



WEEK 2 STUDY GUIDE

Read Matthew 13:47-51.

This passage is part of a chapter filled with parables from Jesus about the kingdom of heaven. He uses a number of comparisons to draw us into better understanding of the kingdom of heaven. Anthony Hoekema described the kingdom of heaven as “the reign of God dynamically active in human history through Jesus Christ, the purpose of which is the redemption of his people from sin and from demonic powers, and the final establishment of the new heavens and the new earth.” More simply, Graeme Goldsworthy summarized the kingdom of heaven as “God’s people in God’s place under God’s rule.” (It’s worth noting that this LIVE volume contains an entire series—“The Kingdom of Heaven Is Like...”—dedicated to the other parables in this chapter.)

Our conversation in this lesson only briefly touches on Matthew 13:44-46, but the “Again” at the beginning of verse 47 makes it essential to be familiar with the prior passage. The parable of the treasure and the parable of the pearl are similar because the main character sold all he had in order to purchase something. These parables differ, however, in how the man and the merchant each discovered the thing worth obtaining. The man stumbled upon the treasure. He was in a field and just happened to find the treasure. The merchant, however, wanted to find a pearl and was looking high and low for just the right pearl. But in both parables, each man decided to sell everything he had, in order to obtain the treasure.

And with that context in mind, as we approach verses 47-51, we discover that there are consequences to the most important decision we will ever face: Will we choose to truly follow Jesus? The decision to accept or reject the message of Jesus has an eternal impact.

If we have chosen to follow Christ, we must remember that our calling includes sharing the message of Jesus with others. And we must remember that God is the ultimate judge of who does or doesn’t have genuine faith in Jesus.

WEEK 2 OVERVIEW

THE MAIN POINT

We are called to share the message of Jesus to everyone.

THE MAIN SCRIPTURE

Matthew 13:47-51

TOUGH PARABLES

Wrestling With Jesus' Challenging Stories

Week 2: The Fishing Net

Main Point: We are called to share the message of Jesus to everyone.

Main Scripture: Matthew 13:47-51

THE WHAT

ME:

Share a time where you had to make a big decision. What made the decision easy or hard?

WE:

We all face decisions in life—some decisions more important or difficult than others. What's an easy decision you've made today? (What to wear, what to eat for lunch, etc. Anyone want to share?) Think back, what's a really hard decision you've had to make? (Anyone want to share?)

TRANSITION:

One decision we cannot escape is the choice to either follow or reject Jesus. And even if we decide to live life as a follower of Jesus, we must remember to give other people in our lives the chance to make that choice, too.

SO WHAT

GOD

Read Matthew 13:47-51 together.

Let's spend a few minutes exploring this passage to see what we can learn from a brief parable about a fishing net.

1. We are called to share the message of Jesus.

Those of us who are followers of Jesus play an essential role: We are called to tell others about Jesus, to introduce them to him so they, too, can encounter the person who has changed our lives. This parable reminds us that the message of Jesus must be shared and we are the ones who must do it.

2. Jesus' net catches all kinds of fish.

The kingdom of heaven is offered to everyone. But at the end of time, there will be a sorting process where only those who truly followed Jesus will be allowed to enter and spend eternity with God. And as we read this parable, it's a reminder about the importance of choosing to follow Jesus—the most important decision we can ever make.

3. We are not called to decide who's in and who's out.

We sometimes fall into the trap of judging who is a genuine follower of Jesus and who isn't—and then judging or condemning people we think aren't true Christ-followers. It isn't our job to separate the righteous from the wicked. Our job is to follow Jesus, truly make him the center of our lives, and lovingly tell others about the message of Jesus.

GOSPEL MOMENT

Jesus died for "all the fish," aka everyone. What do I mean by that? The Bible says that everyone has sinned and because of SIN (which is anytime we do something wrong/not God's way) everyone's relationship was broken. God sent His son JESUS to suffer and die a painful death on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. When we chose to believe and give our lives to God, we receive eternal salvation and a restored

relationship with God. It's not about "doing enough good" or "going to church enough," it's all about faith in Jesus.

TRANSITION

Jesus doesn't force His love on us or anyone else. He gives us all the gift of choice. He doesn't want robots who have to follow and love Him - He knows for us to truly love Him it must be a choice.

NOW WHAT?

YOU

Some of you have made this chose already. Some of you maybe have not. If you haven't CHOSEN to believe in Jesus, why not? What is holding you back? I promise you it's not as great as what you will receive if you chose to follow Jesus Christ with your heart and your life. I encourage you to TODAY, RIGHT NOW, make the chose to follow Jesus. I'm going to ask everyone to close their eyes so there is no pressure. And I'm going to say a prayer. These words aren't magic, but believing and saying them in your heart has GREAT POWER. If you chose to follow Jesus, I want you to pray them in your heart RIGHT NOW:

Jesus, because of my sin I ask for your forgiveness. I believe you chose to suffer and die for my sins and rose from the dead. I trust and follow you as my Lord and Savior. Guide my life and help me to do your will. In your name, Amen.

Now if you said this prayer in your heart for the first time, I want you raise your hand so we can celebrate with you. AWESOME!

WE

Once we received Jesus' love and truth, it becomes our job to share it. It's like a light put inside our hearts that is meant to shine for the whole world to see. Trust me, I get it, this can be scary. But God is with us and we are in it together. We can encourage and support each other, even pray for each other that God will give us His words and boldness to share His love.

PRAY

God, thank you for loving us so much! We pray that you will give us your words to share your message with others and a boldness to do so. We pray for people in our life who don't know you - that they would come to know and accept your love. Amen.

WEEK 2 TOUGH PARABLES DISCUSSION GUIDE

This guide is a suggestion; Adjust as needed to fit your group. Don't feel like you need to do, or ask, everything you see here. Let the students and the Holy Spirit guide the conversation, too.

THE MAIN POINT

We are called to share the message of Jesus with everyone.

THE MAIN SCRIPTURE

Matthew 13:47-51

GET THEM TALKING

- How well did you share as a kid?
- Who can share a funny story about either sharing well or NOT sharing something well as a kid?

READ Matthew 13:47-51 and answer the following questions:

1. We are called to share the message of Jesus.

- What's your initial reaction to this parable?
- What do you find most challenging or unclear about this parable?
- Think about when you became a follower of Jesus. Were you raised in a Christian family? Did someone tell you about Jesus at school? Did you see a follower of Christ who truly lived out what he or she believed? Tell us your story.
- When you realize not everyone will accept the message of Jesus, does that make you less motivated to even bother sharing that message at all? Why or why not?

2. Jesus' net catches all kinds of fish.

- Have you ever gone fishing? If so, tell us what that experience was like.
- How is a fishing net different from the way most people fish when they talk about "going fishing"?
- Do you think this parable means there are many "fish" in our churches who won't spend eternity in heaven? Why or why not?
- Read John 14:6. Why doesn't God allow everyone to enter heaven? Why is faith in Jesus the only way to spend eternity with God?

3. We are not called to decide who's in and who's out.

- What are the dangers of us—or anyone else—playing the role of saying who is a "good fish" and who is a "bad fish"?
- How can people who follow Jesus become judgmental? Shouldn't that be impossible? Tell me what you think.

NEXT STEPS

How can we share Jesus' message with others? Let first practice together. Have everyone pair up and give them 2 minutes to share with their partner about Jesus. Then switch. Afterwards, debrief and ask everyone how it went. Then everyone come up with one tangible step they want to take this week to share Jesus' message (maybe pick 3 more people you know to practice sharing Jesus' message, or invite someone who doesn't know Jesus to church with you, or share Jesus' message with someone who doesn't know it).

PRAYER GUIDE

We'll close our time tonight by praying for God to help prepare us to share His message with others. Ask your students to share any prayer requests, and close together in prayer.