
John 20:30-31

Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may *believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that *believing* you may have life in His name.

Before John continues on he takes a quick moment to remind us that he has not compiled a complete litany of all that Jesus said and did; rather, he wrote with a very specific purpose in mind and that is that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ—the Son of God. In fact, John’s entire gospel attests to the fact that Jesus is God in the flesh and all things, absolutely everything, happened according to the design and intentions of His Father in Heaven.

And if his testimony is true, and John attests to its accuracy (and all the cultural, political, and social dynamic also attests to its authenticity and lack of hyperbole in the descriptions of all that Jesus did) then it demands a response from you and me. What He did, no man has ever done—it was all supernatural—and what He did will never be replicated by any man. Thus, if Jesus is the Christ, then everyone is faced with a choice as to what they will do with this information—to either *believe* and live according to this truth or walk away and try and act like the implications for their life are not huge and absolutely cataclysmic.

John’s hope is that upon reading his account we would *believe* that Jesus is the Christ—yes, *believe*. He did not tell us to take this information and go and form a religion with all sorts of rules and requirements and duties to be performed in order that we might get right with Jesus. No, he just said that we need to *believe*.

We must never be persuaded into thinking that anything other than *belief* is the basis for our entire relationship with God—it is the foundation upon which all things are built. *Believing* is how we come to God; it is how we enter into a relationship with Him, it is how we experience Him, it is how we learn to trust ourselves to Him, and it is how we live in Him and let Him live in and through us.

Unfortunately, somewhere along the line this notion of “*believing*” has largely been overshadowed and in some instances even replaced by the notion that our Christian life is first and foremost about learning how not to sin and inversely learning how to discipline ourselves to be good and to do good things for God—even ministry. These replacements have the appearance of godliness and spiritual wisdom but are really of no eternal value whatsoever. They are just tenants of self-made religion and do not lead to life. Life is only found through *believing!*

John says we are to believe that Jesus is the Christ and in so believing we will find life in His name. Let’s address both of these concepts. First of all, we must believe that Jesus is the Christ. As we have studied, Christ is a title and is the Greek form of the Hebrew word Messiah, which means anointed. If we believe that Jesus is the Christ, the holy one who came from God, the anointed one, we will believe the following:

- In the beginning He already existed and was the *logos* or the living Word of God.
- He was in the beginning with God and He was God.
- He is the only one who has seen God and is the One who is near to the Father’s heart.
- He created everything there is and nothing exists that He didn’t make.

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- Life itself was in Him, and this life gives light to everyone. The light shines through the darkness and the darkness can never extinguish it.
 - The living Word became flesh; He literally became human and dwelt among men.
 - He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness.
 - He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!
 - He is the Son of God—the King of Israel!
 - He is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.
 - And that all who believe in Him and accepts Him, He gives the right to become children of God, even to those who *believe* in His name.

(This entire list comes from *John 1*). When it comes to believing (in the Biblical sense), it is important to understand that John is not simply talking about knowing these facts and intellectually or emotionally believing that they are true; He is talking about living as if they are true. Remember *James 2:19* says that even the demons believe and shudder, so knowledge and even experiential and emotional conviction is not the *pathway* to life.

You see, Biblical belief, or what we would call faith, is to be lived. Therefore, the question we are confronted with is this: If Jesus is the Christ, then how shall we live? The answer: we are to live by *believing*. We are to trust ourselves to Him in all things and for everything. Because, if He is the Christ, it means that you are not. Therefore, no matter how much you have swallowed the lie that you can be *like* God and that in you there is some goodness, you aren't and there isn't. That is why He is the one who gets the right to direct all the details of your life. In fact, if you

think about it, if Jesus is the Christ (full of unfailing love and faithfulness), who are you to even suggest, much less tell Him, how to manage your life? You are His child; you are not His parent. Besides, with those credentials (full of unfailing love and faithfulness, and the One who is close to the Father's heart) don't you think He will do a much better job of leading your life than you could ever do for yourself?

I know it often does not feel that way. I know that most everything about our physical existence tells us that God will not really be there for us all the time; so we often choose to step in and, from time to time, play the role of Christ—sort of a temporary fill. Now, when He does show up and make His presence in our life known it is wonderful and we love it and we thank Him, but since He is so often *seemingly* absent (at least from our perspective), we believe we must try and do His job. But understand when you do that you live as if you are the Christ; and, trust me, that is simply not the case!

Only the one who was always with God and is Himself God lives outside of time and knows the beginning from the end. Only He is the one who knows what our today and tomorrow holds. Therefore, only He is in the position to make the right decisions for our lives. We simply can't. That is why we are to believe that He is the Christ and let Him lead and care for every part of our lives. And believe me, He will do His job if you step out of the way and let Him be your Christ.

John says that it is in *believing* that we will have life for life is found when we are absolutely convinced that our spiritual existence is our true reality regardless of our physical and emotional experiences. Therefore, we must believe that Jesus is the Christ—that Jesus is our Christ—despite what He chooses to allow in our lives and chooses to allow us to either endure or to enjoy. What He lets in may feel wonderful or it may feel absolutely awful, but regardless it in no way diminishes the truth—He is our Christ and He loves us and He has allowed all things for His

purposes (which we know from *Romans 8:29-30* is to conform us into His own likeness).

When we choose to *believe* that His love is what we need and that His life is what we must have, we can actually start to experience life outside of our circumstances. This kind of living is powerful and entirely supernatural. This means that when things are bad we don't think freak out thinking He has failed to do His job, but we begin to see all things as good and as opportunities to see His glory shine in our lives as we trust Him through all of it. This also means that when things are good we don't get full of ourselves thinking that we are good and have somehow either deserved it or are entitled to it. Thus, when we find our life in Him we are not tempted to either curse God when things are bad or ignore God and live for ourselves when things are good.

Further, we also live free from the tyranny of our emotions. We no longer are tossed to and fro by everything we feel. We discover out how free we are to love others and to be a vessel through which His mercy and compassion are poured out. For example, as we studied the other week in *John 20:23*, we can forgive. A person's past offenses against us are literally wiped clean from our souls and their future offenses find no resting place; and even though it might hurt, we are totally free to love them and see them through the lens of their need to *believe* that Jesus is their Christ verses through our hurt feelings.

Think about what John said: "that *believing* you may have life in His name." Make this very personal. I live when I believe: that Jesus is the Christ, that He is my God, that He is my light and He is the one who has given me new life. He is the lover of my soul and therefore the only Hope of my soul. I am His son and He has proven it by giving me His Spirit to permanently dwell within me. He loves me as the Father loves Him. He desires me to know His Father's will and do only what

He asks me to do, I am never safer than when I choose to believe—choose to trust myself to Him—and thereby live in the center of His will for my life. He does not deal with me on the basis of sin since He is the lamb of God who died for the sins of the world; in fact, He *never* deals with me on the basis of sin. He is always faithful to me and I am never more loved than I am right now at this moment. His love is truly unfailing—it is safe, secure, stable, and poured out without limit or restraint. He came to give me His life in abundance.

John 6:47; 17:3

I say to you, he who believes has eternal life...This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

Eternal life experienced here and now is all about knowing Him, being intimate with Him—so:

Colossians 3:2-3

Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

He is your life. Set your mind on Him and you will experience eternal life and yes even a supernatural life; it's all found and discovered in Him. He is life, He is joy, He is Peace, He is our provision (He is our bread and our living water), He is our abundance, and He is our glory. He is everything! Do you believe?

After John makes this remarkable statement, He gives us another story which is intended to demonstrate to us that Jesus is the Christ and once again compel us to *believe*—to live the truth!

John 21:1-14

After these things Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and He manifested Himself in this way. Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will also come with you." They went out and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing.

But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. So Jesus said to them, "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" They answered Him, "No." And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch." So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea.

But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net full of fish. So when they got out on the land, they saw a charcoal fire already laid and fish placed on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have now caught." Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn.

In both *Matthew 28:10* and *Mark 16:7* we find that in Jesus' discussion with Mary at the tomb He had told her to tell the other disciples to leave for Galilee and that they would see Him there. So John opens up this story with the disciples at the Sea of Galilee (also known as Tiberias). Then John gives us a list of 5 names and references 2 other people, for a total of 7. However, he does not just say that there were 7 of us and for some reason he does not include the names of the other two. But he lists Peter, Nathanael (whom we were introduced to back in chapter 1 where Jesus referred to him as an honest man, a true son of Israel), Thomas the twin (the same Thomas who insisted on touching Jesus hands and sides before he would believe in the resurrection) and the sons of Zebedee who were James and John (the same John who wrote this gospel).

I have a theory as to why he mentioned only these 5 names and not the other two, and we will get into that, but I am fascinated by the numbers. It reminds me of *John 6* and the miracle of 5 loaves and 2 fishes as it communicates, in so many ways, the same message. This story is a demonstration of man's complete inability and God's total ability. It describes the division between the flesh and the Spirit and between those who believe and those who continued in their unbelief. Let's refresh our understanding of these numbers.

The number 5 has a dualistic meaning: on the one hand, it means man's absolute weakness and on the other hand it means God's grace and His perfect provision for man's weakness. The number 2 also has a dualistic meaning. There are times it means union but more often than not it represents division. If you want all the details that support these meanings I explained it pretty exhaustively in *John 6 verses 1-15* which you can listen to from our website.

Before we jump into the number 5, let's consider why there are 2 unnamed disciples. I believe these 2 did not get named because they represented a division

between those who believed (and who are named) and those who still did not believe (those who were unnamed). I arrive at this conclusion because in *Matthew 28* we are told of an event which occurred shortly after the events in this story where Jesus appeared to all the disciples:

Matthew 28:16-17

But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful.

So I think John was letting us know that these two unnamed disciples were part of those who, despite the 2 prior times that Jesus manifested Himself to the group, still waivered in unbelief. We will also see that this introduction sets the stage for the division throughout the story between efforts which are done in the Spirit and those done in the flesh.

So why 5? John did not want us to in any way miss the overwhelming message represented by the 5 who believed and that is their abject inability which stands in stark contrast to God's ability to come through with abundantly more than they could ever ask or think. And, although these 2 groups may initially seem divided, when you add 5 and 2 the summation is 7, which is the hallmark of the Holy Spirit's work and denotes perfect completion. In other words, the Spirit will soon convince the unbelieving disciples that Jesus is the Christ. (History tells us that is exactly what happened. From the day of Pentecost onward, all of the original disciples were full-on for the Lord.) Once again, the 5 and the 2 indicates man's weakness is made strong, and man's unbelief is turned into belief, by the grace and mercy of the Spirit of God.

So let's dive into the story. The disciples were sent to Galilee and they were waiting around for Jesus to show up so Peter gets a little antsy and decides to go fishing and the others decided to join him. A lot has been made of this as if Peter, after his failure, was returning back to his old life or somehow had decided that he needed to fish to provide for his family. I'm not so sure, it is just as likely that he was bored of waiting and wanted to fish to pass the time.

But either way the symbolism is clear, he had been called to be a fisher of men and having been *set aside* for this purpose everything had changed. He did not know it at this time but nothing in his life was ever going to be the same and nothing was ever going to work in the same way. It's as if upon receiving his calling the natural rules of the world were suspended and things were only going to work when he was about his calling. Hence, they fished all night and they caught nothing, zero, zilch. It was all wasted effort.

Personally, in my own life, I have found this to be true with a vengeance. Retrospectively, I can see God's hand all over my life diligently working to convince me both that I belong exclusively to Him and He has set me aside for His purposes. This is a truth in which He has wanted me to choose to live. As I started to comprehend this and understand what He had been doing in my life over all these years, I realized that He was very jealous of my time, my attention, my focus, and all my efforts.

Therefore, He has literally let nothing else in my life succeed except for when I am doing exactly what He has "*set me aside*" to do. It does not matter what it is that I venture off into (even certain forms of ministry), He just finds a way to crush it, stop it, corrupt it, or just have it fade away (especially when it comes to finding ways to practically provide for my family). It has been so weird and confusing especially given the heavy burden I carried (emphasis on I) to provide for my

family and so on, not understanding that since I belonged to Him it was actually His responsibility to care for me and my family, and not mine at all.

In His jealousy for me He would only have it His way. He would not let me be satisfied or even occupied by anything or anyone other than Him. So no matter how long I fished, not matter how skilled I was at fishing, no matter what people I knew or tools I employed, I always caught nothing—the net always came up empty whenever I threw it on the left side of the boat.

Back to the story; it was early in the morning and all was dark. Jesus stood on the beach; yet, the disciples could not see that it was Him. Again, in this detail I see a picture of how we are in darkness whenever we do anything which does not derive from the Father's will for our lives. And when we are in that place of shadows and darkness, we often don't even see Jesus or understand that it is Him when He talks to us. You see they were supposed to be waiting for Jesus to show up, waiting for another supernatural encounter with the risen Lord. But it seems that they got tired of waiting and in their busyness they were distracted and could not see the Lord.

Waiting seems to be one of the hardest things for all of us. We want everything now and if we don't get it now we go and try and make something happen in our lives even if it is settling for second or third best, as long as we are doing something. This gets incredibly tricky especially when are busy doing "Christian" things and "serving" the Lord. It is so easy to be deceived by our own efforts and so hard for us to sit still and be focused on the Lord merely listening, yearning, and waiting. After all, waiting is totally in opposition to our cultural dna and this is a real problem since one of the Lord's favorite tools to teach us why we need to get out of the way and depend only on His wisdom, is waiting.

Proverbs 8:34-35

Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at my doorposts. "For he who finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord.

If they would have truly believed, *actively believed*, that at any moment Jesus would appear, Jesus would have found them waiting and ready to receive His wisdom. That is how I want to always be and how I want you to always be: waiting and ready.

The good news is that even when we blow it, Jesus still fulfills His commitments to us. First of all, He shows up and meets us where we are. Notice that He did not go to the house or some other place where they should have been and copped a squat and waited for them to decide to call it quits and leave the boat behind. Rather, He went out to them; He stood at the sea shore and called out to them. And that is what He does for us. When we find ourselves not living as if He is present with us every moment of our day and we start being distracted and venturing into darkness, He calls out to us and asks us to follow His leading.

In addition, I want you to notice that Jesus did not stand on the shore and say: "Hey dummies. What are you doing out there? I am over here. I told you to wait for me; I did not tell you to go fishing." No; He stood there with a heart and desire to surprise them, bless them, and totally blow their minds. However, in His customary sarcastic way, He calls them children. This is a bit humorous because in the Greek He literally calls them infants or "little ones," which perfectly captures their spiritual maturity. So even though He is ready to bless them beyond measure, He still always deals in truth and calls a spade a spade.

But with that said, He does not deal with them on the basis of sin. They blew it; they were supposed to be waiting yet He does not even mention it. He moves forward from there and just blesses them, and shows them that life is found in Him and nothing is found outside of Him.

I also think it's a bit comical that they are out there fishing and striving to catch something yet Jesus already has breakfast prepared. He knows their needs and He already made provision. But they are absolutely clueless. If they would have just waited they could have been sitting around a warm fire eating a good breakfast enjoying fellowship with Jesus. Isn't this the way it always is. If only we would be willing to wait and seek and continue waiting until He appears and talks to us, we would find that Jesus always show up, provision in hand.

When Jesus asks them if they have caught anything, I think He was again being just a tad bit sarcastic. He knew they caught nothing; He just wanted them to make a connection between their effort and nothingness and His word and abundance. He told them to cast their net on the right-side of the boat saying that they will find a catch, which again I think is so funny. The right side as opposed to the wrong side—the right side is always found when we do things His way and follow His word—even if what He asks us to do seems nonsensical. The wrong side is always found when we do anything from our own initiative—our own efforts.

So they did what he said and the nets were suddenly filled. They were so heavy that they could not even haul in the catch. I am sure the scene was hilarious. They were probably freaking out not even understanding what just happened. But I think this event triggered in John a memory of an earlier, very similar, episode which we have recorded in *Luke 5*. When Jesus first called Peter, John and Andrew they had been fishing all night and had caught nothing but when Jesus told them to push out

into the deep water and drop their nets the nets were suddenly exploding with fish. So John instantly recognized that the man on the shore had to be Jesus.

John then gives us an interesting detail about Peter's attire. Peter was in his skivvies, which was the appropriate attire for fishing, and he puts on his outer garment and then jumps into the water and swims to Jesus. From a swimming perspective it was not very practical, but John points this out to complete the picture for us. Since Peter was not doing what Jesus had told him to do, he was in his flesh standing "practically" naked. But as soon as he resets his eyes on the Lord he realizes that he needs to be clothed. You see Peter was called to fish for men, not fish, and in order to fish for men he needed to be clothed in the Spirit.

This gives us an awesome picture of what it is like when we live in the flesh and not in the Spirit; we are practically naked. And before we can fellowship with the Lord we must be willing to clothe ourselves with the Spirit. It also paints for us the reality that God does not deal with us on the basis of sin. Peter just needed to put back on his garment and jump in the water and head to Jesus. There was nothing else he needed to do. He did not need to be embarrassed, feel ashamed, be filled with remorse, try to make up for it, punish himself, or do anything of the sorts; Peter just needed to stop doing what he was doing in the flesh and move forward in the Spirit. And I love it, Peter jumped in without hesitation; he wanted to be with Jesus.

When we find ourselves in a similar place of having spent any time in our flesh, we must remember that nothing else is required but to stop and move in the opposite direction—move toward Jesus—that's it—turn and go!

The number 2 once again comes into play in the contrast (or the schism) between Peter and the other 6 (which interestingly enough is the number of man).

Peter wanted to be with Jesus and he was going to get to Him as fast as possible. I can just picture the excitement in his face when John told him who was standing on the shore, but the others thought the catch was a little more important. At this point in time these 6 “little children” still wanted what Jesus could give them more than they wanted to be with Him. Their hearts were focused on the things of man not the things of God.

Can you imagine, God showed up on the shore and they were like, umm, just a moment, we got to get these fish, there’s so many of them. God, yes, the creator of the universe, was standing only 100 yards away and they were focused on the fish and never even left the boat. They even dragged their boat back to the shore with net in tow. To me that is unbelievable; but, at the same time, it is exactly what we all tend to do. It’s sad that we still find ourselves, at times, looking for what God is going to do *for us*, with us, and through us and we forget that He is our life and that our true need is not for what He gives us but for Him. Remember, He is our Christ—He is our life—and it is intimate fellowship with Him that we need!

So when they got to shore they saw the charcoal fire, the fish Jesus had prepared and bread—complete provision had been made (not just the protein but the carbs as well). Then He told Peter to go and bring some of the fish they caught and Peter obeyed, but this time it was different. Peter went and gathered fish because of the word of the Lord. The catch was extreme and ordinarily would have burst the net, but because it was according to Jesus’ word and it was His provision, the net held together and Peter got to have the fun of bringing in the catch.

Do you understand that this story was a practical rendition of the teaching we find in *John 15:5*? "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing." Understand; the disciples would soon be sent out into the world to preach the gospel and to fish

for men. Therefore, Jesus wanted them to have a life lesson so that they would always remember that if they went out into the sea of humanity and put in all this good work trying to fish for men, they would end up with nothing. Their nets would be empty and they would be naked, sweaty and tired.

But if they were to drop their nets only *where* He would tell them, and only *when* He told them, they would bring in a great catch. People would supernaturally make it to shore and they would get the privilege of bringing some of those people to Jesus. And it is in the obedience of *believing* that Jesus is the Christ that they would find the desire and strength to wait on the Lord and fish only *where* He tells them to fish and only *when* He tells them.

And in the obedience of *believing*, they would receive their reward: times of deep intimate fellowship with Jesus. They would dine with Him and partake in the provision that He had ready and waiting.

John 21:12-14

Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples ventured to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and the fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead.

I love it when He says: "come and have breakfast." Those are beautiful words. But He did not just call them to have breakfast He served them the bread and the fish. God not only provided but God also served. He gave them the bread to eat (which represents Himself—the bread of life) and that which would come from the

sea (the men and women who would give their lives to Jesus). These disciples, now knowing that they were with their Lord, were able to just enjoy His presence and fully enjoy His provision.

Everything we need comes from His hands, which is why we are to always wait for Him and for His instruction. Even the harvest in which we get to participate, the men and women whose lives we are privileged to touch, come at His command and not as a result of our efforts. We just get to be there to participate in the fun if we listen to *when* and *where* He wants us to cast our net. As we listen, as we follow His instructions, we also get the privilege of enjoying deep intimate fellowship of His presence knowing that He has provided for all that we need.

As far as the 153 fish, I don't think there is anything crazy in that number other than it being a big number. I think the number was included in order to convince us that the writer of this gospel was one of the 7 and an eye-witness to these events. I believe this is the same way the writer of this gospel tells us that Jesus cooked the fish over a charcoal fire (not a wood fire, but a charcoal fire). John gives us this detail so we can be convinced that his testimony is true. After all, only an eye-witness would have such mastery over the most miniscule of details. And, since there were only 7-people there that morning, it is not too hard to conclude, as we have done several other times, that the disciple whom Jesus loved is none other than John, one of the sons of Zebedee.

This was the 3rd time that Jesus manifested Himself to the whole group of disciples but it was actually the 7th time that He had manifested Himself after He arose from the dead. 3 and 7: perfect and complete, as always!

Let's Pray