

How many disciples are there and what is their occupation?

There are more than 12 disciples and not all of them fished.

Disciples are not just people who follow Jesus. In fact there were more disciples who despised Jesus than who followed him.

Disciples were all over Israel, in the temples, by the lake – some knew Jesus, some didn't.

Disciples have been around before the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah. In Hebrew the word for disciple is 'la-mud' meaning taught.

From the times that scriptures were taught, the stories told – before anything was written, disciples were being formed. In the times of Israel, being a rabbi – priest, teacher of the law, Pharisee – was the most respected position in society.

Which is why all young Jewish boys memorized the scriptures. I need to apologize for the gender exclusive language – but unfortunately, the girls in Jewish society did not get the same opportunities as boys. Sorry.

All the boys worked hard to know the stories. But not all became disciples...it was the special ones who asked questions and interpreted the scriptures, and challenged and tested the rabbi's – who were then invited to be a disciple.

This is why when Jesus was 12 years old, and in the temple *questioning* the rabbi's, they were all amazed, impressed at his interpretation... and he told Mary and Joseph – this is where I need to be! And it makes sense throughout the New Testament – when Jesus recites Old Testament stories – like everyone would know them – because they would.

All wanted to be disciples...few were chosen to accompany the rabbi's. The select that were chosen... hang around for maybe 18 years...until 30 when they become a rabbi/teacher/Master themselves. For years disciples will walk so closely to the rabbi so they are covered with the dust of his feet. To hang on his every word. Some young disciples even followed the rabbi into the men's room. You wouldn't want to miss any enlightening word!

And what about the also-rans? The second place or last place. What about the young boys who didn't make it as a disciple? (Wait for answer)

They returned to fishing, or carpentry, or the other family business. Because they didn't make the cut.

Bringing us to the story...people pressed in on Jesus – just like last week – but they are not here to hurl him off a cliff, or drown him – but they are once again amazed by his words.

And force Jesus into a boat, and out on the lake. But they get more than a Rabbi's teaching, more than a pastor's sermon. They witness the miracle.

This miracle is not about the amazing catch a fish. The real miracle is found in the call of the disciples... everyday, second class also rans. Sinful, unbaptized, fisherman, given a chance to preach and teach the good news. Ragtag nobodies – given status as ministers of God (walking alongside the Master, the Son of God!)

They already missed their chance. But the rabbi is calling them...now. Think of how they felt when they weren't chosen as young boys. Unworthy. Simon names his unworthiness to even be in the very presence as Jesus – Go away from me, Lord, I am a sinful man!" Not worthy to be a disciple...

Jesus still calls.

They hear, they see, they are called, they follow.

It is more than a new vocation...they are made worthy. After being cut from the team – they are elevated to starters. After being lost, they are found. After failing as fisherman, they will now fish for people.

I wonder what it looks like to be chosen as a disciple and to fish for people.

I'll be honest – I am horrible fisherperson. I get bored quickly, I don't set my hook well, I can't (won't) clean them. I'm not crazy about casting with around...probably because of the time Grandpa hooked Grandma in the neck while casting.

I fished with my friend Josh once...in the time he caught 40 bluegill, I caught 8. The best and biggest fish I ever caught was when I was 12...it was a bullhead. At the time I thought it was the “*awesome-ist*” fish EVER!

If being a fisher of people were our decision, I would probably decline because my gifts aren't in fishing. And if Jesus chose us based on ability...I probably wouldn't make the cut.

That is how we usually do ministry - match skills to a church function – you are good singer? Be in the choir – you are good at maintenance? Property! You are a banker? Help with Finance – Jesus calls in a much different way.

Jesus calls Peter, to “catch people” not because he will be good at it, but because Jesus can do it through him. When we recognize that we have nothing worthy to ministry of the church may be the very moment we see Christ using us in ways we can't imagine.

Because being a disciple is not our choice. And it isn't about our ability. Which is why this story is a miracle. Calling unworthy people to be God's disciples.

Peter and his partners are failures at their job, and, Jesus gives them salvation – defined as wholeness, worth, status, and purpose. Jesus takes the least of these – the excluded boys – and makes them disciples.

And it doesn't stop with them. There are more than 12 disciples.

Remember how memorizing scripture and becoming disciples were limited to boys? Guess what... this rabbi Jesus doesn't limit. Women are disciples too! Women and children – are also the least of these. So are the outcasted prostitutes, tax collectors, lepers, and blind etc. Jesus calls a bunch of unworthy failures to be disciples.

The net used fishing for people stretches wider, longer, and deeper than we can imagine. Because fishing for people, getting caught in God's net – is not a quiet solitude activity.

Fishing for people is a loud communal call...to be disciples...to be God's presence of grace, love, and forgiveness to others. To help people get caught in the wonder and awe of God's creation. To expand our attitude of mercy and inclusivity. To calm anxiety, when people fish for answers.

To teach God's story, by living God's story...where Jesus' comes to the lakeshore as salvation to the unworthy.

Helping others witness the miracle... that Jesus will do anything, through anyone. The miracle that Jesus has made everyone a disciple. Even us.