

The Secret Of Fruitful Service

John 21:1-14

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When a person becomes a believer in Jesus Christ, the first thing that happens to them is that they are born again. They have what we call salvation, and I might say that is God's work for me, Jesus died on the cross, we saw that in John 20, and so we come to be saved. The second work that God wants to do is not for me but in me and that we call sanctification. Sanctification is a lifelong process. It starts the moment you are born again or saved or justified, and the goal of that is Jesus making you more like Him. The third thing that God wants to do, and this is a lot of times forgotten in the Christian life, that is, service. We have salvation, sanctification, and service. Service is God's work not for me or in me but through me. God saves us by His grace, He sanctifies us by His Spirit, and He uses us for His glory.

Tonight I want to look at that subject of not salvation or sanctification, but I want to talk to you about the subject of service based on this historical narrative passage of the resurrection of Jesus and His post appearance there on the Sea of Galilee. I believe that every Christian should have a desire to be used by God. I'm of the opinion that if you're a Christian and you don't want God to use you, then I have to question your salvation or certainly your understanding of what it means to be a believer in Jesus Christ.

When I came to the Lord, it was the summer of 1972 actually, and God just put in my heart this desire to be used of God. That's all that I had, "I just want God to use me. I want to be used any way that God wants me to be used." I just had this passion to be used by God, then whatever doors God opened for me to serve, I just got busy serving in the Lord's work, and God has led me one step at a time my whole life through.

I want to give you some of the secrets found in this passage. The background for them are found in this story of Jesus appearing to His disciples on the Sea of Galilee. I want to give you some background principles on the secret of being fruitful in our service for God. The first thing that we need to learn, and the principle we draw from verses 1-2, is that God uses ordinary people. If you want to write this down, make a note of that—God uses ordinary people. Look at John 21:1-2. John says, "After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise," or this way, "shewed he himself. 2 There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples," that John, for some reason, doesn't really name.

Notice in verse 1, "After these things," that's a common phrase you find in the Bible, and it's not too hard to figure out what it means. It means, "After these things." What things? Backing up into John 20 where Jesus has been buried, resurrected, appeared to Mary, the other disciples, Thomas absent, and then Thomas shows up and sees the risen Lord. At the end of John 20, I want to draw your attention again to it in verses 30-31, we have John's purpose statement for his gospel. In that purpose statement he says, "And many other signs," that's one of the keys to the book of John, pointing to His deity, seven miracles, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in

the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: 31 But these are written,” or recorded, “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” That’s the reason John wrote his gospel. Immediately after that statement we have then in John 21:1, “After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias,” don’t let this confuse you, the “sea of Tiberias” is another name for the Sea of Galilee.

The Sea of Galilee is in the northern region of Galilee. If you look at a map of Israel, and the map runs north and south, you have in the north of the map in the land of Israel the Sea of Galilee. It’s really a freshwater lake. It’s about 13 miles long and about 8 miles wide. It’s kind of an upside down pear shape. At the bottom, out runs the Jordan River, and then it runs down through the land into the Dead Sea. You can look at a map and familiarize yourself with that, but here it is known as the “sea of Tiberias.”

How many of you received the little handout tonight? I hope you received it. If you didn’t, then ask for your money back, you got gypped when you came to church. I promised you this last week. I believe that there’ll be some on the counter in the Connection Booth as you leave, so you can grab these. I got a hold of this many years ago. It has really been a great resource for me, and I wanted to make it available to you. It lists the twelve post-resurrection appearances of Jesus in chronological order. It starts with Mary Magdalene; secondly, to the other women; thirdly, to the disciples on the road to Emmaus; then Simon Peter. Fifth, was to the disciples with Thomas absent; sixth, is to Thomas and the other disciples; the seventh is where we come tonight in John 21, to the seven disciples by the Sea of Galilee. The eighth is to more than five hundred brethren at once, 1 Corinthians 15:6; ninth, to James; tenth, to the eleven with the Great Commission; twelfth, was to the disciples on Olivet, Acts 1, when He ascended back into heaven; and last, but not least, 1 Corinthians 15:8, He appeared to the Apostle Paul who said he was born out of due season. You can just kind of file that in your Bible, take it home, put it in a safe place, and you have a list in chronological order of the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus Christ.

“After these things Jesus shewed himself again,” but this time at the Sea of Galilee or Tiberias. “There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.” The point I want to make is that in this context Jesus had told His disciples, “I will meet you in Galilee.” He said, “Just wait for Me, hang out for Me.” He didn’t tell them to go fishing, which was their favorite pastime and their profession in Galilee, but He said just to wait there for Me.

I want you to note the disciples that are named, and this is my point, God uses ordinary people. There are three that I want to point out. There was actually Simon Peter, Thomas, and then the sons of Zebedee, which are two more individuals, James and John, the author of this book of the Bible. You say, “Well, what’s the significance there?” The significance there is that these are ordinary run-of-the-mill human beings. God uses ordinary people.

Think of Simon Peter. Simon Peter was the apostle jokingly we say that had the foot-in-mouth

disease. He was always opening his mouth, saying something stupid, sticking his foot in his mouth. In Caesarea, they have a place where they said they found Peter's house. I sometimes jokingly say, "I don't know how they know it was Peter's house unless they found the sandal with bite marks on it," or something like that, because Peter was always putting his foot in his mouth. He was always impetuous, always running ahead, and we know that Peter denied the Lord. We're going to see next Wednesday night in John 21 that Peter is actually restored, not only to fellowship but he's restored to service. Peter crashed. Peter fell. Peter denied the Lord. Peter was frail. Peter had faults, but God used Simon Peter. There's hope for us. Amen? If God can use Simon Peter, God can use you and me, someone just like us.

Then there's Thomas, called Didymus. The word Didymus actually means twin, so it indicates that he had a twin brother (who is never seen on the pages of Scripture but he evidently had a twin brother). Again, think about Thomas. He is known as doubting Thomas. The Bible doesn't call him doubting Thomas, preachers call him doubting Thomas, but he is somebody that is always looking on the negative side. Remember when Jesus was told that his friend Lazarus was sick, Jesus knew he was dead and wanted to go back to Judea there to help him, Thomas said, "Well, they're going to try to kill You there." Jesus wanted to go anyway, so Thomas said, "Well, let's all go and just die together with Him." He was kind of like the Eeyore of the disciples, always looking on the negative side. After Jesus was resurrected and appeared to the other disciples, Thomas absent, they said, "Thomas, the Lord was here! You should've been here." Thomas said, "I'm not going to believe unless I see the nail prints in His hands and thrust my hand into His side." Thomas is a doubter. He lacked faith.

Simon Peter faltered and failed, Thomas had a problem with believing and trusting in God, and take these two sons of Zebedee. Do you know the nickname that these two guys were given? The Sons of Thunder, you know the story. When Jesus was going to go through Samaria, the Samaritans, who didn't like Jews, would not let Jesus pass through. It was James and John, actually the writer of this gospel, that said, "Lord, we've got a plan. Would You like us to call down fire from heaven and roast them," this is a paraphrase, "on the spot?" They wanted to go witnessing with a flamethrower. They were going to fry these guys, and Jesus said, "Look, you don't know what manner of spirit you are of. I haven't come to destroy men's lives, I've come to save them," and I'm sure that Jesus was thinking, How did I ever pick these guys, anyway? What a bunch of flakes. Sons of Thunder, but as I look at that I think, You know what? God uses ordinary people.

Write down 1 Corinthians 1 where the Word says there that God uses not the wise, the mighty, or the noble; but God uses the weak, God uses the base, God uses the despised. And, He tells us why—so that no flesh will glory in his presence. I believe that God wants to use you. You say, "Yeah, but I've stumbled, I've fallen," so did Peter. You say, "Well, I have a hard time trusting God," or "I lack faith," so did Thomas. You say, "Well, I do silly things," or "I make mistakes," so did James and John, but God used them and loves them. God uses frail, humble, broken vessels, and He does it for His glory.

God used Moses, and Moses had a stutter. God said, "Moses, I want you to go to Pharaoh."

Moses said, "Send someone else. I can't speak." Maybe your excuse tonight is, "I'm not an eloquent speaker. I don't know how to talk very well." God used David, and David had a great sin in his life. God used Gideon, and he was afraid and fearful, yet God came to Gideon and used him in a mighty way. You say, "Well, that doesn't really encourage me. I can't identify with Moses, Gideon, or David." Maybe this illustration will encourage you. God used Balaam's donkey. There's hope for you. If God can speak through a donkey, God can speak through you. Amen? There's hope for you. God doesn't look for intelligent people, He doesn't look for people who are powerful and influential, He looks for people that are available. He's not looking for ability, He's looking for availability. Tonight you can ask God, say, "God, here I am, weak, frail, faulting, and falling, but use me." God wants to use you to minister to others.

Warren Wiersbe has written an excellent little book. If you haven't ever read it, it's called *On Being a Servant of God*. He says, "Ministry takes place when divine resources meet human needs through loving channels to the glory of God." That's one of the best summary definitions of what it means to minister that I've ever heard. Ministry takes place when God uses us to meet human needs, those divine resources flow through us, and we're doing it in love for the glory of God. God has a purpose in wanting to use you.

How is God glorified in our service? Before I move to my next point, I want you to just write these thoughts down. First of all, when God uses you, and it's unexplainable and only God is obviously the One doing the work, then it's for the glory of God. "When you can explain it," someone said, "God didn't do it." When God uses you, He uses you for His glory. That's why He has chosen the foolish things, weak things, base things, despised things.

When we get to verse 7, we're going to see the disciples all of the sudden discover that the stranger on the shore of Galilee is the Lord, and John actually says, "It's the Lord." When God is using you for His glory, people are watching or they're recipients of the ministry that God has given you, that's what they say, "It's the Lord."

Secondly, God is using us for His glory when people see Jesus, not us. In Matthew 5:16 Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Ministry is never about us, or us getting glory or credit, it's all about God being glorified.

Thirdly, God is glorified when your service produces spiritual fruit. We want our service to be spiritual fruit. In John 15:8 Jesus said, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." Now, there is a difference between results and fruit. There are a lot of people serving the Lord. A lot of churches have results, but they're man-made manufactured things. They're not the fruit of the Holy Spirit. We want God's Spirit to be working through God's servant for God's glory. The difference is: results glorify man and don't last but fade away, fruit glorifies God and is eternal. When you think in terms of God using your life, you want to think in terms of, I want spiritual fruit for the glory of God so that it will have an eternal affect and bring eternal reward. Let God use you for His glory.

The second principle or lesson that we see in this story around Lake Galilee is in verse 3; that is, when God uses us, we need to understand that without Jesus we can do nothing. First, God uses ordinary people, but without Jesus we can do nothing. Notice verse 3, "Simon Peter saith unto them," now this is Peter talking to the other disciples and makes this profound statement, "I go a fishing." If you're a fisherman tonight, you love this verse. It's in the Bible. Peter says, "I'm going fishing." The rest of the guys said to him, "We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship," or boat, "immediately," and notice what it says at the end of verse 3, "and that night they caught nothing," awesome fishermen.

I am not a fisherman, I solemnly confess. I have nothing against fishing. I think it's kind of stupid, but I think some guys that I used to know want to go fishing so they could sleep all day. They drop their line in the water, they don't care if there's any bait on it or if it's the right hook, they just want to close their eyes and go to sleep, and they call that sports fishing. I never could figure that out.

Peter was a fisherman. He grew on the Lake Galilee, and that was what he did professionally. Here's the point I want to make: Jesus specifically told them to wait for Him. He didn't say, "Go fishing." He actually said, "You're going to be fishers of men," but He didn't tell them to go fishing. Peter, I believe, was being, again, impetuous, running ahead of the Lord, not being led by the Lord, not in the purpose and plan of the Lord, but you know how difficult it no doubt was for them. It was probably one of those warm, sunny, hot days. They're lying on the beach, you can hear the waves lapping on the shore, and you can smell the water. It's not saltwater, it's freshwater, but as I think about the ocean and the nice warm high pressure offshore flow, I can see the waves, hear the waves, smell the waves, and I can't tell you how hard it is for me many times, not that I go fishing but I go surfing. It's like I can smell it, I can taste it, I can feel it, I gotta get in the ocean. Peter, being a fisherman, just had to go; so he runs off, the rest of the disciples jump in the boat, and they go off all together.

I believe John records this, and only John records this, because of the lesson he wants us to learn—they caught nothing. Why this night of no success? Why this night of fruitless toil? This is one of the nights of fishing. On the Lake Galilee it was very common for them to go out in their little boats and actually have torches and flames on them. You would see the lights of the torches on the lake at night as they were throwing their nets and fishing in the Sea of Galilee. Why did John record this fact that they went out all night and caught nothing? Well, I believe that it wasn't a lack of effort or lack of ability. They tried hard and knew what they were doing. They were excellent fishermen, but the answer that I come up with, and I believe is the case, is that it was God's providential purpose and plan for them. You say, "Well, what are you talking about?" I believe that God was trying to show them that without Him guiding them, directing them, leading them, empowering them, and without being in the plan and the purpose and design of God for their lives that their lives would be pictured as this night of fruitless toil.

The only life that bring everlasting rewards is the life of service to God, so I believe that this night of empty nets was actually planned and purposed by God. I don't care how good a fishermen they were, that night on Lake Galilee every fish in the Sea of Galilee was directed by

the Lord away from their boat. When the Lord doesn't want you to catch anything, guess what? You won't catch anything. We used to have a group of men go fishing from our church in San Bernardino. Sometimes they would go and spend all night out there on the water and come back. I can't tell you how many times when they came back I said, "How many fish did you get?" They said, "Oh, well, never mind. We didn't get any." They get sick, it's no fun, they catch nothing, and they pay to do that. I could never figure that out. I believe that God providentially had His hand on Peter and the others in order for them to understand that without Him they would do nothing.

Let me read to you at length a quote from F.B. Meyer on this point. He says, "It is his love which is arranging all, in order to teach you some of the sweetest, deepest lessons that ever entered your heart. There is not a cross, a loss, a disappointment, a case of failure in your life, which is not arranged and controlled by the loving Saviour, and intended to teach some lesson which else could never be acquired. Fitfully, curiously, without apparent art or fixed design, is the web of our lives woven; thread seems thrown with thread at random, no orderly pattern immediately appears; but yet of all that web there is not a single thread whose place and colour are not arranged with consummate skill and love." I love that. God is actually using the circumstances of our lives to train us, to prepare us, and to teach us. I'm convinced after all my years of ministry that God is more concerned with the servant than with the service. God is more concerned about you than what you do for Him, so don't get sidetracked in your walk and relationship with Him and building godly character into your life by the Word of God and the Spirit of God because it doesn't really matter what you do for God, what matters is what God does in you. It starts with salvation, then you must have sanctification, and then out of that flows service. You can't reverse the order, so you have to become more like Jesus to be used for His glory.

So often God uses our failures as the back door to success. Did you know that failure can be the back door to success? You say, "I tried to witness, and it didn't work," or "I tried to teach the Sunday school class, and it didn't work," and "I tried to lead a prayer group, and it didn't work." Sometimes God uses our failures to teach us a lesson of dependence and need for Him. Many times God uses our failures to wean us of self-sufficiency and pride. It keeps us humble in a place of dependence on Him. One of the reasons I believe God allowed Paul to have a thorn in his flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him, was to keep him humble and to keep him usable. God wasn't trying to punish Paul, God was trying to keep Paul humble so that Paul could be usable. Verse 3, "...they caught nothing." Jesus said in John 15, "...for without me ye can do nothing." We need to remember that.

Here's the third lesson that we learn or principle we can draw. The background for it is in verses 4-6, that is, we need to let Jesus direct and empower our service. Let Jesus direct and empower our service. Let's read the story. "But when the morning was now come," this is one of the night scenes in the Bible. By the way, right now I'm preparing a series that I'm excited to do in the near future called, "Night Scenes of the Bible." We're going to go through and look at all of the night scenes of the Bible, and this is one of them. Verse 4, "But when the morning was now come," they had caught nothing all night, "Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples

knew not that it was Jesus.” After a night of fruitless toil, the sun is starting to come up, they’ve had a lot of fun out there fishing all night (I’m saying that sarcastically), they come back to shore, and it’s going to be a new day because Jesus stood on the shore, verse 4. “...but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.” At this point in time, they don’t know. Maybe He is backlit with the sun coming up and all they can see is the silhouette and don’t know that it’s Jesus, “But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.”

Verse 5, “Then Jesus saith unto them, Children,” that’s a term of endearment, “have ye any meat,” or food? He was speaking of fish. “They answered him, No,” that’s the shortest answer they ever gave to Jesus when He asked a question. When you’re out all night fishing and catch nothing, you don’t want anyone to ask you what you caught. They just said, “Nope.” Verse 6, “And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore,” now, remember, this instruction given by the Lord, they didn’t know it was the Lord. They’re professional fishermen. They fished all night and caught nothing, and some stranger on the beach says, “If you throw your net on the other side of the boat, you’ll catch a bunch of fish.” Now, the boat was probably only about four to five feet wide at the most. If there’s no fish on this side, there’s no fish on this side, and being professional fishermen, you would think they’d say, “Hey, you’re crazy. You don’t know what you’re talking about,” but Jesus gives them that instruction. Jesus gives them a promise, “...and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.” That is such a cool story.

Not only does Jesus appear to His disciples, but He messes with them. I love this. He’s training them. He’s teaching them. All night they’re toiling and catch nothing, and early in the morning they’re coming to shore and Jesus is standing there, “Children, have ye any meat?” fish, “They answered him, No.” That’s all they said. They don’t want to talk about it. He says, “Cast your nets on the other side, and they’ll be full.” “Well, what have we got to lose?” They throw their nets on the other side, and they’re full. They can’t even drag in the nets at the initial stage, and it’s going to go on to say that there was 153 fish in their nets. Normally, the nets would have broken, but it was a miracle of God’s power.

After a night of fruitless toil, perhaps discouraged and ready to give up...I believe that many times God in His preparation of us as His servants allows us to fail to teach us our need of dependence on Him, and we never outgrow that lesson no matter how long you’ve walked with God, no matter how long you’ve served God. To use a familiar expression, God knows how to lovingly pull the rug out from under us to teach us that we need Him. Many times lying flat on our back, “Lord, help me!” and He says, “I’ll be glad to.” He needs to teach us that we need Him, so He comes to them and manifests Himself to them. Jesus, verse 4, shows up, and as I pointed out, they didn’t know it was Jesus.

Jesus does three things, I want you to see it in the text. The first thing He does is ask them a question. It’s interesting when Jesus asks questions. Another series that I’m planning on doing on Sunday mornings is, “Questions Jesus Asked.” Go through the New Testament and just find all the times Jesus asked questions, which is interesting because He was God in the flesh. He

didn't need to ask questions, so He would only ask a question because He wanted us to know the answer. He wanted to pull us out. How about when God asks questions? How about when Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden and God actually said, "Adam, where are you?" Did the omniscient God not know where Adam was? "Oh, no, I just made him and now I've lost him in the garden." No, He wanted Adam to know where Adam was. He wants you and me to know where we are.

How about when Cain slew his brother and God said, "Where's your brother?" God knew where his brother was, but He wanted Cain to face his own sin. I believe this question from the Lord to the disciples after the night of fruitless toil was to get them to realize, "Without You, Lord Jesus, we can do nothing. Our toil is fruitless, out of Your will, Your purpose, and plan for us." Jesus said, "Did you catch any food?" They said, "No. We haven't caught anything."

Secondly, Jesus gave a command after the question in verse 6. Notice the command, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." It's a command with a promise, if you throw the net on the right side. It really wasn't a question of right and left side, it was a question of wrong and right side. You had to be very specifically throwing the net where Jesus said to throw the net. That's why I've titled this lesson here that we want God to direct our service, and we want God to empower our service. We must be doing what God wants us to do, we must be doing it where God wants us to do it, we must be doing it how God wants us to do it, and we must be doing it for the glory of God. We need to go where He wants us to go, do what He wants us to do, be what He wants us to be, and say what He wants us to say. When we do that, our lives will bear fruit for His glory. We'll have fruitful service. Jesus issues a command. The Lord begins to direct and empower them. I love Romans 12, "...that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice...not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed," and we present our bodies as living sacrifices to obey His will.

The third thing Jesus does in verse 6, I want you to see it, is that He sent His blessing. "They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes." They obediently followed the Lord's words and guess what follows? Blessing. Blessings follow obedience. Now, we don't obey in order to be blessed, we obey because we love Him. When we do that willingly and wholeheartedly, God blesses us. I think it's so important that we simply say, "Lord, I want to live for You. I want to follow You. I want to obey You," and do you know what God will do? God will bless you. God will never be your debtor. God will never fail you. God will never disappoint you. God will never shortchange you.

Anyone in here tonight, I can promise and guarantee that if you surrender your whole life to the Lord to serve Him and to live for Him, you will have a wonderful, blessed, and fruitful life. If you go your own way and your own direction, live for yourself, step out of God's will and disobey Him, you'll have a heart aching life, a frustrating life, an empty and vain life. Your life will be wasted rather than invested in the Kingdom of God for the glory of God. Jesus said, "...Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." They were supposed to be fishing for men not for fish. When Jesus started to direct and guide them, and they obeyed His command, their nets were full, the Lord sent His blessing.

Lastly, in verses 7-14, we see the great discovery. Here we have the results, and we won't tarry long on it, but the discovery are the results of them obeying the Lord's direction and purpose for them. Notice verse 7, "Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter," and I love this statement, "It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,)" he was actually in his undergarment, "and did cast himself into the sea. 8 And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with the fishes. 9 As soon then as they were come to land, they saw," three things, "a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. 10 Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. 11 Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three," it's interesting, all the other disciples weren't able to drag it up; but Peter goes up, he's a big strong fisherman, and says, "Step aside, guys, I can handle this," and pulls up this large net full of fish, "and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken." Again, I believe this is reiterating that this was a miracle of God.

Verse 12, "Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord." They're eating breakfast with Jesus, and no one says, "Oh, by the way, are You Jesus?" No, no one is going to ask that question, that would be dumb. They knew it was the Lord. "Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise." John says, verse 14, "This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples," not the third time Jesus showed Himself, but the third time He showed Himself to specifically His disciples. You can look at the chart of the listing that I gave you. "...after that he was risen from the dead." John's whole main purpose in teaching this narrative was, again, that Jesus Christ who died, Jesus Christ who was buried, is the same Jesus Christ who is risen again from the dead. He's risen again.

It's interesting that they discovered several things, and I want you to write them down. First, they discovered His presence, verse 7, "...It is the Lord." Again, as I pointed out, when you're serving God as a loving channel of divine resources meeting human needs for the glory of God, people are going to say, "It is the Lord." Years ago, during the height of the Jesus movement here in Southern California when God was blessing Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa, Pastor Chuck Smith was there and thousands of young people were getting saved. Young hippies were getting saved, and Life Magazine and Time Magazine came to write about it. Everyone wanted to know, "What's the secret," you know, "Is it a hippie worship leader?" Churches wanted to borrow the hippie worship leader so that we could have a growing church. Or, "Was it the dove on the back wall?" or "Was it the green shag carpet?" you know. "Was it the drums on the stage? What's the secret of this move of God?" Pastor Chuck would always give a simple answer based on this statement here in John 21. He would say, "It is the Lord." That's all you can say. God using the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. Amen? All you can say is, "It's not that they have a lot of money, it's not that they're really smart, it's not that they're highly educated, that's for sure, it's that it's the work of God," so it was done for the glory of God. What they discovered when they obeyed God was His presence, "It's the Lord. He's in our ministry. He's working through our ministry, and He is being glorified."

It's interesting that John was the perceptive one that knew it was the Lord. Peter didn't know what was going on. I can imagine that John just kind of nudged him in the boat and said, "Peter, it's the Lord! Do you realize that Person on the beach right now that just said, 'Throw the nets on the other side,' that it's Jesus?" Peter just kind of freaked out, put on his coat, jumped in the water, and swam to shore.

Secondly, not only did they discover His presence, but they discovered His provision. Notice verse 9. This is one of my favorites. In verse 9, when they got to the shore, "...they saw a fire of coals there," it was early morning, probably cold, "and fish laid thereon, and bread." These fish on the fire were already there provided by Jesus. Isn't that cool? He didn't say, "Hey, give Me one of the fish out of your net," He does say, "Bring some of your fish," but at this point He has fish for them. He's in His resurrection body about ready to be sent back to heaven; but He is carefully and lovingly and thoughtfully feeding them, taking care of them, and meeting their needs. It's such a tender picture. Can you imagine in the early morning on the beach and you can hear the waves lapping on the shore, the fire crackling, heat coming off the fire, there's fish roasting on the fire and bread. They experienced His provision. Do you know that when God guides, God provides? When God is guiding and leading us, God provides for us. It's awesome that Jesus was providing for them, and I believe that when we're in the will of God doing the work of God that God will provide for us as well.

The third thing they experienced and discovered is in verse 12, they had His participation. Notice verse 12, "Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine." That phrase, if you were unaware of it, "come and dine" in the English Bible is literally come break fast. That's where we get the word breakfast from. The Jews only ate twice a day—they ate in the morning and in the evening. We eat every hour through the day. I was thinking about this today, forgive me, but I'm thinking, Okay, I pretty much eat all day long every day. They would just eat once in the morning and once at night. After the evening meal, and the night that they would sleep, they considered the first meal of the day breaking the fast, so it was called breakfast. That's actually what Jesus says here. He says, "Come and breakfast." I don't know about you, but I say, "Praise God! I'll come to breakfast." Jesus invites them for breakfast.

When I say they had His participation, they had His fellowship. Again, coming back to the concept of service, the lesson here for us in this narrative is that when we serve the Lord, we must live in fellowship with the Lord. It's easy to be busy serving God and out of fellowship with God. When that happens, you lose your joy, your peace, and you certainly lose a sense of God's power in your life. You have to be very guarded and careful. Yes, serve the Lord, but also realize that you have to rely upon Him, stay dependent on Him, stay in communion with Him, and stay in fellowship with Him. The word "fellowship" in the Greek of the New Testament is the word *koinonia*. That word means participation, so when we're serving the Lord, we want to be in fellowship with Him. We want to be in joint participation with Him—God working in us, and God working through us.

There are three things to remember. First, God uses ordinary people. That means you and I are candidates—people who have faults, people who fail, people who stumble, people who

make mistakes. God forgives, and we're going to see that in Peter next week. "Peter, do you love Me?" "Yes, Lord." "Okay, then go feed My sheep." Peter was forgiven, and Peter was restored back to ministry. Secondly, without Jesus we can do nothing. Let us never ever forget that it's all about Jesus. We can't do anything without being abiding in the vine. Thirdly, let Jesus direct and empower you—divine resources meeting human needs through loving channels to the glory of God. I cannot think of anything more important in this short brief life than saying, "Here I am, Lord, use me for Your glory." Amen?