

STOP AND LISTEN TO GOD

Luke 5:1-7

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Key Verse: **Luke 5:5**, "*Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.*" True success in the Christian life begins when we stop relying entirely on our own understanding and learn to listen to God and obey His Word.

Purpose of the Sermon: To challenge believers to move from merely asking God to listen to them toward becoming people who listen to God; to trust His Word above personal experience, obey His instructions, and keep their eyes fixed on Christ rather than merely on the results they desire.

INTRODUCTION

Brethren, many of us are very good at talking to God. We know how to pray when we are in trouble. We know how to tell God what we need. We ask Him to provide for us, heal us, protect our families, open doors for us, help our businesses, restore our relationships, bless our children, and solve our problems. There is nothing wrong with asking God for these things. Scripture teaches us to pray. But there is another side of our relationship with God that we sometimes neglect: we want God to listen to us, but are we listening to God?

Sometimes we spend so much time telling God what we want Him to do that we fail to ask, "*Lord, what do You want me to do?*" There is a difference between wanting God to hear our voice and being willing to hear His voice through His Word.

Luke 5:1-7 gives us a powerful picture of this truth. Peter was an experienced fisherman. He knew the water, the equipment, and the work. Yet after an entire night of labour, he had nothing to show for his effort. Then Jesus gave him an instruction that seemed to contradict his experience. The turning point came when Peter decided that Christ's Word was greater than Peter's experience.

The message today is simple: Stop and listen to God. Then trust what He says and obey Him.

1. STOP RELYING ENTIRELY ON YOUR OWN UNDERSTANDING

Luke 5:5 records Peter saying, "*Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing.*" Peter was not lazy. He had worked. He had experience. He had equipment. He had partners. He had spent the night doing what he knew how to do. Yet the result was nothing.

Sometimes we genuinely work hard and still do not obtain the expected result. You may have worked hard on your marriage, business, family, finances, career, ministry, or another important area of life, yet you look at the situation and say, like Peter, *"I have tried, but I am not seeing the result I expected."*

Peter's problem was not a lack of effort. Jesus was about to teach him that human effort and experience have limits. Proverbs 3:5 tells us to trust in the Lord with all our heart and not lean entirely on our own understanding.

God has given us minds, education, experience, abilities, and wisdom. We should use them. But none of these should replace dependence upon God. There comes a point where our experience says one thing while God's Word says another. At that moment, we must decide which one will have the final authority in our lives.

2. LISTEN TO GOD, NOT ONLY ASK GOD TO LISTEN TO YOU

Before Jesus told Peter to launch out into the deep, Jesus entered Peter's boat and taught the people. Peter was there. He was listening. Before Peter received the instruction concerning the fish, he first heard the teaching of Christ.

We often want God's intervention without God's instruction. We want

God to change the situation, but perhaps God first wants His Word to change us.

We say, *"Lord, bless my marriage."* But are we listening to what God says about marriage? We say, *"Lord, bless my finances."* But are we listening to what God says about stewardship, honesty, generosity, responsibility, and contentment? We say, *"Lord, help my children."* But are we listening to God's instructions concerning parenting? We may say, *"Lord, answer my prayer."* But perhaps we also need to ask, *"Lord, am I listening to You?"* The Christian life cannot consist only of speaking to God. Prayer is not an attempt to make God our servant. Christianity is surrender to Christ as Lord.

Sometimes we approach God with a complete plan and simply ask Him to approve it. Spiritual maturity teaches us to ask instead, *"Lord, what is Your will? What does Your Word say? What would You have me do?"* We must move from only saying, "God, listen to me," to saying, *"Lord, I am listening."*

3. TRUST GOD'S WORD WHEN EXPERIENCE SAYS OTHERWISE

Luke 5:4 records Jesus saying, *"Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught."* Imagine Peter hearing this after fishing all night. The night's work was over. The nets were being washed. From Peter's perspective,

the evidence was already available: we tried and it did not work.

Peter could have said, *"Jesus, You are a teacher, but I am the fisherman. I know these waters. I know when to fish. I have been doing this for years."* But this is where faith becomes real. Faith is easy when God's instruction agrees with what we already want to do. The real test comes when God's Word challenges our assumptions.

Peter had experience, but Jesus had authority. Peter knew fishing, but Jesus knew the fish. Peter knew the lake, but Jesus is Lord over creation.

Our previous disappointment does not cancel God's present instruction. What happened yesterday does not make God's Word powerless today.

4. DEVELOP A 'NEVERTHELESS AT THY WORD' FAITH

Luke 5:5 is the heart of the passage: *"Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net."*

Peter did not deny reality. He acknowledged that they had worked all night. He acknowledged that they had caught nothing. Faith does not mean pretending there is no problem. But after acknowledging the facts, Peter said, *"Nevertheless."*

My experience says there are no fish. My tired body says go home. My professional knowledge tells me we already tried. My disappointment tells me not to expect anything. Nevertheless, at Thy Word.

There are moments in every Christian's life when we need this attitude. When forgiveness is difficult: nevertheless at Thy Word, I will forgive. When honesty appears costly: nevertheless at Thy Word, I will be truthful. When temptation is attractive: nevertheless at Thy Word, I will walk away. When obedience requires sacrifice: nevertheless at Thy Word, I will obey.

Faith is not merely saying, "I believe God exists." Faith says, "Because God has spoken, I will act." Peter's breakthrough did not begin when the fish entered the net. It began when he decided, *"At Thy Word I will."*

5. LISTENING WITHOUT OBEDIENCE IS INCOMPLETE

Peter could have agreed with Jesus and continued washing his nets. He could have said, *"Lord, that is a wonderful instruction. I believe You can do it."* But if he had never acted, nothing would have changed.

Luke 5:6 says, *"And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes."* Notice the connection: when they had done

what Christ instructed, the result followed.

James 1:22 teaches us to be doers of the Word and not hearers only. It is possible to attend worship regularly, hear many sermons, know Scripture, quote Scripture, and discuss Scripture while refusing to obey what God has clearly said.

Suppose God says forgive and I refuse. God says speak truth and I continue lying. God says flee immorality and I continue in it. God says love and I continue in hatred. Hearing has not yet produced obedience.

Jesus said in **John 14:15**, *"If ye love me, keep my commandments."* Our obedience demonstrates that we take His Lordship seriously.

6. OBEY GOD FULLY, NOT ONLY WHEN IT IS CONVENIENT

The passage reminds us that God's instructions deserve serious and complete obedience. Sometimes we want to negotiate with God's Word. God says forgive, but we add our own conditions. God says love, but we want to love only those who treat us well. God says serve, but only when it is convenient. God says go, but we want to go only when we understand everything first.

True obedience does not ask, *"What is the minimum I can do and*

still call it obedience?" True surrender asks, *"Lord, what have You commanded, and how can I faithfully do it?"*

7. KEEP YOUR EYES ON CHRIST, NOT ONLY ON THE FISH

We must be careful not to reduce **Luke 5** to the message, *"Obey God and you will always get more fish."* The greatest thing Peter encountered that day was not fish. It was Jesus Christ.

The fish were a result, but Christ was the revelation. As the passage continues beyond verse 7, Peter's response shows that the miracle caused him to see Jesus differently and to see himself differently.

Christianity is not fundamentally about using God to get what we want. We do not obey God as a business transaction, saying, *"God, I obeyed You, therefore You owe me success."* We obey because He is Lord.

Sometimes obedience produces visible results quickly. Sometimes it does not. Sometimes we obey and still experience difficulty. Our faith cannot depend entirely upon receiving the fish. Our faith must rest upon Christ.

Habakkuk 3:17-18 gives us the spirit of mature faith. Even when the expected results are absent, the prophet chooses to rejoice in the Lord. Mature faith says, *"Lord, I*

desire the blessing, but more than the blessing, I desire You."

8. GOD CAN USE OUR EMPTY-NET EXPERIENCES

Peter's empty net was not the end of his story. It became the setting in which Christ taught him a deeper lesson. Had Peter already caught plenty of fish, he might have attributed everything to his own experience and skill.

Sometimes God permits us to reach the limit of ourselves so that we understand the difference between self-confidence and dependence upon Him. Empty-net experiences can teach us: I cannot control everything. I do not know everything. My ability has limits. I need God.

There are lessons we learn in abundance, but there are also lessons we learn beside an empty net.

9. YOUR OBEDIENCE CAN AFFECT OTHERS

Luke 5:6-7 tells us that the catch was so great that Peter had to signal to his partners in the other boat to come and help. Peter's obedience affected other people.

A father's obedience can affect his household. A mother's faithfulness can influence her children. A husband's obedience can strengthen his marriage. A wife's godly example can influence her family. A leader's integrity can

affect an organization. A Christian's conduct can influence colleagues and neighbours.

The opposite is also true. Our disobedience can affect people around us. Our decisions are rarely isolated. Peter obeyed Christ, and others became involved in what followed.

10. WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU THROUGH HIS WORD?

What area of your life is presently your empty net? Is it your marriage, family, finances, spiritual life, relationship with someone, service to God, struggle with sin, or disappointment? Perhaps you have been saying, *"I have tried."* That may be true. But the next question is: have you listened carefully to what God says in His Word? And after listening, have you obeyed?

Maybe your prayer has been, *"Lord, change my husband."* What does God's Word require of you? *"Lord, change my wife."* What does God's Word require of you? *"Lord, change my children."* What kind of example are you giving them? *"Lord, bless my finances."* Are you managing faithfully what God has already entrusted to you?

We often ask God to change our circumstances while God is working to change our hearts.

THREE QUESTIONS TO TAKE HOME

First: Am I truly listening to God? Not simply attending worship, hearing sermons, or reading words, but allowing God's Word to correct my thinking and direct my life?

Second: Do I trust God's Word above my experience? Peter had experience, but he eventually said, *"Nevertheless at Thy Word."* Can I

say the same when God's instruction challenges what I think I know?

Third: Am I obeying what I already know? Sometimes we ask God for more direction while ignoring the direction He has already given. Before asking, "Lord, what else should I do?" perhaps we should ask, "Have I obeyed what You have already told me?"

CONCLUSION

Brethren, Peter began that morning with an empty net. He was tired. He had experience. He had worked through the night. He had evidence suggesting that another attempt was pointless. Then Christ spoke, and Peter faced a choice: would he trust what he had experienced, or would he trust the One who was speaking?

Peter answered, *"Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net."* That is the attitude God desires from us. Lord, I do not understand everything, nevertheless at Your Word. Lord, my experience tells me something different, nevertheless at Your Word. Lord, obedience is difficult, nevertheless at Your Word. Lord, I cannot see the outcome yet, nevertheless at Your Word.

But remember, our goal is not merely to get a net full of fish. Our goal is Christ. If our eyes are fixed only on the fish, then when the fish do not come in the way we expect, our faith may collapse. When our eyes are fixed on Jesus, we can trust Him in abundance and scarcity, in success and disappointment, when we understand and when we do not understand. True success in the Christian life begins when we stop relying entirely upon our own understanding and learn to listen to God, trust His Word, and obey His instructions.

So the question we should take home today is not only, *"God, are You listening to me?"* The deeper question is, *"Am I listening to God?"* And when His Word speaks, can I respond like Peter: *"Nevertheless, at Thy Word, I will."*