

How Can I Be Effective For God? Luke 5:1-10

This week I couldn't help but remember a story I read about a blind pilot who works for one of the major airlines. Yes, that is what I said: A blind pilot.

I won't tell you which airlines, because I don't know which airlines, and besides, people get nervous enough flying as it is.

I mean, I can sympathize with the man who said that there are two things he refused to do: fly or swim. He said, "I'm not going to do anything that when you stop, you die!" Sound reasonable.

In any case, someone asked this blind pilot how he managed to fly the aircraft. He said, "It's really no big deal. All it takes is a little help from my friends and the Good Lord." And then he explained what he meant.

He said, "A friend comes by my house in the morning and picks me up. I walk carefully out to his car and get in. He drops me off at a certain gate at the airport. I know exactly how many steps it is to the door of the airplane. I have memorized the way to the cockpit.

"When I am seated, I start the engine." Then I turn the controls over to my copilot to taxi the aircraft to the runway. I tell him to give the controls back to me when we are ready to climb into the air. He does just that. He gets the airplane going down the runway at a high rate of speed and then just when we are nearly to the end of the runway, he hands the controls back over to me. And I wait.

And just as soon as he yells, "Good Lord!" I pull back on the controls and lift us into the air."

It really is amazing what we can do with the help of the good Lord, isn't it? Have you ever stopped to dream about just what you could do with the Lord's help? Have you ever stopped to dream about your potential in his eyes? What an awesome thought. Somehow, this morning, I want us to stop and think about it. Do you remember all those tests you had to take as you were going through school? I mean all those achievement tests. How many of you remember them? How many of you were blessed by them? They just thrilled your heart and you couldn't wait to take them? Well, those tests were designed to give you an indication of your abilities in terms of educational achievement. Those kinds of tests abound in our world. The most common test given to determine a person's achievement capability is what? [IQ] How many of you have ever taken an I.Q. test? Do you know what I.Q. stands for? **Intelligence Quotient**, well let me explain IQ with this **video clip**. I've always been afraid to take one for fear of finding out that I didn't have an I in my Q. There is something to be said, though, about having an insight into your abilities and potentials. Now, here is my thought: Have you ever wondered if you had the potential to do something great, I mean really great? Have you ever wondered if you had it in you to accomplish something tremendous for God? Well, at the risk of driving some of you crazy, or giving you an anxiety attack, I am going to give you a test this morning to determine your P.Q. That is your **Potential Quotient**, your potential for accomplishing something great in life. There are only **4 questions** to the test, so be careful how you answer.

1) Here's question number one: **how do you respond to disappointing failure?**

How do you respond to difficulties and hardships? When things get tough and people let you down and the disappointments multiply about you, how do you respond? How do you respond to disappointment and failure? That is our first question and your answer will determine your P.Q. Let's look at Peter again as we find him here in our passage. As our passage opens, we find Simon Peter having had a big disappointment. It says there, *"One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, he saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything."* (vv. 1-5) As you can read in the text, they had been out fishing all night, and the results of their fishing expedition was a big fat zilch! How many of you have ever gone fishing and not caught anything? How many of you ladies have gone shopping and not found anything? (Dumb question, right?) Well, Peter – who was still called Simon then - had gone fishing all night long and had not caught a thing. That meant he had nothing to sell. Which meant he no income to gain. Which meant he had no food to buy. Which meant...well you get the picture.

I would say Peter was facing a real disappointment, a real failure. But let's look at how he responded, vs. 5: *Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."* (vs. 5) Here he is having to face terrible disappointment and failure. Add on top of that the fact that a traveling preacher stops wanting a floating preaching platform. How did Peter respond? He hopped in the boat and they took off, and his disappointment turned in the greatest opportunity he had ever known. Peter responded to disappointment and failure by listening to Jesus and turning that disappointment into possibility! Now, here is the point: The fact of the matter is that **how we respond to the disappointments and failures of our lives will determine our P.Q.** Some people respond to failure or disappointment with disgust or contempt, or even anger. Others respond with renewed challenge and vigor, insight and drive. *I read recently about two boys who were taken to a place with two rooms. It was an experiment to determine how children react to blessings and disappointment.*

One of the children was the kind of kid who was always down and discouraged about everything. The other kid was the kind of kid who never let anything get him down or slow him down. He just responded well to difficulty and disappointment.

Well, they took these two kids into the two rooms. One room was full of brand new toys and the other was full of hay and horse manure.

After a while, the observers came back to check on the kids. They found the first kid standing in front of the room full of toys crying. When asked why, he said it was because all of those toys would soon be broken.

They found the other kid in the room full of hay and horse manure, and he was shoveling furiously. When they asked him why, he said, "I know that there has to be a pony in here somewhere!"

Our potential for accomplishing something great for God will depend upon how we respond to failure and disappointment. How do you respond to disappointment?

- ☞ Do you give in to the discouragement?
- ☞ Do you let it defeat you?
- ☞ Or do you learn from it and go on?
- ☞ How do you respond to disappointment and discouragement?
- ☞ Do you just pick up your things and go home?
- ☞ b. Or do you listen to Jesus and look for another opportunity?

Question number one in our P.Q. test is this: **How do you respond to disappointment and failure?** (Rate yourself on a scale of one to ten)

2) Not only is your potential for accomplishing something great for God a matter of how you respond to disappointing failure, but it is also a question of **how do you respond to direct authority?**

It says there that, *"He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat."* (vs. 3) Jesus asked Simon to put his boat out from shore a little so he could preach from it, and he did it. Think about it: **What would you do** if a stranger showed up and asked/told you to do something with your equipment? Our first response would be to tell the guy where to get off - in the water! We don't respond well to requests/demands from others and especially strangers. *I heard recently about a young second lieutenant at Fort Bragg who discovered that he had no change when he was about to buy a soft drink from a vending machine. He flagged down a passing private and asked him, "Do you have change for a dollar?"*

The private said cheerfully, "I think so, let me take a look."

The lieutenant drew himself up stiffly and said, "Soldier, that's no way to address an officer. We'll start all over again. Do you have change for a dollar?"

The private came to attention, saluted smartly and said, "No, sir!"

Let's be honest. Our tendency when strangers make demands on us is to stiffen up and refuse. Well, Jesus – a stranger to Peter at the time – was making demands on Peter. In fact, look at the demand he made in vs. 4, *"When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."* Now, think about it. We don't like people to tell us what to do, but we especially don't like people to tell us how to do our job.

Now, what I am trying to point out is the way people typically respond to authority, especially when that authority is some stranger telling you how to do your job, a job which you (and your entire family in Peter's situation) have been doing longer than the stranger has been alive. The typical response is to tell that person what they can do with their advice.

Now in this story in Luke, you need to add to all of this the fact that Peter and his associates' experience militated against their choosing the course of action that was suggested to them by this stranger. We tend to be willing to take advice as long as it is something we already know and agree with. We do that all the time. If we are asked to do something that we already know should be done and that we would have done even if we hadn't been asked is not really responding to authority, that's agreeing with a suggestion. But here, Peter responded in obedience to authority even when it was a command to do that at which Peter was a recognized authority, and to do that for which he had experiences which had already militated against choosing that course of action. We would have expected Peter to give the answer heard all so often these days: "Been there, done that!" And in some respects that is what Peter started to say, but he followed it up with immediate compliance with Jesus' directions. Listen again to vs. 5, "*Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."*" (vs. 5) Peter didn't say, "We've tried that, it didn't work and so we aren't going to do it. No, he simply did it! He responded well to authority, not with indifference or complaint, or agitation, but with wholehearted and complete obedience.

Now, here is the point: Our tendency in our culture today is not to respond well to authority, but here Peter did. He recognized in Jesus an authority. An authority that hadn't been earned, but an authority Peter could sense in the way Jesus handled the word of God. Jesus had just finished preaching a message to the people, he had just taught them about God. Peter responded as much to that message and it's authority as he did to the directions given for the fishing expedition. So again, here is the question: **How do you respond to authority, especially the authority of Jesus?** For example: When God hits you up about an issue through his word or through a sermon like this or when God says, for example,

- get involved in that ministry,
- Or go apologize to that person,
- Or start giving your money faithfully,
- Or stop that habit, or change your schedule;

When God hits you up about something, how do you respond?

- Do you respond with 49 reasons why you shouldn't couldn't and wouldn't do it?
- Do you flat out reject his instructions?
- Do you possibly obey, but do it begrudgingly, complaining the whole way?
- How do you respond to authority?

You answer will have a great impact upon what Jesus can do in your life. *I read about a high-priced management consultant who was brought in to train and motivate the corporate troops at a particular company. He got up there and gave it his best shot and it soon became obvious that there was a great deal of resistance among the ostensible listeners. They were conveying with their body language and their lack of enthusiasm that they were not with him.*

The speaker paused for a goodly portion of time, enough to gain their attention and said, "This reminds me a great deal of trying to teach a pig to sing. It costs a lot of money, and all it does is make the pig mad."

The people got the message and began to listen and respond.

The point is that our potential quotient depends upon how we respond to authority. We can do great things for God if we respond to his authority with immediate obedience. So, **give yourself a score on that one.**

3) Your potential quotient for being effective for God depends not only on how you respond to disappointing failure and direct authority, it also depends on **how you respond to distinctive success.**

How do you respond when things go well in your life, when life is profitable and successful?

Well, look at Peter, *"When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"* (vv. 6-8) What I want you to see here is how Peter responded to this unbelievable catch of fish. This was more fish that he had ever caught before. This was a boatload of fish - pardon the pun. He could just see the dollar signs at the market when he sold them. The question is how did he respond? Tell me: How would you have responded? How do you think that most people respond to success, particularly financial success? *Have any of you ever seen the musical, Annie? There is a line in that musical that hits the nail on the head as far as the way most people in our society respond to success.*

It's the line where Daddy Warbucks recounts the ruthless way he climbed the ladder of success. And then he says, "You know, you don't have to be good to the people you meet on the way up if you don't plan to go down again."

Unfortunately, all too many people don't handle success well. In fact, study after study has shown that people tend to respond to success in a very selfish manner. They tend to horde all the rewards and hog all the credit. People by and large do not respond well to success. Let me give you some specifics:

- According to a report by George Barna, **Two-thirds** of all adults donate to a church or religious center during 2009.
- But the most frequently given yearly amount by all of these people was \$300 that was a **14%** decrease over the 2008 levels.
- And here is the shocker: According to Barna, **one out of every 6 born again believers** gave no money at all to a church last year.
- And only, catch this, only **8%** of born again Christians actually tithe (give the biblically mandated 10% of their income to their church.)

A survey that appeared not all that long ago in USA Today indicated that the more people earn the less they give proportionally to help others. It should work the other way around, shouldn't it? The more you earn the more flexible income you have; therefore, the more you should be able to give. But that's not the way it works. Surveys show that **people with incomes below \$10,000 give three times more proportionally to charities than people with incomes of \$50,000-\$100,000**, and people with incomes below \$50,000 give almost twice as much proportionally as people in the \$100,000-\$200,000 category? Why? We all know why, because their response to success was to horde the rewards. Now, Peter didn't do it that way. Our passage said: Peter responded with immediate obedience to Jesus' authority, and because he did he caught the biggest haul of fish he had ever witnessed...and how did he respond to that success? He called over his other friends and workers and shared the catch with them. He didn't keep it to himself. He shared it with others. That's how to have a high P.Q. Respond to success by sharing the rewards and not hogging them.

I said that human nature's typical response to success is to selfishly horde the rewards, and also to hog all the credit. "Lest you say, 'See what I have made with my own hands.'" That was the warning that the Lord gave the Israelites as they were entering into the Promised Land. He knew that they would have abundance. It was a land of abundance. The threat was that they would egotistically hog the credit for what he had given them. We tend to do the same thing. We are so slow at times to share that it is the Lord who has done this thing. Maybe that stems from the fact that if we give God the credit we will also be obliged to give him the rewards! But what did Peter do? He fell down at Jesus' feet and said, "Go away from me Lord, I am a sinful man." He was recognizing that it was Jesus who had done this great thing. It wasn't him. He wasn't worthy of such things. It was Jesus! The people God can use are people who respond well to success by giving God the credit and the rewards of that success. Tell me something: how do you respond to success? **Score yourself between one and ten.**

4) Your potential for accomplishing something great for God is not only a question of how do you respond to disappointing failure and direct authority and distinctive success. It is also a question of **how do you respond to disciplined following.**

Look at vs. 10-11 again, *"Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid, From now on you will catch men.' And when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed him."*

When it came to the question of responding to following Jesus, Peter passed with flying colors. He left everything and followed Jesus. That is what I call unreserved following, and when we respond to Jesus with unreserved following, our potential is unlimited! Unreserved following is quite demanding: **"They left everything"** to follow him. They left even the biggest **catch** of their lives. They left their **boats**, their **families**, and they followed Jesus. Tell me something: Do you discipline your life to follow Jesus? That's a serious question. Do you wrap your life around your relationship with Jesus Christ? Or do you wrap your relationship with Jesus Christ around your life? I'm concerned as a pastor. I am concerned that over the years I have seen a very frightening trend take place amongst believers. It's the trend towards what I call **"convenient Christianity."** That's where people want to be Christians and part of a church as long as it is convenient. As long as it doesn't demand too much or take too much of their time or cost them; then they will be there. As long as it is convenient, Christianity is fine. But what I find in this passage and what I find over and over in scripture is that following Jesus Christ is to be the consuming passion of our lives and not a convenient addition to our lives. When it comes to your potential and my potential for accomplishing anything great for God, it is always a matter of disciplined following. It's a matter of making Jesus Christ your central focus. So, be honest for a moment. Do you wrap your life around your relationship with Jesus Christ, or do you wrap your relationship with the Lord around your life?

Peter left everything to follow Jesus; he wrapped his life around his relationship with Jesus. And because he did, Jesus used him in a great and mighty way. So tell me; how far are you willing to follow Jesus? Write down your score for this one as well:

Well, those are the four questions to our test.

- How do you respond to disappointing failure?
- How do you respond to direct authority?
- How do you respond to distinctive success?
- How do you respond to disciplined following?

Those are the questions. How did you score? What is your potential Quotient?

I created a grading scale:

- **30-40: You had better believe that God can use you. Get started today working in his kingdom.**
- **20-29: You need to return to the school of spiritual discipline, taking the steps that lead to spiritual maturity.**
- **10-19: You need to get serious with God about the spiritual needs in your life.**
- **below 10: We need to talk, immediately!!** Actually, you need to talk to Jesus immediately.

How far are you willing to follow Jesus? You think about that as we stand to close this service.

How Can I Be Effective For God?

Luke 5:1-10

The help of the Good Lord!

Four Questions To Determine Your Potential Quotient:

#1: How Do You Respond To Disappointing Failure?

One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, he saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. (vv. 1-5)

Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." (vs. 5)

Your Score _____ (Scale of 1 to 10)

#2: How Do You Respond To Direct Authority?

He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. (vs. 3)

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." (vs. 4)

Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." (vs. 5)

How do you respond to the authority of Jesus?

Your Score _____ (Scale of 1 to 10)

#3: How Do You Respond To Distinctive Success?

When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" (vv. 6-8)

Survey On American Success:

- Two-thirds of all adults donate to a church or religious center during 1999.
- The most frequently given yearly amount was \$300, a 14% decrease over the 1998 levels.
- One out of every 6 born again believers gave no money at all to a church last year.
- Only 8% of born again Christians actually tithe.

(George Barna)

- People with incomes below \$10,000 give three times more proportionally to charities than people with incomes of \$50,000-\$100,000.

(USA Today)

Your Score _____ (Scale of 1 to 10)

#4: How Do You Respond To Disciplined Following?

"Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid, From now on you will catch men.' And when they had brought their boats to land, the forsook all and followed him." (vv. 10-11)

Convenient Christianity

Your Score _____ (Scale of 1 to 10)

Total Score: _____ (Add up the four scores)

The Scoring Scale for Your Potential Quotient:

* 30-40: You had better believe that God can use you. Get started today working in his kingdom.

* 20-29: You need to return to the school of spiritual discipline, taking the steps that lead to spiritual maturity.

* 10-19: You need to get serious with God about the spiritual needs in your life.

* below 10: We need to talk, immediately!!

What Is Your Potential Quotient?

3. Unreserved following entails big game hunting.
 - a. It means going out and being fishers of men.
 - b. The translation of "to catch" is somewhat misleading. It is a word that means "to take alive" like animals are taken alive for a zoo.
 - c. Sometimes we get the idea that there are two kinds of Christians: those who catch the animals and those who come and look at them in the zoo. But that is not so!
 - d. If we are going to be followers of Jesus, we are going to be involved in big game hunting.

B. So, here is the point: Our P.Q. depends upon how we respond to disciplined following.

1. Are we people who respond with unreserved following which leads to big game hunting, or are we people who want to just go and look at them in the zoo?

All too many of us spend forever getting around to it. Jungle animals playing football. None could stop rhino. But late in game rhino tackled by centipede. Lion asked, "That was great, but where were you on the kick off?" "I was still putting on my shoes."

It takes commitment. Two women discussing SS lesson. I thought it was going to be easy to be a Christian. No one ever told me about this discipleship stuff. DP Sep192.1

It pays off. Great illust of field goal kicker able to kick a winning field goal even without his contact lenses because of his discipline. DP Aug492.1

I heard about a man named Louis Evans, who was a pastor. He had a parishioner once who was a new convert. The man was a railroad engineer.

Well, one day this man asked Dr. Evans if there was a job for him in the church. Dr. Evans explained that they already had a surplus of ushers, teachers, and officers (something we definitely do not have.) But Dr. Evans told this man that they had all the teachers and ushers that they needed, but that he did have a job for him.

He asked the man, "Is your fireman (a coworker on the railroad) a Christian? If not, then that's your job!"

Again, let me get personal and ask: How do you respond to following? The church is not a spectator society in which we go to the zoo. We're all supposed to be out catching the animals!

When it comes to your potential quotient, how you respond to following is the primary question.

Well, those are the four questions to our test.

- How do you respond to disappointment?
- How do you respond to authority?
- How do you respond to Success?
- How do you respond to following?

Those are the questions. How did you score? What is your potential Quotient?

I credited a tongue in cheek grading scale:

- * 30-40: You had better believe that God can use you. Get started today working in his kingdom.
- * 20-29: You need to return to the school of spiritual discipline, taking the steps that lead to spiritual maturity.
- * 10-19: You need to get serious with God about the spiritual needs in your life.
- * below 10: We need to talk, immediately!!

Your P.Q. depends upon how you respond to disappointing failure, direct authority, distinctive success, and disciplined following. How do you score?

God has tremendous plans for you. Miracles he wants to perform through you. What he will in fact be able to do through you has a great deal to do with your answers to those questions.

I read an interesting story the other day about W.W. II.

Luke 5:1-10

1 One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God,

2 he saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets.

3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."

5 Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break.

7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"

9 For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken,

10 and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men."

(NIV)

More Americans claim to tithe than actually do. 17% of adults claim to tithe while 3% actually do so.
(1997)

How would you like a job where, if you made a mistake, a big red light goes on and 18,000 people boo? Former hockey goalie, Jacques Plante

There are two rooms one full of brand-new toys, the other full of hay and horse manure. Two children are taken into them, one a pessimist, the other an optimist. The pessimist looked at the first room and cried because all those wonderful toys would soon be broken. The optimist was in the other room shoveling. "I know there's got to be a horse in here somewhere," he said.

Don't be discouraged. It took Noah six months to find a parking place.

A mother of three unruly preschoolers was asked whether she'd have children if she had to do it all over again. "Sure," she responded, "but not the same ones!",

