

When I was in high school, I tried out for a role in play, and to my surprise, I made the cast! I was excited at first, until it dawned on me that I knew next to nothing about acting. It’s one thing to act like a goofball. That I could do. But to act on stage with everyone watching—much different setting. Fortunately, our director had lots of experience and he had us go through different exercises to help us improve. One exercise in particular sticks out in my mind.

The director split the cast up into pairs and then one of us was blindfolded. Our partner had to guide us through the book stacks in the library without hitting anything, using only words; turn left, turn right, stop, go. I got the blindfold first, and I was starting to reconsider this whole acting thing, but as my partner gave me good directions, my trust in that person began to grow. It was an exercise in trust and teamwork, things that were probably more important to the success of a high school play than the ability of any one actor. It was scary to let someone else lead me around, but trust was built as I followed the guiding words of my partner.

Have you ever wondered what went on inside of the men Jesus approached with the summons, “Follow me?” Have you ever wondered what moved them to answer the calling of the Lord? Getting personal now, would you say that you are following Jesus? In my high school blindfold scenario; in the case of Jesus’ disciples, and in your own life of faith, following and trust are closely linked.

In today’s gospel reading, you see Jesus establishing trust with Simon Peter, and he does it in two major ways. The first is this unlikely catch of fish that Jesus causes. It’s fascinating. After finishing his teaching from Peter’s boat (which means Peter *at least* heard Jesus talking), Jesus then enters Peter’s area of expertise and suggests something that frankly did not sound like it was going to work. It would be like me waltzing into a mechanic’s garage and offering tips about engine repair. For whatever reason, Peter responds respectfully, saying, “at your word I will let down the nets.” And to Peter’s shock, it works. It’s a record-breaking catch of fish. Net-breaking, too. Jesus’ weird suggestion works and works unusually well. Jesus’ words are trust-worthy.

However, this ignites an emotional reaction in Peter. The rugged fisherman is disarmed. His awareness of Jesus’ identity, as unfinished as it was, moved him to confession. “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” Peter said that having fallen at Jesus’ knees. What struck at Peter’s heart was, *this Jesus is holy and I’m not. Something’s gotta give.*

And here’s the second way that Jesus builds trust. He doesn’t depart from Peter. He doesn’t leave. Peter’s sinfulness, as big as it was, was not big enough to chase Jesus away. What Peter does not yet know is that Jesus is going to pay off Peter’s big sin debt on the cross. But Jesus knows. And that enables him to say, “Do not be afraid.” Do you see the point of this? Recognizing your sin does not disqualify you from being with Jesus; in fact, it is the only way into a relationship with Him. Peter is ready for what Jesus is giving. Right now, Peter does not have to be afraid of holiness, because Jesus has said so.

And then comes the blindfold. You remember my intro? Being led around with no idea where I was going, except for the words of my partner? Well, here's Peter's blindfold: Jesus said "...from now on you will be catching men." It's a blindfold in the sense that there's no way Peter could have understood what Jesus was talking about. For this to work, he was going to have to listen to Jesus and trust Jesus' words and just follow. Turn left, turn right, stop. Go and serve. Go and teach and baptize. And we are told in verse 11 that Peter, Andrew, James and John left everything and followed him.

Now make no mistake, as you follow Jesus through life, you may wonder, "Where is He leading me?" The disciples had the same concern. The same men who seemed to answer Jesus' call so perfectly didn't really understand His mission; they would worry about who was the greatest disciple; they would prevent little children from coming to see Jesus; a few even betrayed the One who had called them. Their trust in Jesus was uneven at best—they struggled against that blindfold. But Jesus did not depart from these sinful men. He stayed. He forgave. He removed fear, and they followed.

Ultimately, they followed him to Jerusalem. They followed Him to an upper room, to a dark garden, to a judgment hall, and finally a select few followed him to Golgotha, the hill of the skull where Jesus was nailed to a cross. It was there that Jesus showed his disciples just how much He loved them.

Jesus led His disciples to another hilltop, forty days after His resurrection. The disciples followed the living Son of God to the top of this hill, and there He truly made them fishers of men. Just before ascending into heaven, Jesus gave this command: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always." They had followed Jesus through good times and bad; now it was time for the disciples to become disciplers; to go fishing for men and women, drawing people up out of the depths of sin and death; catching them in the great net of God's grace in Jesus.

If you ever wonder, "Where is Jesus leading me?" Remember where He led His disciples. He led them to His cross. He leads you there too when you are burdened and beaten down by sin. He leads you through repentance to the refreshing forgiveness of sins, reminding you of just how much He loves you.

And remember, Jesus led His disciples to a mountain where He made them disciplers; he commissioned them to go fish for people; Wherever Jesus takes you, He wants the same for you. Wherever God has put you, cast your net out; catch people with kindness; grab them with grace. You may not be able to 'see' where you are going, so listen to the guiding words of Jesus. He is worthy of your trust. Let Him lead you.