

Dear Disciples of Jesus:

Two movie producers approached a man named Donald Miller. They wanted to make a movie about his life. Donald Miller was very excited about this. Just think they want to make a movie about my life. Not only would they make the movie about him but they would pay him a great deal of money to do so.

However, there was one catch. The movie producers told Donald Miller that his “real life” was too boring. They told him they needed to make up things to turn his life into an entertaining movie. While the movie producers were writing the script for Donald Miller’s life story he came to this conclusion:

- The things that make a movie great are the same things that make life great.
- The things that make a character great are the same things that make a real-life person great.
- It all comes down to the size of the conflict a person is willing to face.

Think about this for a minute.

If there was a movie made about someone whose life was all about getting an iPhone the final scene would show the actor walking out of Walmart with their iPhone and that would be it. It would be a boring movie. Or if there was a movie about someone’s major quest in life to get a promotion at his job, and that final scene was just that – the person getting the promotion it would be a boring movie.

As the movie producers were making the movie about Donald Miller, Mr. Miller asked the producers, “Is this going to be a good movie? They replied yes. Then he asked, “Is this going to be a great movie?” and they both said yes. Finally, Mr. Miller said, “Do you think this movie about me is going to win an Oscar?” They answered, “No, Only epic movies win Oscars.”

So, Mr. Miller asked the producers, “Well, what does it take for a movie to be an epic movie?” They responded that for a movie to be an epic the main character would have to overcome a great conflict and be victorious.

The movie SOUL SURFER could be called an epic. It is a movie about a real-life ordinary girl named Bethany Hamilton. Her story involves overcoming a major conflict in her life to be victorious. Her story has impacted thousands of people. Bethany was attacked by a shark while swimming and lost part of her arm. Her struggle for survival and recovery is almost larger than life. Bethany is a believer in Jesus and she endured because the Lord was with her and she held onto Jesus' words found in John 10:10.

In the second half of John 10:10, Jesus says to his followers, **"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."**

God desires that we have a full life. God desires that we have an "epic" life. Jesus came to earth not only to forgive us of our sins but to free us so that we may live a full life.

But, there is someone who doesn't want you to live that full life in Christ. Jesus also says in John 10:10 "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy..."

Satan is that thief. He is in the business of destroying people's lives. He is in the business of making life unfulfilling. He is in the business of tempting you and trying to make you fall into a life that contradicts God's will for you.

As remember what happened to Bethany Hamilton we also want to remember the story of the Apostle Peter found in Luke 5. Like Bethany, Peter knew what it was like to face difficult trials. Like Bethany, Peter found victory over trials through the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Luke 5 Jesus is teaching, while Peter and the other disciples are cleaning their nets. The disciples had been fishing all night and had not caught anything. This must have been very discouraging for them. They were probably tired and just wanted to go home.

But Jesus wants to teach the disciples a lesson. He gets into Peter's boat and tells Peter to pull his boat back into the water. Could you imagine Peter's thoughts? He fished all night and was discouraged and exhausted. What must have gone through Peter's head?

Whatever Peter thought, he obeys Jesus. Jesus taught Peter and others as he sat in Peter's boat. Peter had a front-row seat to everything that he had to say.

Jesus tells Peter to put the boat back into the deep water and let the nets down. Fishermen did not fish with nets in the deep water. It was too difficult to catch fish with nets in the deep water back in those days. They would fish in the shallow water not the deep water. They just had fished all night and had caught nothing. Peter must have thought there are no fish out there and they won't even bite until later in the day. Jesus' request made no sense. Also, cleaning the nets took about an hour and now they were to make them dirty again.

Still, Peter obeys Jesus. He trusts Jesus' word even though he did not understand what Jesus was trying to do. Peter and the others throw their nets over into the water. What happens? They catch so many fish that the boat begins to sink and their nets begin to break.

What must Peter have thought? Hundreds of fish began flopping into the boat.

Right in the middle of the fish flopping all around, Simon fell at Jesus' feet and confessed his sin. There is something bigger there than a boatful of fish. Peter realizes that he is standing next to God. Peter responds in awe and fear. He is completely amazed that the Lord of the universe has taken an interest in him a lowly fisherman. Peter and his companions were astonished at the catch of fish.

### **"Go away from me, Lord: I am a sinful man!" v8**

Isn't this our response when we understand the holiness of our Lord and then recall our utter sinfulness. We know our sinful thoughts, words and actions. In our sin we can't stand before our holy Lord.

The prophet Isaiah was given a vision of heaven and saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted. Isaiah cried out: "Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips...and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." Isa 6:1ff

We know that with our sins we can't stand before the Lord. While Isaiah was crying over his sins an angel flew to him and said your guilt is taken away and you sin atoned for. Isa 6:6f

Isaiah was then sent by the Lord to do the Lord's work among God's people.

Like Isaiah, Peter knew he was sinful and could not stand in the Lord's presence but like Isaiah, Peter was told, too, that his sins were atoned for. Like Isaiah, Peter is sent on a mission by Jesus.

### **Jesus says, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." V10**

From now on Peter wasn't going to be catching fish but men. Catching fish is a good thing but catching men and women for the Lord is a bigger thing. There is nothing better than this.

Peter knows this and drops everything to follow Jesus. So did James and John, who were Peter's fellow fishermen.

What about you and me? Is Jesus telling us, too, to throw our nets into the deep water? May we obey Jesus, too, as did Peter. Or do we want to play it safe and just stay on the shoreline where it is safe.

### **God's mission is to reach others with the Gospel**

The Apostle Paul says: "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." Ephesians 2:10

When Paul wrote these words there were only a handful of Christians living in Ephesus. It was illegal to assemble in Jesus' name at this time. In fact, Paul was run out of town by thousands of angry people who wanted to kill him. So what God had called the believers in Ephesus to do wasn't easy.

The people of the Bible did not have easy lives. They had difficult lives. But Jesus said in John 16: "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

In SOUL SURFER, Bethany Hamilton's road to recovery was extremely difficult. Losing an arm and coming close to death is something that is beyond our comprehension. Living life for the Lord may be difficult.

In Jeremiah 29 the Lord says to his people: **“For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”**

These words were spoken to the Israelites while they were in captivity in Babylon some 600 years before Jesus was born. Their worst nightmare had come true. They had been dragged from their homes to another country over 1000 miles away. As a people they would be in this strange country for 70 years. That meant that most of them would die here and it would be their children and grandchildren that would someday return home. 70 years is a long time. But God tells them they have a future with him.

Bethany Hamilton never got her arm back. Yet, she knows God has a plan and a future for her.

Today we live in a culture that craves instant gratification. We want things NOW. We get upset if the Internet takes 30 seconds to load or if we don't get our fast food within five minutes.

But walking with the Lord takes time. Look at people's lives in the Bible and you will see that God's people were patient and persevered because they knew the Lord was with them.

Going back to Peter's story in Luke 5 could you place yourself in Peter's shoes?

- You are sitting on the beach cleaning the nets after a long night of fishing
- Jesus is teaching the crowd a few feet away
- You are tired and frustrated because of your poor catch of fish
- You are busy cleaning your nets while Jesus is teaching - What are you busy with...what are the things that take up most of your life today?
- You are asked to get back into the boat with Jesus and put out a little from shore while Jesus teaches the people from your boat
- Is God asking us to step out of our comfort zone today and trust him?
- Now you are asked by Jesus to go out into the deep water and put down your nets

- What does this look like for us? What are the deep waters for us in our relationship with God?
- Jesus did not have to do this miracle. But he does and Peter's boat begins to sink with so many fish
- Does God overflow our lives with his work and blessings?
- Peter knew that Jesus was God for this catch of fish was a miracle.
- Peter's first response was confession of his sins.
- Our first response to God's love and presence in our lives must be confession of our sins.

God wants to overflow into our lives and through our lives.

Jesus says: **“Follow Me.”**

God has created us and redeemed us for big things. God has big plans for each of us but at times our life may be difficult and things in our lives will take time. Satan will try to foul things up and tempt us to go in a different direction.

But God has overcome sin, death and the devil and we are united with him.

God says to us in Isaiah 43:1ff

“He who created you...He who formed you...Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God the Holy One...your Savior.”