

THE CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

“Come to Me”
Matthew 11:20-30
August 5, 2018

Summary: “Would you say, in the honesty of your own heart, that you are a Christian?”
“Would you say that you are an earnest, committed disciple of Christ?”

Many people are more confident answering yes to the first question than the second, which suggests that we believe the faith has two tiers. One is for believers (Christians), the other is for practitioners (disciples). One is generic, the other is name-brand. One accepts Jesus as Savior, the other obeys him as Lord. But in the Bible, there is only one kind of Christ-follower. Whether we call the person a Christian or a disciple, the only “saved” person is one who take Jesus with his tandem titles, “Lord and Savior.” The only “saved” person believes in Jesus with the earnest intention of following him. In fact, the goal and measure of our Christianity is “the obedience of faith” (Luke 6:46-49; Romans 1:5, 16:26).

But Jesus doesn’t crush people into submission. He invites them.

1. The Call: “Come to me.” “Come” is a gracious word that woos, calls, and propositions. It doesn’t drive or force like the word “Go!” might. Jesus *invites* us to himself. The other rabbis taught with borrowed authority yet tried to build brands that would allow them to have low acceptance rates, like colleges desire today. Jesus taught with unique, personal authority—and backed it up with signs and wonders—yet he invites all to come. His freshman class is always unlimited in size.

2. The Response: Take his yoke and learn. We want to know God and live the life he made us to live. We want to grow, mature, and thrive. That requires real learning, not a diploma-mill certificate. So, like oxen were yoked together so they could walk and work together, disciples (learners, apprentices) are yoked up with their rabbi so they can walk and work with him; so they can learn his ways. Specifically, a rabbi’s “yoke” was his interpretation of God’s word: what it meant and how it was lived. Often the rabbis tied heavy burdens on people, making godly living into a matter of rigorous self-righteousness. But Jesus said his yoke is easy and his burden is light. Not that being a Christian is effortless, but as Eugene Peterson translates Matthew 11, Jesus wants to teach us “the unforced rhythms of grace.”

3. The Payoff: Rest for your soul. Augustine famously said: “You (God) have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.” We were made for a relationship with God; made to be yoked up with him. When we’re connected to him we are known and named. We find our place. We walk and work with God. Our lives have noble purpose. In the Bible, certain human faculties are often linked to a body part: the heart is the center of your will; your right arm is a symbol of your strength; you have “bowels of compassion,” gut-level concern for others. Likewise, the soul is often associated with the neck or throat, that most vital yet vulnerable body part. All your air, food, and water passes through your neck; without it you cannot live. Yet it is so vulnerable. If you’re ever attacked, the enemy will go for your neck. Jesus says, “Put my yoke on your neck and you’ll breath again; your dry soul will be watered again; your life will be fed and strengthened again.” Rest for the soul is what we all seek, and what Jesus always offers.

Discussion Guide:

1. Read Matthew 11:20-30 from a standard translation like the NIV or ESV and also from *The Message*.
2. The sermon opened with two questions: “Would you call yourself a Christian?” and “Would you call yourself an earnest, committed disciple of Christ?” Why do you think so many people believe that they can be Christians without being disciples (leaners, apprentices) of Jesus? Do you think Jesus would say the same thing to them that he said to the towns of Galilee in Matthew 11?
3. Read Luke 6:46-49 and Romans 1:5; 16:26. What does “the obedience of faith” (or “the obedience that comes through faith”) mean to you?
4. What is your emotional response to the call of Jesus in Matthew 11:28? How does it sound and feel to you; how does it land on your heart?
5. Think about bearing the yoke of Jesus—walking and working with him according to his interpretation of God’s word; his “take” on how to believe in it and live it. What is one practical way in which wearing Jesus’ yoke has changed how you live?
6. What is one area into which Jesus might want to guide you next? Is there an area of life and discipleship in which you clearly have further training to do? What will following him look like?
7. Discipleship clearly involves walking and “working” with Jesus—that’s suggested by the yoke—yet the result is rest for your soul. How do you reconcile rest and effort, or grace and works in the Christian life?
8. How would you describe your experience of rest in Christ and his gospel? How is his rest most evident in your soul?