

REPS
DAY ONE
**IDENTITY
AND
CALLING**

READ

LUKE 5:1-11

REFLECT

So much of an athlete's identity is wrapped up in sports, and rightly so. To compete to the best of our abilities, we must dedicate hours to our craft. We commit ourselves to daily practice and intense workouts. We sacrifice other pursuits to put in extra time in the weight room, run through mental reps, or drill that new technique. Is it any wonder then that our sense of self might be wrapped up in our team identity, our school colors, and especially our performance on game day?

Finding a sense of purpose in our given sport is a good and important gift. But Jesus calls us to more than just training to win on the field or in a race. When Jesus calls Simon Peter to follow him, he does so with reference to a skill that Simon has been practicing and perfecting for most of his life. Simon, along with his partners James and John, are fishermen. They eat, sleep, and breathe fishing. They even stay up all night to fish when the pickings are best. Yet, on this particular morning in this particular story, they have nothing to show for their expertise and efforts – their nets are empty. Jesus thus steps into a particularly vulnerable situation; what is a fisherman who comes home without a catch of fish?

Think about how absurd Jesus' instructions would have sounded to Simon. What does a carpenter-turned-rabbi know about fishing? Yet, Simon obeys the absurd request and is subsequently overwhelmed and astonished by the equally absurd catch of fish that is breaking his nets and sinking his boats. At that moment, Simon realizes the great gap in power and authority that exists between himself and the teacher who has commandeered his boat. His hard-earned years of skill and experience have never yielded a catch like this! One can thus understand Simon's instinctual need to distance himself from Jesus. What good can a sinful man like him be to the one who is capable of wonders such as this?

But Jesus thinks differently. Instead of inadequacy, Jesus sees Simon's identity as a fisherman and names it as precisely the thing that will be transformed for God's work that is to come. Jesus is inviting Simon to root his identity not merely in being a fisherman for its own sake, but for the sake of God and others. "Don't be afraid," he says, "from now on you will fish for people."

RESPOND

In response to their calling, Simon and his partners leave everything behind to follow Jesus. They still retained their identity as fisherman, but they offered it up in service and obedience to a new, riskier, and higher calling.

- What about you and your identity? What does it mean to you that you are a college athlete?

Far from seeing you as just a jersey number or a set of statistics, Jesus sees your commitment, the hours you've put in, and the things you have sacrificed, and invites you to go all-in with him. Even when you're off the field or don't have anything to show for your hard work, Jesus still sees you, wants you on his team, and can lead you to outcomes that you would never have dreamed of on your own. And don't be afraid! Your athletic background is a gift from God that has more than adequately prepared you in a unique way for the work of love, justice, mercy, grace, and salvation that Jesus wants for our campuses.

- How might God be inviting you to develop and use your identity as an athlete for something greater during college?