

Session 1: You Shall Be Called Rock

John 1:35-42 and Luke 5:1-11 | 75 to 90 minutes | Young Adult Inductive Study

PART ONE: LEADER PREPARATION GUIDE

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim: The group discovers that Jesus calls Simon before Simon has done anything to deserve it, and that the encounter with divine holiness produces honest confession of sin, which Jesus answers not with dismissal but with mission.

Catholic Touchstone: Grace precedes every human response. The preparation of man for grace is itself a work of grace (CCC 2001). Simon is renamed before any recorded word, deed, or profession of faith of his own, called before he is worthy, and commissioned in the very moment he confesses his sin.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

This session opens with two scenes, and their relationship matters. In John 1:35-42, Andrew, already a disciple of John the Baptist, meets Jesus first and immediately fetches his brother. Jesus looks at Simon and declares, “You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter). This is a first meeting, not yet the definitive call. In Luke 5:1-11, likely some time later back in Galilee, Jesus steps into Simon's working life, borrows his boat, commands a catch against all professional judgment, and calls him to leave everything. The Gospels do not give us a precise timeline for harmonizing these scenes, and it is honest to say so if asked. What they clearly give us is a sequence of grace: Jesus knows Simon, names Simon, and claims Simon before Simon has done a single recorded thing.

A few background points will strengthen your leading. First, the renaming. In Scripture, God renames a person when He claims him for a mission: Abram becomes Abraham (Genesis 17:5), Jacob becomes Israel (Genesis 32:28). As far as our records show, Kepha (Aramaic for rock; in Greek, Petros) was not in use as a personal name in Israel. Jesus is not choosing from a list of names. He is minting a title, and He does it in the future tense: “You *shall be* called.” It is a promise about what grace will make of this man, not a description of what he is.

Second, the fishing. By the working knowledge of Galilean fishermen, night was the productive time for net fishing on the lake of Gennesaret; daylight in deep water was the least promising option. Simon and his partners had worked the right hours with professional skill and caught nothing. When Jesus, a carpenter's son, tells a fisherman to try again in broad daylight in deep water, He is asking Simon to obey against his own expertise, in public, on the heels of failure. Simon's answer contains the hinge of

the whole session: “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets” (Luke 5:5). Faith rests on the word of Jesus, not on the evidence of the nets.

Third, Simon’s strange response to success. The catch does not make him feel lucky; it makes him feel unclean: “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8). Nearness to the Holy One reveals sin the way sunlight reveals dust in a room. Your group will discover for themselves that this exact pattern already happened seven centuries earlier in Isaiah 6, so do not reveal that connection in advance. Note carefully what Jesus does not say. He does not say “You are not that sinful,” and He does not grant the request to depart. He says, “Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men” (Luke 5:10). Honest confession of sin, met by Jesus, becomes the doorway to vocation.

Finally, the phrase that names this whole study. Jesus’ command in Luke 5:4, “Put out into the deep,” is *duc in altum* in the Latin of the Church. St. John Paul II took those two words as a watchword for the entire Church at the start of the new millennium. In this first scene Simon must be ordered into the deep, and he goes reluctantly. Keep that detail in your pocket; this study will return to it.

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

Isaiah 6:1-8 (the live discovery text; do not preview it). Isaiah sees the Lord high and lifted up, cries out “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips” (Isaiah 6:5), is touched and reassured, and is commissioned: “Here am I! Send me” (Isaiah 6:8). The pattern is exact: manifestation of holiness, confession of unworthiness, reassurance, mission. Luke 5 replays it on a fishing boat.

The renaming pattern. Genesis 17:5 (Abram to Abraham, father of a covenant people) and Genesis 32:28 (Jacob to Israel, after wrestling with God). A God-given name declares a God-given destiny.

The reluctant call pattern. Moses protests “Who am I?” (Exodus 3:11); Jeremiah protests “I am only a youth” (Jeremiah 1:6). God consistently calls those who feel unqualified and supplies what they lack. Simon’s “Depart from me” stands in a long line of protests that God overrules with mission.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Ambrose of Milan | *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke, Book IV*

Commenting on this scene, St. Ambrose dwells on the fact that of all the boats on the shore, the Lord chooses Simon’s boat to teach from, and it is Simon whom He commands to put out into the deep. Ambrose reads the deep water as an image of the depths into which Christ calls His Church: deeper trust, deeper mystery, deeper waters than our own skill can fish. The Fathers loved to see in the boat that carries Christ and His word a picture of the Church herself. Offer that image as the Church’s cherished spiritual reading of the scene, not as the literal sense of the text.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom | *Homilies on the Gospel of St. John, Homily 19*

Preaching on John 1:41-42, St. Chrysostom marvels at two things. First, Andrew’s instinct: having

found the Messiah, he cannot rest until he has fetched his own brother, and so the greatest of the apostles is brought to Christ by a simple act of family evangelization. Second, the renaming: Jesus tells Simon what he shall be called, showing that He knows not only who Simon is but what He will make of him. For Chrysostom, the future tense of the name is a quiet declaration of divine foreknowledge and divine power: the One who names is the One who transforms.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Paul II | *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (2001)

At the close of the Great Jubilee, St. John Paul II gave the whole Church the words of Luke 5:4 as her program for the new millennium: *Duc in altum*, put out into the deep. He recalled how Peter and his companions trusted the word of Christ against a night of failure and let down the nets, and he urged every believer to remember the past with gratitude, live the present with enthusiasm, and look to the future with confidence, because the command spoken once from Simon's boat is spoken to us now. This study borrows its name from that command.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

- **CCC 208:** Faced with God's holiness, man discovers his own smallness and sinfulness. The Catechism cites this very scene, Peter's "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord," alongside Isaiah's "Woe is me."
- **CCC 878:** Christ calls each of the apostles personally and by name; the call of God is never generic. Simon is called as Simon, in his own boat, in the middle of his own work.
- **CCC 2001:** The preparation of man for the reception of grace is already the work of grace. Simon's renaming before any merit of his own is this doctrine in narrative form.

THE WAY OF SALVATION (STUDY STRAND, LEADER ONLY)

MOVEMENT 1 OF THE KERYGMA: GOD'S INITIATIVE

Each session of this study quietly dramatizes one movement of the core Gospel message. Tonight's movement: **God acts first**. Salvation begins not with our search for God but with His search for us. The didactic texts that state plainly what this scene shows in story: 1 John 4:19 ("We love, because he first loved us"); John 15:16 ("You did not choose me, but I chose you"); Ephesians 2:8-9 (saved by grace through faith, not our own doing). Near the end of this study the group will hear Peter himself preach this mechanic in his own words. One guardrail as you lead: God acts first does not mean God acts alone. The Catholic teaching is that God's free initiative demands man's free response (CCC 2002); grace precedes, invites, and empowers cooperation, and Simon's "at your word I will let down the nets" is that cooperation in the flesh. If discussion drifts toward "God does everything and we merely receive," point back to the man rowing the boat. Do not teach this strand aloud; let the story carry it. It is listed here so you always know which rail the session is running

on.

THREAD WATCH (LEADER ONLY, NEVER REVEAL)

- **The future-tense name.** Jesus says Simon shall be called Rock. Across this study, watch when the Gospels call him Simon and when they call him Peter, especially at his failures. The name is a promise under construction.
- **The boat and the deep.** Tonight Simon must be commanded into the deep and obeys reluctantly. Another boat scene at the end of this study will answer this one. Say nothing about it.
- **The sealed guess.** Take-Home 1 carries the My Guess box: what will it take for Simon to become the rock Jesus just named him? Participants write, fold, and keep it. It opens in Session 9. Collect nothing; they keep their own sheets.
- **Attachment at the point of abundance.** They left everything on the best fishing day of their lives. Surrender at the point of greatest attachment will recur.

SESSION GOALS

1. The group articulates, in their own words, that Jesus calls Simon before Simon is worthy, and that grace precedes every response.
2. The group discovers the Isaiah 6 pattern themselves and names the connection between encountering holiness and confessing sin.
3. The group recognizes that Jesus answers honest confession with mission, not dismissal.
4. Each participant privately identifies their own boat: the thing that would be hardest to leave.
5. Every participant leaves with Take-Home 1 and completes the sealed My Guess box before Session 2.

TIME NOTE

Core session runs about 75 minutes. If your group runs long: cut the second Dig Deeper box (Why Borrow a Boat?) and use only the first Win question. **Do not cut** the Isaiah 6 discovery in Question 5 or the two Send questions; they are the heart of the night.

PART TWO: DISCUSSION GUIDE

OPENING PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, you stepped uninvited into Simon's boat and made it your pulpit, and you speak to us now as you spoke to him. Give us tonight the honesty of the fisherman: to hear your word, to obey it against our own judgment, and to tell you the truth about ourselves without fear. You who called Simon before he was worthy, call us; we are listening. Come, Holy Spirit, and put out with us into the deep. Amen.

WIN: OPENING QUESTIONS

Open questions; every answer is welcome. Do not correct or steer.

W1. Tell us about a time someone saw potential in you that you could not yet see in yourself. What did their confidence do to you?

W2. When you hear the word “saint,” what kind of person comes to mind? Honestly: does it feel like something possible for you?

BUILD: INTO THE TEXT

READ ALOUD: John 1:35-42

1. Watch who does what in this scene. How does Simon end up standing in front of Jesus? What does Simon himself say or do?

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

Andrew finds Jesus first and immediately goes to get his brother; Simon is brought. In the entire scene Simon says and does nothing that the text records. Before Simon has spoken a single word in the Gospels, Jesus looks at him and renames him. Every ounce of initiative in this scene belongs to Jesus (and to Andrew, the first evangelist in the family). Let the group sit with how strange that is: the greatest of the apostles begins as a man standing silently while someone else's faith carries him.

2. Jesus says, “You shall be called Cephas,” in the future tense. What is the difference between a name that describes what you are and a name that declares what you will become?

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

A descriptive name reports the past; this name is a promise about the future. In Scripture, God renames people when He claims them for a mission (if the group recalls Abram becoming Abraham or Jacob becoming Israel, celebrate it; if not, you may supply Genesis 17:5 and 32:28). Nobody in Israel is named Rock; Jesus is not picking a name, He is minting a title. And He mints it before Simon has done anything. The name is not a reward. It is a prophecy.

3. Be honest about the man we will watch for twelve sessions: does Simon look like a “rock” any time soon? Then why would Jesus give him this name now, at the very beginning?

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

No. The man we are about to follow is impulsive, boastful, quick to sink, and capable of catastrophic failure. Jesus names the destination at the starting line. This is the first fingerprint of grace in the study: God's call is based on what His grace will accomplish, not on what we have already achieved. If Jesus waited for us to be rock before calling us rock, He would wait forever.

READ ALOUD: Luke 5:1-11

4. Jesus borrows a working man's boat, then tells a professional fisherman how to fish, in daylight, right after a failed night. Put yourself in Simon's sandals: what makes “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets” a hard sentence to say?

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

Everything about it costs him. His expertise says no: night is when you catch fish on this lake, and deep water in daylight is the last place his experience would send him. His exhaustion says no: the nets are already washed. His pride says no: the whole shore just watched him fail, and a second public failure would sting. The hinge of the sentence is “at your word.” Simon obeys not because the evidence improved but because of who is asking. That is a working definition of faith this group should hold onto: acting on the word of Jesus when your own judgment argues otherwise.

5. The catch works beyond all expectation, and Simon's response is bizarre. Not “thank you,” not “how did you do that?”, but “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” Why would an act of pure generosity make a man suddenly feel his sin?

Live discovery: after the group wrestles with this, say: “This exact pattern already happened, about seven hundred years before this morning on the lake. Split into pairs, read Isaiah 6:1-8, and find every parallel you can between what happens to Isaiah and what just happened to Simon.” Give them several minutes. Let them report before you open the answer box.

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

The parallels the pairs should surface: a sudden manifestation of divine holiness (the Lord high and lifted up; the impossible catch); a cry of unworthiness in almost the same grammar (“Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips” and “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord”); a word of reassurance (the burning coal and “your guilt is taken away”; “Do not be afraid”); and then, astonishingly, a commission (“Whom shall I send?” “Here am I! Send me”; “henceforth you will be catching men”).

Why does generosity expose sin? Because nearness to the Holy One reveals what distance concealed, the way sunlight reveals dust in a room that looked clean in the dark. Simon suddenly knows he is standing next to holiness itself, in his own boat, and the honest human response to that

nearness is Isaiah's response: I do not belong this close. The group has just discovered, from the text, the first two movements of the Gospel: God comes near in undeserved generosity, and His nearness shows us the truth about ourselves.

6. Look carefully at what Jesus does NOT say to Simon's confession. He does not say "You're not so bad," and He does not grant the request and depart. What does His actual answer, "Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men," tell us about how Jesus treats sinners who tell Him the truth?

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

He neither minimizes the sin nor abandons the sinner. Jesus takes Simon's confession completely seriously, and then overrules the conclusion Simon drew from it. Simon reasoned: I am sinful, therefore depart from me. Jesus, in effect, answers: your sinfulness does not disqualify you; follow me, and I will make you a fisher of men. The world's logic says clean yourself up first, then come. The Gospel's logic says come, and grace will do the cleansing, the transforming, and the sending, never bypassing Simon's freedom but working through it: his "at your word" is his cooperation. Honest confession is not a disqualification from vocation; in this scene it is the doorway through which the mission arrives.

7. "They left everything and followed him" immediately after the greatest catch the text records: nets breaking, two boats near sinking. Why leave when the nets are fullest? Would it not make more sense to follow Jesus AND keep the fishing business?

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

The catch was never the point; it was a sign pointing past itself. Simon leaves the fish because he has seen the One who commands the fish, and the gift is nothing next to the Giver. Notice the mercy in the timing: the call comes not after the empty nets but after the full ones, so that what Simon leaves is not failure but abundance. Surrender that costs nothing proves nothing. Real surrender happens at the point of greatest attachment, and the timing of the call, at the moment of greatest abundance, invites us to see exactly that. Let the group feel that: He is not after our leftovers.

DIG DEEPER: THE NAME

The Aramaic word Jesus actually spoke is *Kepha*, rock. St. John preserves the original: "You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter). In Greek it becomes *Petros*, in Latin *Petrus*. As far as our records show, it was not in use as a personal name in Israel; Jesus is not selecting a name but creating a title. Every time this study says "Peter," we are repeating a promise Jesus made before Simon had done anything at all.

DIG DEEPER: WHY BORROW A BOAT?

Of all the boats drawn up on that shore, Jesus chooses Simon's, sits down in it, and teaches the

crowds from it. The Fathers of the Church, St. Ambrose among them, delighted in the picture: Christ teaching the people from Peter's boat. They saw in it an image of Christ teaching the world from within His Church. Hold the image lightly; it is the Church's cherished spiritual reading of the scene rather than the literal sense. But it is worth noticing whose boat He wanted.

SEND: TAKING IT WITH YOU

S1. Jesus' call reached Simon in the middle of his ordinary work, using his ordinary tools, on an ordinary bad morning. Where is the middle of YOUR ordinary life, and what would it mean to let Jesus step into it uninvited this week?

S2. Simon said, "Depart from me," and Jesus stayed. What is the honest sentence you have been avoiding saying to Jesus? Are you willing to say it this week, and let Him stay?

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

1. Pray with Luke 5:1-11 once this week, slowly, placing yourself bodily in the scene the way St. Ignatius taught: feel the boat, smell the nets, hear the command. Stay in the boat until you can honestly answer, "What is Jesus asking me to put out into?"
2. Once this week, when you feel unqualified for something good in front of you, say silently: "At your word I will let down the nets," and do the thing.
3. Come next week having noticed one place in your life where your own competence has quietly made trusting God feel unnecessary.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you knew Simon's name before he knew yours, and you know ours. We have heard you tonight say "Do not be afraid" to a man who told you the truth about himself. Give us the courage to tell you the truth about ourselves, and the faith to hear you answer with a calling instead of a condemnation. We put out into the deep at your word. St. Peter, pray for us. Amen.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."

Luke 5:4 (RSV2CE)

Before you dismiss: hand every participant Take-Home 1. Point out the sealed My Guess box on it and ask them to write their guess this week, fold it closed, and keep the sheet somewhere they will not lose it. Tell them only this: "We will open it together later in the study." Say nothing else about it.

PART THREE: LEADER REFERENCE CARD

EVERY PASSAGE IN THIS SESSION

Primary Texts (read aloud in session)

- John 1:35-42, Andrew brings Simon; Jesus renames him Cephas
- Luke 5:1-11, the borrowed boat, the catch, “Depart from me,” the call

Live Discovery Text (group finds the parallels)

- Isaiah 6:1-8, holiness, confession, reassurance, commission

Supporting Texts (supply if needed)

- Genesis 17:5, Abram renamed Abraham
- Genesis 32:28, Jacob renamed Israel
- Exodus 3:11, Moses: “Who am I?”
- Jeremiah 1:6, Jeremiah: “I am only a youth”

Way of Salvation Strand (leader only)

- 1 John 4:19, “We love, because he first loved us”
- John 15:16, “You did not choose me, but I chose you”
- Ephesians 2:8-9, saved by grace through faith
- Acts 15:11, Peter preaching salvation by grace (resolves late in study)

Catechism

- CCC 208, holiness encountered, sinfulness confessed (cites Luke 5:8)
- CCC 878, called personally and by name
- CCC 2001, grace precedes and prepares every response
- CCC 2002, God's free initiative demands man's free response (leader guardrail)

Memory Verse

- Luke 5:4, “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.”