

THE CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

“Follow Me”
Matthew 4:18-25
August 12, 2018

Summary: Jesus encapsulates his calling on all of us with the calling that came to the four fishermen in Matthew 4: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

1. FOLLOWING — In a day and age when “following” may mean nothing more than receiving someone’s tweets, Jesus summons us to a life-altering, identity-changing way of life in which we become learners, apprentices, *disciples*. His life and teaching will become the norm of our lives. As Bonhoeffer wrote, “Christ makes clear from the start that his word is not an abstract doctrine, but the recreation of the whole life of man. The only right and proper way is quite literally to go with Jesus. The call to follow implies that there is only one way of believing on Jesus Christ, and that is by leaving all and going with the incarnate Son of God....They must rise and follow him. They must burn their boats and plunge into absolute insecurity in order to learn the demand and the gift of Christ.”

We do not invite Jesus into our lives as our personal assistant; he invites us into his life as Lord and Savior.

2. FORMING — Christ promises, “I will make you....” He will make something of our lives. We call this aspect of discipleship “spiritual formation,” the fashioning of the whole person into the image of Christ. Formation of some kind is always happening in our lives, basically through observation and imitation. Something holds sway—some vision of the good life, some supreme value—and our lives are fashioned after it. Christ wants us to observe and imitate his life in such a way that he is reduplicated in us. Paul wrote in Galatians 4:19 that he is in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in us. Until our whole lives conform to Christ we are misshapen and in need of forming and *reforming*.

3. FISHING — We’re not just being formed into “good people,” we’re training for a good purpose: the search-and-rescue mission of God. We’re being disciplined straight into the mission. There are people drowning in despair, loneliness, debt, sorrow, and sin. They are being overwhelmed by the circumstances of life and by their own alienation from God. Jesus calls us to fish them out.

This is not the work of elite Christians who have attained some advanced stage of faith. It is for every Christian, teamed up with one another, perpetually reaching out to others and welcoming them into the Christ-following life. Discipleship always issues forth in disciple-making, which in turn enhances our discipleship and spiritual formation. It’s virtuous cycle of positive effects.

That’s why the calling of the disciples in 4:18-22 is immediately followed by the mission in 4:23-25. That’s what we’re training to do. “A disciple who is fully trained will be like his master.”



Discussion Guide:

1. Read Matthew 4:18-25 from a standard translation like the NIV or ESV and also from *The Message*.
2. The sermon explained how it is that the disciples immediately left everything to follow Jesus. Remind each other of the historical situation, including the story from Luke 5 which likely preceded the one told in Matthew 4.
3. Discuss the quote from Bonhoeffer's, *The Cost of Discipleship*, shared in the sermon:

“One would have thought that nothing so drastic was necessary at such an early stage. Could not Jesus have initiated them into some new religious experience and leave them as they were before? He could have done so, had he not been the incarnate Son of God. But since he is the Christ, he must make it clear from the start that his word is not an abstract doctrine, but the recreation of the whole life of man. The only right and proper way is quite literally to go with Jesus. The call to follow implies that there is only one way of believing on Jesus Christ, and that is by leaving all and going with the incarnate Son of God.

“Until that day, everything had been different. They could remain in obscurity, pursuing their work as the quiet in the land, observing the law and waiting for the coming Messiah. But now he has come, and his call goes forth. Faith can no longer mean sitting still and waiting—they must rise and follow him. They must burn their boats and plunge into absolute insecurity in order to learn the demand and the gift of Christ.”

- Has the call to “Follow me,” landed on your heart with such compelling force? Explain.
 - How do we translate the call to leave jobs and families into the “idiom” of our lives today?
 - What is one way in which you must “burn your boat and plunge into the absolute insecurity” of following Christ?
 - Does following Christ mean insecurity—or does it only seem so? Explain your perspective.
4. Jesus said that when a disciple is fully trained he will be like his master (Luke 6:40). He also said that we would do greater works than his when he goes to the Father and sends us the Holy Spirit (John 14:12). How are we to interpret these sayings? In what ways are they true? How do you explain the fact that we so often seem to be less powerful, fruitful, and effective than Christ indicated we would be?
 6. One of the lines that we’re hearing more regularly in our church is that there are people who are “far from God but near to us.” The implication is that God wants to save them through us. To what degree are you confident that this is true? To what degree are you confident in being an active part of the rescue mission? How can we as a group, as a team, work together to be “fishers of people”?
 7. Talk about the possibility of praying evangelistic prayers every time you meet. Could you make this both a starting point and top priority of your group, to pray specifically for the salvation of people who are far from God but near to you?