

John 21:1-14

Aim of lesson

To show how Jesus gave his disciples further positive proof of his presence after his resurrection, and demonstrated his continuing care for them.

Background study

Matthew 26:32; 28:10; Luke 5:4-6; Acts 1:3. Study methods of fishing on the Lake of Galilee.

Suggested outline of lesson

Back to fishing on Galilee

Begin this lesson with questions and answers. "What did Peter, John and some of the other disciples do for a living before they met Jesus? What do you think they would do now that they needed to earn some money? Where did they fish? Where were they when Jesus first appeared to them after his resurrection?" At this point, you could refer to a map, showing first the position of Jerusalem and then Galilee and Tiberias, to which the Galilean disciples had now returned.

Ask whether anyone has seen fishing boats, or nets drying by the seaside, or seen a film showing fishermen casting nets from boats near the shores of the Lake of Galilee. If possible, show or draw appropriate pictures and describe the lakeside scene. Lead from this description to the story of Peter, tired of inactivity, declaring one evening his intention of going fishing, and his companions willingly accompanying him. Imagine their pleasure at pulling out once more on to the beautiful, familiar lake, and of handling the nets as they used to do. As the night progressed their enthusiasm waned and disappointment took its place, as again and again they pulled in the empty nets. Dawn broke, and tired and dispirited they prepared to return to shore.

Found by Jesus

Convey the drama of the situation when, in the half-light of dawn, they saw someone standing on the beach and heard a voice calling over the water: "Lads, have you any fish?" and telling them exactly where to cast their nets to find fish. Perhaps they looked questioningly at one another, remembering an earlier, similar occasion. Without comment, they cast the nets out again. This time they were overwhelmed by the result. It was John who first realized that the man on the shore who had performed the miracle was Jesus. Note Peter's characteristic impetuosity, which heightens the drama, as he rushed ahead leaving the others to follow with the amazing haul. The significance of the number one hundred and fifty three is unclear, but children find such details interesting. Perhaps they were counted for the purpose of equal distribution later.

Sharing fellowship with Jesus

The scene on the beach will appeal to the senses of sight, smell and taste. The disciples were tired and hungry, and the sight and aroma of a cooked breakfast must have been very welcome. In providing it, Jesus showed his love for them and his concern for their physical well-being. Their hearts would have been full because of the miracle they had witnessed and because of the reappearance of their Lord. How exhilarated they must have felt, to be sharing a meal with him again. Perhaps he reminded them of this earlier promise, that he would see them again in Galilee (Matthew 26:32), and used the opportunity to further their understanding of his teaching and the significance of his death and resurrection. Perhaps they were too over-awed to question him, but were happy to be in his presence.

Worksheets

These should be self-explanatory.

Prayer

Dear Lord God, thank you for teaching us two things about Jesus in this lesson - that Jesus is alive now, and that he cares for all those who follow him. Amen.

Memory verse

"After his suffering, [Jesus] showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive" (Acts 1:3, NIV)

Relevance to the children's lives

Can you say how you would have felt if you had been one of those disciples in the boat? How would you have felt when a stranger suggested, at the end of the night, that you cast the net again? How would you have felt when you saw the nets bulging with fish? How would you have felt when you returned to the beach and found Jesus waiting there with breakfast ready for you? What makes you feel certain that Jesus really is alive now?