

Experts
[Luke 5:1-11](#)
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February 9, 2025

According to psychologists, there is a condition called the Dunning-Kruger effect, which sometimes happens when someone first starts learning a new skill or studying a new field. At the very beginning, when just getting started learning something, people tend to get overconfident about how much they understand their subject – you learn the basics so quickly that you start to think that this stuff is easy, you’re a genius, you’ve got everything figured out. But if you keep studying, pretty soon you discover that things are a little more complicated than you initially thought. You can learn the surface level really quickly, but the deeper you get into a topic, the more difficult things get, and pretty soon you realize you never really understood things at all, that you’re not an expert after all. If you keep studying, keep learning, keep trying to understand, eventually with a lot of work you might eventually master the topic you’ve been studying, but even then, you’ll still be aware of how much more there is to learn, how much further you have to go to become a true expert. But not everybody is willing to put in all that work. It’s a lot easier to just stay on the surface, to learn just enough about something so you think you’re an expert, instead of pushing through and finding out how much more there is to know. The real experts recognize just how much more they have to learn.

Keep that in mind when we read today’s New Testament reading from the gospel of Luke. Here we see Jesus at the very beginning of his ministry,

teaching and preaching on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Already the news is spreading about his amazing miracles, how he's healing the sick and casting out evil and teaching about the scriptures with authority, as if they belong to him, as if he wrote them, and so people have started to gather from all over Galilee, coming in the hundreds to see what he can do, to hear what he has to say. Very quickly, Jesus has become a celebrity, a great preacher, healer, and miracle worker. When it comes to drawing a crowd, Jesus is fast becoming an expert.

And when the crowds start getting too big and people start pressing in around Jesus, crowding him on the beach, Jesus makes a good decision. Sound travels well over water, and so Jesus recruits a few of the local fishermen who are just sitting on the beach washing their nets, and he asks them to take him out away onto the sea so he can be heard better by the crowds on the beach. Now, these fishermen are pretty tired – they've been fishing all night, trying to catch the schools of fish that come up to feed in the shallows before dawn, so this request is a bit of an imposition, but it's not that big a deal – they can repair and clean their nets just as well on the ship deck as on the beach, and it means that the crowds won't be getting in their way while they're trying to work, so they agree, they bring Jesus aboard and they let him use their ship as a makeshift pulpit, turning the lake into an amphitheater for this expert preacher to do what he does best. And then, when Jesus finally finishes his sermon and sends the crowds away, he turns to the fishermen and says, "Boys, thanks so much for the help. In return, let

me give you a little something. Take the boat back out into the deep water, and let down your nets.”

Now, this is a silly thing for Jesus to say. Jesus is not a fisherman. His father was a carpenter, and he probably has a basic set of skills in tools and craftsmanship, working with wood or stone. And he clearly knows a thing or two about preaching and teaching and how to draw a crowd. But he is not a fisherman. In all likelihood, this is the first time he’s ever even been on a boat. But these fishermen, this is their life. They’ve been doing this every single day since they were able to walk, like their fathers and grandfathers before them. They know this lake like the back of their hand. They know fish – they know where fish like to feed, what times they come up to the shallows and when they go back to the depths. They are the experts, and along comes this celebrity preacher who presumes to tell them how to catch fish. They know that going out at this point in the day is just a waste of time – all the fish are long gone by now. It’s no use. It’s pointless. They’re the experts, they know how to catch fish, and they know this Jesus guy has no idea what he’s talking about.

And yet, one of the fishermen, a man named Simon, decides to humour their guest. Simon knows they’re not going to catch anything – they were out all night doing everything right, and they still caught nothing, so they’re not going to catch anything now. But he still takes the boat a little further out, probably rolling his eyes and chuckling a little at this landlubber who thinks he knows what he’s doing, the guys on the other boats already ribbing him as he rows past. And then Simon throws out the nets, and starts to pull them

back aboard. But they don't move. Simon's nets are full, absolutely full to the brim, bursting at the seams. More fish than Simon has ever seen before in his entire life, more fish than he thought existed in the entire lake. So many fish they're spilling out of the net, and then lining up for their turn to jump back in. So many fish they're just leaping directly from the water into Simon's arms, looking up at him with an affectionate little smile as if to say, Cook me with a little lemon and butter, friend. I'm going to be delicious. And as fast as Simon and his partners can start pulling fish into the boat and throwing them down into the hold, more fish keep coming, they're everywhere, they're all around them, Simon is knee-deep, waist-deep, neck deep in fish, fish, more fish, more fish than the boat can hold. The whole ship is starting to sink from the weight of all this fish. More boats come streaming over to help, but there's too many fish even for them, as every living thing in the Sea of Galilee tries to crowd their way on board all at once. And in the middle of the panic and confusion, Simon looks over and sees Jesus. And he doesn't look surprised. He doesn't look worried. He looks like he's having a ball. And just when it looks like the entire ship is going to be dragged down to the bottom of the lake by this all you can catch buffet, Jesus just nods, and all the fish still out in the water look up at him, and nod back, and then they're gone. And Simon looks at Jesus, and in that moment he realizes that he is not the expert. Not about fish. Not about anything. This preacher he's been sharing a boat with is so much more than he ever imagined possible, he's so much bigger and stronger and wiser than anyone or anything that Simon has ever met. And standing next to Jesus, the weight of his own ignorance, his own inadequacy, it all comes crashing down.

Simon suddenly realizes how little he knows about the world, about himself, how small and insignificant he is compared to Jesus Christ. And he cries out, Lord, please leave me alone. I am such a sinful man. Simon thought he was an expert, and now he realizes how little he really knows, how little he understands about what the world is really like.

But Jesus doesn't listen to Simon's cry of despair. He wades through the pile of fish all around them, and smiles at Simon, and tells him, Don't be afraid. You're a fisherman. I'll teach you to fish for people. Right now, you feel inadequate. I'll help you grow. I'll show you how to become more than you ever thought possible. Simon thought he was an expert, and then he met Jesus and he realized how little he knew, but Jesus wouldn't let him stay in that ignorance and despair. Jesus promised to show Simon how to become something more, to learn and grow and become a disciple who could do so much more than just steer his boat and haul in his nets, a disciple who would share what Jesus gave him with the entire world, who would become the foundation for the church, who would one day change the course of history. First Jesus showed Simon how little he knew, and then Jesus showed Simon how much he could become.

And Jesus' promise to Simon and his friends there on the boat that day in Galilee, that's Jesus promise to us as well. All too often, we like to think that we are the experts at whatever we're doing, at this world we live in, we like to think we've got it all figured out. We want to think that we know how people work, we know what a good society should look like, what a successful life consists of, we know that money and prestige and possessions

are the determining factors that show the world around you've got what it takes. We even start to think that we have God figured out, that we know everything there is to know about the one who created the universe, that we are in charge of how God's kingdom operates and who is welcome in it. We so easily see ourselves as the experts who've got things all figured out. But inevitably, something comes along, and changes that. At some point we run into trouble we didn't expect, we come up against a challenge we just don't know how to handle, the world takes a turn when we're not ready and all of a sudden, all our so-called expertise just isn't any help anymore. All of a sudden we realize we aren't the experts, when all our wisdom and strength isn't enough to lift us up out of the trouble that we're in. And that's when Jesus Christ reaches out to us. When we're at the end of our rope, humbled by the truth of our own weakness, Jesus comes to us, and in the light of his presence and power, when all our earthly power is so inadequate for the trouble we're in, Jesus still speaks words of comfort and strength. Jesus refuses to leave us in uncertainty and despair, adrift, neck deep in fish, fully conscious of all our own shortcomings and unable to do anything about them. Jesus promises to teach us to see the world the way he sees it, to love the world the way he loves it, to know the truth about God's plan to bring in the kingdom of heaven so that we can share that good news everywhere we go, so that we can stop fishing for money and power and comfort and pleasure, and we can start fishing for people, start bringing the love of God out into the world around so that everyone we meet can have what we have, everyone we meet can encounter Jesus just like Simon did. And the more we learn about Jesus' love, the deeper we grow into knowledge of his plans for our lives, the

more we realize that there is still so much more to know. There's still so much more to learn. We're still not experts. We'll never be experts. But we can be disciples. We can follow the one who created us, who knows us inside out, who loves us without condition or reservation, the one who promises to use us to bring in a harvest that we never thought possible, to bless us with such abundance that our boats overflow. And as we follow him, we grow more and more to be like him, we learn more about his love, we are shaped by his grace each and every day. Every step of the way, we follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, we learn how little we know and how much more we have to learn, and every step of the way, Jesus teaches us who we're meant to be, so that we can change the world, so our joy will overflow. In the name of Jesus Christ – Amen!