Allow teams to determine who their youngest member is.

SAY: Before we started, I wrote down a number between one and twenty-four.

Whoever picks closest will go first.

Reveal the number you wrote down earlier.

SAY: Great! Head back to your teams and let's drop the net!

Here's how we play: Each team will have the opportunity to "drop the net" on a fishing hole by selecting a Fishing Net number.

Point to the FISHING NETS (containers) at the front of the room.

SAY: You can only fish from the shore.

Point to an area on the opposite side of the room from the containers.

SAY: When you pick a Fishing Net, I'll go see how big a fish you caught.

As a team, you can decide to keep the fish or throw it back and "drop the net" again in hopes of getting a bigger fish.

Fish that are thrown back are discarded and not pickable by other teams.

SAY: If you pick a bigger fish, you can decide to throw it back and go again.

But if you get a smaller fish, then your team is done and the next team will "drop the net"!

Once all the teams have had a turn, the team with the biggest fish will select a prize, then the next biggest will pick, and so on.

Who's ready?

Awesome! Let's DROP THE NET!

TEACH

SAY: That game was really awesome!

I hope you all enjoy your prizes.

We're starting a brand-new series tonight, and I couldn't be more excited.

Over the next four weeks, we are zooming in on one of Jesus's closest followers.

Drumroll please ... it's Peter!

Peter was one of Jesus's closest friends and one of the men that was with Jesus through His entire ministry.

Peter had some great moments and some not-so-great moments.

Just like you and I do.

Over the next four weeks, we will take a look at some of these moments and discover how God was with Peter and working in his life just like He is with us and working in our lives, too.

To get us started, let's dive in with some background and see who Peter was.

First, his real name was Simon.

But Jesus gave him a new name.

Let's read [John 1:42](#):

42 Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. Looking intently at Simon, Jesus said, "Your name is Simon, son of John—but you will be called Cephas" (which means "Peter").

SAY: Jesus named him Cephas, or Peter, meaning rock.

Jesus often gave people new names that matched their current character or how He saw them.

In this case, Jesus calling Simon Peter was pointing to the kind of person Peter would become.

Peter would be the rock – not Dwayne Johnson but the OG Rock.

Jesus called them both to be disciples and part of Jesus's inner circle, or, you might say, His close friend group.

A couple more things – Peter was known for being a bit quick to speak, not having a great filter for what he said, and being a bit impulsive, too.

But Peter was also known for his deep devotion to Jesus, his love for Jesus and, as we'll see in a few weeks, taking the message of the Good News of Jesus to many people after Jesus's death and resurrection.

Peter was a human just like us.

He had strengths, weaknesses, doubts, great faith, sin, struggles, and wins.

And what I hope we find through studying Peter is that just as God worked in Peter's often-flawed life, He is diligently working in our lives as well.

Tonight, let's begin at the beginning of Peter's story in Scripture.

Turn in your Bibles to [Matthew 4:18-20](#). Can I have a volunteer read this passage for us?

Allow a student to read the following verses out loud.

18 One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers—Simon, also called Peter, and Andrew—throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living.

19 Jesus called out to them, “Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!”

20 And they left their nets at once and followed him.

SAY: Thank you for reading for us.

Peter was doing what he did every day.

Unlike how many of us fish today, Peter wasn't a hobby-fisherman looking to get the most impressive catch to post to his social media accounts.

Fishing was his regular, everyday job.

Like flipping burgers or mowing lawns or ringing up sales, fishing was how Peter paid the bills.

Without a net full of fish, there would be no food, no clothes, no rent money, and certainly no new sandals in the latest style.

Fishing was a necessary part of his normal, sweaty, and exhausting life.

And that's exactly where Jesus showed up.

I imagine Peter was probably dirty, smelled like rotten fish, and was tired from a hard night of throwing his net into the water and hauling it back up again when Jesus strolled up.

He may have been stressed, having not caught enough to earn what he needed.

And he was likely just wanting to wrap things up so he could get home to his family.

He had no time to clean up before Jesus walked by.

No time to put on his Sunday best and grab his Bible and latest devotional book.

He was just Peter, doing the things that Peter always did.

Jesus walked into Peter's everyday life and that's exactly how Jesus shows up in ours as well.

He walks to where we are, in the middle of our ordinary, messy, mundane, regular lives.

He shows up, even when we are not all put together, and invites us to be with Him.

Jesus didn't wait for Peter to be perfect or have his life all cleaned up.

And He's not waiting on us to have our lives all prettied up either.

Jesus meets us right where we are and invites us into something bigger.

Let's look back at our Scripture reading to see what Jesus said to Peter.

In [Matthew 4:19](#) we read:

19 Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!"

ASK: Jesus strolled down by the sea to where Peter was doing his normal things, and what did He invite Peter to do?

Allow students to answer.

SAY: Jesus said, "Follow me," and gave Peter a whole new mission to fish for people.

Not with a net, but with love, truth, and hope.

"Follow me," Jesus said.

Remember that silly game you probably played in preschool called Follow the Leader?

One person, the leader, is in charge and everyone else follows behind like little ducks chasing after the mama duck.

If the leader goes fast, the followers go fast.

If the leader crawls under a table, the followers crawl under the table.

When we were younger, we just went wherever the leader took us.

We trusted the leader, and we followed the leader.

Well, Jesus told Peter to follow.

"Hey, Peter, follow me. Go where I go and do what I do in the way that I do it."

In other words, "Peter, trust me."

ASK: And what did Jesus tell Peter that following Him would do?

Allow students to answer.

SAY: Exactly.

He would learn to be a fisher of men.

Peter knew fishing.

It was his livelihood, his career, his way to make money.

But Jesus invited Peter into a new purpose beyond the everyday that he had always known.

He invited him to a bigger mission of gathering people into God's Kingdom.

Not with a net, but with love and truth.

To tell others about Jesus, spread the word that the Messiah had come, and invite others to follow Him, too.

Jesus's invitation was not just for Peter.

It's for us, too.

Turn over to [Matthew 28:19-20](#):

19 “Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

20 “Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

SAY: Jesus gives us the same mission He gave Peter.

Fish for people.

“Follow me and learn to fish for men,” Jesus said.

Following can be tough though, right?

Maybe not when we were kindergarteners and the leader was a fellow five-year-old, but as we get older, following someone other than ourselves can feel really hard.

How do we know that who we’re following – Jesus in this case – isn’t leading us in the wrong direction?

Let’s look at a few Scriptures.

ASK: Can I have a few volunteers to read some passages for us?

Assign the following verses to the volunteers to read:

- John 10:10-11
- Proverbs 3:5-6
- Ephesians 2:10
- Deuteronomy 31:8

SAY: Let’s start with reading John 10:10-11:

Have your first volunteer read the verses out loud.

10 The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep.

SAY: Jesus doesn’t lead us aimlessly.

He leads us on purpose and with purpose.

He’s not out to limit our lives or take away our fun – that’s what the enemy does.

Jesus wants us to experience the fullness of life He created for us and will lead us there.

Let's read [Proverbs 3:5-6](#):

Have your second volunteer read the verses out loud.

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart;
do not depend on your own understanding.

6 Seek his will in all you do,
and he will show you which path to take.

SAY: Jesus doesn't hide His purpose or path from us.

Instead, He shows us the correct way we should go.

Even when we can't see the entire road ahead, He has already prepared it and guides us the entire way.

Let's read [Ephesians 2:10](#):

Have your third volunteer read the verse out loud.

10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

SAY: Not a single one of us is some accident, a mistake that just haphazardly showed up on this planet.

We each were created, made, and crafted by God with purpose.

His plans for us were developed before we were even a thought in our parents' minds, and, as this verse says, He includes all the good things He planned for us to do.

Jesus will lead in the right direction.

And finally, let's read [Deuteronomy 31:8](#):

Have your fourth volunteer read the verse out loud.

8 "Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD will personally go ahead of you. He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor abandon you."

SAY: Jesus isn't inviting us to go somewhere alone.

He is walking ahead of us, making a way, and walking beside us every step of the journey.

We can trust Jesus to lead us in a good direction because He's good, He knows the way, He has a plan, and He never leaves our side.

Jesus came to Peter where he was, told him to follow Him, and said He'd lead Peter to become a fisher of men.

Let's look back over our main Scripture to see how Peter responded to Jesus.

Turn back to [Matthew 4:20](#):

20 And they left their nets at once and followed him.

ASK: What did Peter do?

Allow students to answer.

SAY: Right.

Peter and his brother left their nets at once and followed Jesus.

Wow!

Jesus came to where they were while they were doing their ordinary, regular things and invited them to follow Him and pursue a God-sized mission to fish for men.

This verse tells us that Peter accepted the invitation and followed Jesus.

Peter put down his net.

All Peter had likely known his whole life was fishing.

It was likely the family business, since we know from these verses that his brother, Andrew, was also fishing with him.

Fishing was what he did and a fisherman was who he was.

But Peter left his nets behind.

Sometimes, following Jesus means letting go of our own "nets" – the things we hold onto for comfort, identity, or control.

Peter didn't need his fishing nets anymore.

Jesus was calling him to something bigger.

Peter's nets would probably get in the way or be useless for the work that Jesus had planned for him to do, those good things that we talked about a minute ago that are planned for each of us long before we're even born.

Fishing wasn't bad.

Making a living and working are not a wrong choice.

But sometimes when Jesus invites us to follow Him, we need to drop our “nets” so they don’t get in the way of the work Jesus has for us.

So what are our “nets”?

They can be great things, like work or hobbies or relationships.

They can also be sin and idols and things that we shouldn’t be hanging onto anyway.

Our “nets” are anything that hinder us from following Jesus with our whole life.

I bet if you think about it, you can identify a few “nets” in your life that Jesus is calling you to put down in order to follow Him more fully.

Matthew 4:20 also provides us with details about how Peter accepted Jesus’s invitation.

He left his net at once.

The Message paraphrase translation of the Bible for **Matthew 4:20** says it like this, “**They didn’t ask questions, but simply dropped their nets and followed.**”

Peter barely knew Jesus, yet when Jesus called, he dropped everything to follow.

We have far more reasons contained in our Bible to trust Jesus, but sometimes we hesitate.

ASK: Why do you think we sometimes hesitate to follow Jesus?

Allow students to answer.

SAY: Those are great ideas.

Sometimes we aren’t sure about Jesus or we’re scared of where following Him might lead.

Sometimes we aren’t sure God could use us, or maybe we think we’re too messed up.

We’ll talk about some of these reasons in the weeks to come in more detail, but let’s look quickly at Jesus’s invitation to us, which is always present.

Revelation 3:20 says this:

20 “Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.”

SAY: The invitation that Peter received is our invitation still, all these thousands of years later.

The same Jesus who called Peter is calling you.

He's come to us exactly where we are today, in the condition we are in right now ... and He is knocking, patiently and gently waiting for us to open the door, drop our nets, and follow Him.

Let's pray.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If you had to give up one thing you love for something better, what would be the hardest thing to give up?
2. What stands out to you in our key passage from [Matthew 4:18-20](#)?
3. Why do you think Peter was willing to follow Jesus so quickly?
4. In what ways does Jesus meet people in the middle of their everyday lives today?
5. What are some “nets” (habits, fears, distractions, sins) that you might need to drop to follow Jesus fully?
6. What is something good in your life that might hold you back from following Jesus?
7. We talked about trust helping us follow a leader. Is it hard for you to trust someone to lead? Why or why not?
8. What helps you trust that Jesus is leading you in a good direction?
9. Jesus stands at the door and knocks. What might keep you from answering the door “at once”?
10. What is one step you can take this week to follow Jesus more closely?