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## Nothing But Net

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# Nothing But Net

## **Abstract**

"We may not drag around huge physical nets today, but we do have nets that we use to 'catch' people for Jesus. They're our talents and gifts."

Posting about God using ordinary people to do extraordinary things from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/nothing-but-net/>

## **Keywords**

In All Things, Jesus, miracles, fishing, ability

## **Disciplines**

Christianity

## **Comments**

*In All Things* is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

# Nothing But Net

 [inallthings.org/nothing-but-net/](http://allthings.org/nothing-but-net/)

Josh Bowar

*One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. 2 He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people." So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him. -Luke 5:1-11*

The prizes. The food. The fun. One of my favorite things to do growing up happened once a year in my small hometown. I'd get on my bike, grab some change, and head east of town to the 4-H barns for the annual carnival. In the mind of an elementary school kid, this carnival was a big deal. It had a cake walk, lots of games, and even a place where you could put people in "jail" until they got someone to give a ticket to break out. But the best part of the whole event was the fishing stand. You see, at this stand, you could give a ticket, cast your line over the top of a curtain, wait for the tug, and then reel in your catch, a prize that had been mysteriously put on a clothespin hook. Does fishing ever get easier than that? A guaranteed catch every time, no matter how you cast the line, the weather, the attitude of the fish, etc.

In chapter 5, verses 1-11 of his book, Luke tells us the story of Jesus calling the first disciples. He's standing by the Sea of Galilee with people crowding around and listening. He sees some boats, heads out in one, and starts to preach. Then Jesus takes it one step farther and asks Simon to go into deep water so they can catch some fish. Simon, tired from a long night of fishing (and not the kind of fishing you do at a 4H carnival), is a bit leery but agrees to head out. And he is soon glad they did because the nets become so filled with fish that they start to break. Soon everyone is amazed, and Simon becomes ashamed of resisting Jesus at first. Jesus responds by telling the men they will fish for people. The end of the passage makes you think that there wasn't much resistance at this point, as it says "they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed Him".

So what's this fishing for people thing all about? I believe that it has a lot to do with your net.

Actually, before Jesus's time, there weren't very many Israelites who were fishermen. There was just one Hebrew word for *fish*, and this word meant everything from minnows to whales. When Jesus walked among His people, a fishing industry started around the Sea of Galilee, the setting for our story.

So what was the job of a fisherman? It was very difficult. They worked all year in all kinds of weather, and often at night. These were tough guys, as they had to work long hours doing lots of physical labor. During the time of Luke's writing, nets were very important to fishermen. One of the skills they had to know was making and mending these nets, which were made of linen and had to be carefully cleaned and dried each day or they would wear out because of rot. Actually, many believe that fishermen spent most of their time mending nets, which could be several hundred feet long and as much as 20 feet high.

How did fishermen catch fish? They would drop the nets several hundred yards from shore. The net had cork or wood floats on one edge, keeping that edge out of the water. Stone sinkers were on the other edge, which pulled the

net down into the water. The fishermen would pull the net toward the shore, catching anything they came across.

We may not drag around huge physical nets today, but we do have nets that we use to “catch” people for Jesus. They’re our talents and gifts.

So what’s your net? How do you catch people? It seems there are three things to remember.

First, each person has talents and gifts that God has given, and He will work through them. That’s why He gave them to you. Like Luke’s passage says starting in verse 2, “He saw at the water’s edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.” The tools that we have available will be used by Jesus. He doesn’t care if it’s a small boat or a large yacht. He will use all things for His purposes and glory.

Second, you need to use your net even when you don’t feel like it or you think there’s no hope. In verse 5, Simon answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.” Simon had been working a long night, he may or may not have been happy with the haul of fish that resulted from all of the work, and he probably just wanted to get his net cleaned, head home, and get some rest. But Jesus had different plans. He wanted to use Simon’s net in order to catch some people. I’m not sure I would have responded in the same way, but Simon agreed simply because Jesus “said so”. Yes, our gifts need to be used even when we don’t feel like it.

Third, God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. After the catch of fish, Simon immediately gets down on his knees and says, “I am a sinful man” to Jesus. And what does Jesus say in response? “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.” Simon, a very ordinary fisherman, has been called to do some extraordinary work. We all have. God doesn’t need us – He wants us. Our job is to listen to the Holy Spirit’s promptings, working to be obedient to how and when God needs us to use the talents and gifts He has given to us.

So what do we need to do as fishermen today? We need to FISH, of course!

F = Find your talents and gifts. What has God given to you that you can use for His glory? Take the time needed to do some self-examination, talking with others, and spending time in prayer to discover what God has given to you. Then list specifically what gifts you have to offer.

I = Internalize the gifts. Own them. Develop them. Like a fisherman needs to practice how to use and clean his net, practice using and refining your gifts.

SH = Share the gifts. Follow the Holy Spirit’s promptings, use your net, and catch some people (even when you don’t feel like it).

So what’s our next step? Let’s have our nets always ready, and let’s use them. When the Holy Spirit prompts, let those nets down. I think we’ll continue to be amazed at just how many fish we’ll catch. Better fish than cheap prizes on a clothespin hook, of course. These catches are eternal, with God’s people using what He gave them for His glory. And that’s no fish story.