

Transformation U: **How Can I Go “All in” for Christ?**

Deuteronomy 6:4–10 • Luke 5:1–11

All this fall, we have been going to school with Jesus, the one Who can transform us and our church. Today we come to one of the transformational principles that is hardest for me, and maybe for you as well, “How do I go all in for Christ?”

Luke 5:1 Once when he was standing on the shore of Lake Gennesaret, the crowd was pushing in on him to better hear the Word of God. **2** He noticed two boats tied up. The fishermen had just left them and were out scrubbing their nets. **3** He climbed into the boat that was Simon’s and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Sitting there, using the boat for a pulpit, he taught the crowd.

Luke 5:4 When he finished teaching, he said to Simon, “Push out into deep water and let your nets out for a catch.”

Luke 5:5 Simon said, “Master, we’ve been fishing hard all night and haven’t caught even a minnow. But if you say so, I’ll let out the nets.” **6** It was no sooner said than done—a huge haul of fish, straining the nets past capacity. **7** They waved to their partners in the other boat to come help them. They filled both boats, nearly swamping them with the catch.

Luke 5:8 Simon Peter, when he saw it, fell to his knees before Jesus. “Master, leave. I’m a sinner and can’t handle this holiness. Leave me to myself.” **9** When they pulled in that catch of fish, awe overwhelmed Simon and everyone with him. **10** It was the same with James and John, Zebedee’s sons, coworkers with Simon.

Jesus said to Simon, “There is nothing to fear. From now on you’ll be fishing for men and women.” **11** They pulled their boats up on the beach, left them, nets and all, and followed him. (*The Message*)

The classic story is told that one day a man fell off a cliff, but managed to grab a tree limb on his way down. “Is anyone up there?” he cried out. “I am here, I am the Lord, do you believe me?” the voice said. “Yes, Lord I believe, I *really* believe, but I can’t hang on much longer.” “If you really believe, I will save you—just let go of the branch.” The man paused for a moment then said, “Is there anyone else up there?” The idea of “going all-in” for Christ sounds like a great idea—when it’s someone else—but when it is our lives, our finances, our future on the lines, “going all-in” for Christ sounds a whole lot scarier. So how do we “go all-in” for Christ, and is there a way to make it less scary?

First, most people only go all-in for Christ when they are out of options. In 2005, my mom passed away, and I experienced depths of grief I didn’t know were possible. A few weeks later, the immediate flurry of activity was over and I was back in the grind at work—but I had no energy, no inspiration, and I wasn’t sure how I was going to keep going. I remember going for a walk and telling God how I was at the end of my rope and completely overwhelmed. I remember having a sense almost of someone coming along and putting their arm around my shoulders, a sense of God saying to me, “I was wondering when you were going to let me

lend a hand. Why don't you leave the rest to me?" And I did. To this day, I don't remember very much about that fall, but I can tell you I was in deep water well over my head, and God used it to teach me a lesson in trust that I have never forgotten.

Second, "going all-in" for Christ often seems counter-intuitive. In our passage for today, Jesus says to Simon Peter, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." Think about this for a moment: Jesus was trained as a carpenter. As it turns out, you don't usually fish in deep water on the Galilee, you actually fish in shallow water, where the fish have less room to maneuver. So Peter is being rather gentle when he answers, "Master we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything." What he probably wanted to say was something like, "Hello?! Swinging a hammer really qualifies you to tell me how to fish! I tell you what, next time, *you* fish all night and see if *you* do better." Taking fishing advice from a carpenter seems crazy, but Jesus had something incredible in mind.

Third, take a deep breath and go. If Peter had refused to follow Jesus' direction, he would never have known what Jesus planned, but to Peter's credit, he said, "but because you say so, I will let down the nets." And Peter caught more fish than he had dreamed he could catch, so many he had to call *another boat!* Because Peter was willing to give up what *he* thought was best, and to *surrender* to what *Jesus* thought was best, his fight became wrestling with overflowing nets of fish! It all began with Peter's "but because you say so..." Sometimes we have to pause, and go.

So it comes to us. Are you trying harder and harder in your life and don't seem to be getting anywhere? Are you nearing the end of your rope and wonder how you can go on? Are you struggling with what it means to follow Jesus, holding on to what *you* want for your life? What will it take for each of us to stop fighting what God wants and surrender to Jesus' vision for our lives? Are we willing to lay down our need to lead and be in control, and allow our Lord Jesus to lead? Surrendering to God is not quitting. Surrendering to God is sitting at the poker table of life...and going all-in. As the saying goes, we have to let go and let God.

As a congregation we are getting ready to put out into deep water, where Jesus has told us there is a catch of fish. The question is not whether there are fish—there are lots of people who need to know how much God loves them, loads of people who need to catch the incredible joy of knowing Jesus Christ, tons of people whose lives will be blessed and become a blessing—no, all we have to do is drive down the street or look around us at the store—there are plenty of fish. The question is will we allow God's dreams for us and our world to guide and inspire us? Will we stop fighting God's desire to come into us, surrender our wills to God's will, and begin the fight, together, to land the great abundance our God has waiting for us? It all begins with knowing how much God loves us, enough so that when God says, "Let go," we will know it will be alright, that God will save us, that we can indeed just let go, and let God.