

**AMERICAN BAPTIST MEN RESOURCES
PRAYER BREAKFAST or
AMERICAN BAPTIST MEN SUNDAY**

**“Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men”
Luke 5:1-11**

The following resources have been created to assist the local congregation, specifically the American Baptist men of each congregation, to share the message of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. This may be used as the framework for conducting an annual American Baptist Men Sunday in October, or any other time throughout the year.

These resources may also be used for the annual ABM Breakfast.

INVOCATION

Eternal God, join us here today as we seek to open ourselves to your love and your wholeness. Be with us as we set aside our everyday worries and concerns, and concentrate instead on your forgiveness and loving kindness. Create in us a new sense of meaning and purpose, in the spirit of Christ we pray, AMEN.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Father in heaven and giver of all good things, we present these offerings to you, trusting that they will be used in service to others. We thank you for the special gift of your Son Jesus, our Savior and King, that we might follow his example and live the life of a disciple. May we grow in our giving and live our lives in obedience to you. AMEN

BENEDICTION

Lord, send us into the world, to accept the cost and to discover the joy of discipleship. Therefore GO -- carry with you the peace of Christ, the love of God, and the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, in trial and rejoicing. Amen.



One Day...by a Lake

Scripture: Luke 5:1-11

Sermon for American Baptist Men's Sunday or Prayer Breakfast

There was once a town by a lake where nobody in town could catch fish except one man. Every time he went out fishing, he came home with a pile of fish. He and the game warden crossed paths in the barber shop and the topic of his great success came up. The game warden was curious and asked him how he caught so many fish. The man told the game warden that he would take him fishing the next day. Once they got to the middle of the lake the man took out a stick of dynamite, lit it, and threw it in the water. After the explosion fish started floating to the top of the water. The man took out a net and started picking up the fish. The game warden told him that this was illegal and that he should be arrested. The man took out another stick of dynamite and lit it. He then handed it to the game warden and said "Are you going to fish or talk?".

This man had a powerful way of engaging his new fishing partner, probably a lot more engaging than his fishing partner had hoped. There's something about fishing that brings guys together in a spirit of community, like nothing else outside of perhaps hunting and bowling. Open air, a fresh batch of bait, and a few lines in the water can open up conversation like nothing else. Even commercial fishing has a way of doing this. There are secret insights and special bonds that exist among commercial fishermen. They understand each other and speak the same language. Even as a spectator watching the Discovery Channel's Deadliest Catch, about crab fishing on the Bering Sea, we pick up on certain language. At a glance, even we spectators know the difference between a full pot and a pitiful catch.

In our text from Luke's gospel, we see Jesus approaching a group of commercial fishermen along the Sea of Galilee. He recognizes the look of a pitiful catch. What we see in the story is a progressive unfolding of Jesus engaging with the fishermen. It was intentional and effective. As American Baptist Men, we often are unsure of how to share Jesus Christ with our friends and acquaintances who appear to be disinterested in the Good News we have to share. We go to conferences sponsored by our region or our community and we come away feeling full of energy and motivated to share the Good News. However, as time goes on, and we return to the reality of the day-to-day, we lose that vigor. We become less motivated and confident about engaging with other men on issues of faith.

The natural course of action is that men become interested and engaged with other men because of common interests. There's nothing more entertaining than to watch two motorcycles pull up to the gas pump, having come from opposite directions. The two men have never met, but suddenly, they are looking over each other's bikes and twenty-minute conversation ensues. They talk about their favorite bike trip or what characteristics they like or don't like or maybe even reminisce about a bike they once had.

Jesus' first engagement along the shore, is with Simon when he borrows his boat. Men can be somewhat hesitant to loan their important property to someone else. Whether it's a motorcycle, a car or golf clubs, we prefer not to loan out our possessions. Yet in this moment, Simon seems willing to let Jesus take his boat and launch it out into the deep water. There from that boat, Jesus began to teach people who were crowded along the shore waiting to hear the Rabbi or experience his healing touch. Most often, we think

that in order to connect or engage with people, we have to do something *for* them. In order to share the good news to the –poor, we should feed them. In order to bring Christ to teenagers, we should engage them with pizza, Pepsi and a ski trip. Yet Jesus engages Simon by taking *from* him. Simon had opportunity to serve Jesus right from the start. The American Baptist Men Disaster Relief staff has learned that often men come to Jesus because they were invited along on a disaster relief trip to rebuild homes and communities. Men always like to help rebuild and recover homes after a tornado, earthquake or hurricane. It means hanging out with other guys and using power tools. In the process of helping others, they work alongside other men who are committed to Christ. They see something different in these men, and the difference becomes clear. So they too, encounter Christ and often become followers.

After he had taught the people, Jesus' attention turns to the obvious concern of the group of fishermen. They had fished all night and they got skunked. They came up empty. Their livelihood and subsistence depended upon full (or at least partially full) nets. Instead, they were about to return home with nothing to show for their efforts. What does Jesus suggest to the downcast fishermen? LET'S GO FISHING! In order to engage these fishermen in understanding who he is, he attempts the impossible. He tells them, "Let down your nets for a catch." Imagine if you were Simon. You're a professional fisherman who knows every detail of the lake. You've done this for years; in fact you inherited the business from your father. You've fished all night and caught nothing. Suddenly a carpenter from Nazareth comes along, not even dressed like a fisherman, and tells you to try casting again. Most of us might either resent this request, or ignore it all together. However, there's something different about this man. He is one who speaks with authority, like he knows what he's talking about. Scripture refers a number of times to Jesus' authority. Mark 1:22 reads "*The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority*". Rather than dismissing his request of lowering the nets into the sea, they did what he requested. The fishermen were not disappointed, because when they pulled their nets up, the once empty nets were full to the point of nearly breaking.

When we engage with other men, we might do it by inviting them to a special event. We might engage with them on the softball field or a car show. Yet even in the mundane events when we engage with others, those new friends can still see the power of Jesus. They see Jesus in us, in our attitude and in our speech. Others become aware that the Jesus of the gospel has the power to change lives. It may not be an amazing catch of fish that draws others to Jesus, but it certainly can be a transparent love and solid character and integrity that draw others to Christ as they think, "I want what he has."

Next we see that Jesus let the fishermen in on his magnificent work. They had fish to gather. When the nets were full, they even had to enlist fishermen from other boats to come help out. This allowed even more people to come and observe what kind of person Jesus was. Men's ministry grows by inviting others on board. Keeping the circle open for new men rather than creating a closed environment, is vital for American Baptist Men who want to change their community.

We see that the response of Simon Peter was amazement. He was nearly speechless as he fell down at Jesus' feet and said, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man." He recognized his own unworthiness in the shadow of the magnificent person of Christ. We spend our lives making false comparisons about ourselves. "Well, I'm better than Freddie, because he looks at porn." We bolster our own righteousness by saying, "I'm a pretty good Christian because I go to church, and a lot of people don't." Yet here in this gospel reading, we find Simon Peter completely undone by being in the incomparable presence of the Son of God. He wasn't contrasting himself with other fishermen, but rather comparing himself with the majesty of Jesus. The contrast was almost more than he could stand. None of us can compare with Jesus, but that's not the point. Jesus said, "Don't be afraid." I think he was teaching Peter some basic lessons on *grace*. You don't have to compare. You don't have to excel to some level of perfection. The point of *grace* is that we are accepted as we are and are forgiven, and then changed from the inside out. It appears that there is a miraculous transformation of these fishermen. How do we know this? He calls them and they respond. He says, "Don't be afraid, from now on you will fish for men." They suddenly change direction from the aspiration of catching full nets of fish, to the direction of leading people to changed lives.

This story of Jesus, a boat and some fishermen isn't unlike our own quest as American Baptist Men. There are a lot of cultural differences that we can't easily wrap our minds around, but it is a story of *discipleship*. It is where *discipleship* is introduced in the gospel story. The church with discipleship is much like arithmetic. When we share our faith with a person and they make a confession of faith, believing that Christ died for their sin, ONE has been added to the kingdom of God. We go on to baptize this ONE and we can say that ONE was added into the membership of the church. It is simple addition.

So what happens when true discipleship is applied to that person? What happens when that person is mentored, taught, coached, and prepared to live the Christian life? What happens when that person realizes the urgency of sharing faith with others? What happens when that person becomes a servant of others and wants to be the hands and feet of Jesus? It means they have become a DISCIPLE. When a person becomes a disciple, it is no longer *addition*. Suddenly, it has become *multiplication*. When people become a disciples of Jesus, they want to share their faith. It is so infectious because of the joy and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, that it *multiplies*. As time goes on, others come to Christ because of this remarkable change, and the cycle repeats itself.

American Baptist Men hold as their mission statement: *To bring men and boys into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ*. Our mission is calling men and boys to become fishers of men, dropping their nets and following Jesus on the path to discipleship. It's not an easy journey. There is evidence in the gospel that many didn't stay on that path. Many fell away and weren't willing to make the sacrifice.

On this day as we celebrate the ongoing ministry of American Baptist Men, I encourage you to work with your local leaders. Ask what you can do to best support the work of your men's ministry. Encourage your group to attend retreats. Hold your leaders

responsible for activity and growth of your group. Older men, work on discipling younger men. Older men, be patient, because these younger men are where you were twenty-five or thirty years ago. God has called us to a great ministry of making disciples. Amen.



CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: We are here, because we have heard the call of Jesus in our lives.

PEOPLE: We are here to challenge and support one another to rise up and follow.

Leader: We are here because we want to be God's people.

PEOPLE: We want to learn more about what it means to be the people of God.

Leader: We come, seeking to be moved, changed, and made whole by the Spirit of the living God.

ALL: Let us open our hearts to the moving of the Spirit, and prepare to leave this place as true disciples of Jesus Christ. AMEN.



SUGGESTED PRAYER LIST

- American Baptist Men Disaster Relief effort with recent natural disasters.
- Local and regional ministries of the American Baptist Churches – USA
- National ABM President Bob Slechta and board of directors, for:
 - Wisdom and vision in keeping with the mission of ABM.
 - Prudent financial management.
 - Outreach into all regions under the ABC-USA
 - Travel to camps and conferences to share the work of Jesus Christ through the work of ABM.
- Regional and Local leadership of ABM for energy and vision.
- Numerical growth in membership of ABM.
- Creativity and expansion of ideas in developing new ministries of ABM.

- Local pastors and congregations, for:
 - Clergy health and vitality.
 - Congregations being willing to expand their vision for new outreach.
- Upcoming national ABM conferences and work projects at Green Lake.



A DEVOTIONAL/BIBLE STUDY

Follow Me, and I Will Make You Fishers of Men

Luke 5:1-11

1. What makes the response of the disciples so surprising and unordinary? (*Answer: They were men focused on their trade, and Jesus was a relative stranger who called them to an unknown life*)
2. What all did they leave behind? (Their livelihood, their families, their friends, and their homeland. Peter was married. In Luke 4:38-40, his mother-in-law was healed of a fever).
3. Can you think of people who have sacrificed greatly in order to follow Jesus? (*Example: Adoniram Judson went to India and on to Burma in the early 19th century. During his term of bringing converts to Christ in Burma, he faced persecution, and even buried two wives and a child. On board ship as they were making their initial journey to India, his first wife Ann Hasseltine Judson wrote in her journal,*
“But because we are compelled to be, we have endeavored to count the cost and be prepared for the many severe trials resulting from this change of sentiment. We anticipate loss of reputation and of the affection and esteem of our American friends... These things have caused us to weep and pour out our hearts in prayer to Him whose directions we so much wish and need... We feel that we are alone in this world with no real friend but each other, no one on whom we can depend but God.”)
4. Peter became the most renown of Jesus’ disciples. He went from being a week follower with floundering faith, to a spiritual giant who stood and preached in front of the very court that condemned Jesus, the Sanhedrin. What changed for Peter? (*The indwelling of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost seemed to be the turning point for Peter, although Jesus did pronounce him to be “the rock upon which I will build my church”, much earlier [Matthew 16:18]. The real change took place at Pentecost through the power of the Holy Spirit.*)

What does this tell us about the power of the ministry in which we are involved? *(We are weak and unable to minister apart from the Holy Spirit working in our lives. It is not so much OUR WORK, as much as it is GOD'S WORK THROUGH US.)*

5. What modern day disciples can you think of who seem to have that same reliance upon the power of God as they minister to others?

6. What spiritual habits can lead us into a closer walk with Christ so we can more effectively be used for the work of the Kingdom? *(Prayer, fasting, accountability relationships, daily dying to sin [Romans chapters 6-8])*