

GALILEE FACTS



For use in *Animated/Engaged Learning*.

Note: As you share the following information, please also show the PowerPoint pictures (on your flash drive) of t

Each summer for the past few years I've led tour groups to Israel. It's a life-changing experience to walk in the steps of Christ and study Scripture on-site. My favorite place of all is the northern shore of the sweet-watered lake called the Sea of Galilee, only eight miles wide and thirteen miles long. On our morning boat ride, we head east from the northwest corner of the lake toward the ancient town of Capernaum, where Jesus is staying with Peter in his lake house. (Amazingly, Simon Peter's first-century house has been identified with near certainty; an early church built over it has more than one hundred inscriptions of graffiti containing the name of Christ. Just behind the house are the remains of a first-century synagogue once presided over by the synagogue ruler, Jarius.)

As our boat cruises slowly along the northern coast, I point out some intriguing spots on the lake. Out of the grassy shore a spring of water gushes into the lake. This is Tabgha (meaning "seven springs")—a fisherman's paradise even today. The warm springs produce algae, attracting tilapia and other fish. This site is thought to be the place where Peter and the boys loved to fish—and where Jesus called Peter and Andrew to full discipleship.

"Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and

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immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him" ([Matt. 4:]21, 22 [NIV]). Could it have been in the gushing Tabgha spring itself where James and John were washing and preparing their nets? It certainly fits the description of Matthew 4:22. In fact, Mark's account of this day lends even more insight—describing Jesus and His four full-time disciples as continuing on (eastward) to Capernaum synagogue, spending Sabbath afternoon at Peter's house, and then after sunset being visited by a host of sick people. The following morning, Mark describes Jesus getting up very early, leaving Peter's house, and praying in a "lonely place" (Mark 1:35, NASB). Even today at the Sea of Galilee, there's an area between Tabgha and Capernaum that's referred to as a "lonely place." Just below is a little harbor and a natural hillside amphitheater with perfect acoustics. A speaker in a boat could have his voice easily heard by hundreds of people sitting on the hillside.

These types of geographical details provide an even greater sense of awe as we consider the eternal God taking on flesh and living among men and women, boys and girls on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was here that Jesus "went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people" (Matthew 4:23 [NIV]).