

FOLLOW ME

Week of October 25

For those of us familiar with the Gospel, we probably take for granted the “calling” of the disciples. But consider for a moment how Andrew, Simon Peter, James, and John became “fishers of men.” There by the Sea of Galilee, these fishermen left their livelihood and followed a Carpenter. The first two brothers, Peter and Andrew “left their nets at once.” James and John immediately left their boat “and their father behind” (Matthew 4:20, 22). Thankfully, they followed. And yet, had Jesus never entered their workplace, they would never have received the invitation.

At the time, these men had no way of knowing where Jesus would take them—no way of knowing how their lives would eventually impact the world. Radical as it is that they left everything to follow, even more astounding is the fact that Jesus called them in the first place. In fact, had Jesus never entered their world and invited these fishermen to follow Him, you and I would not be where we are today. The Gospel story changes everything. Has Jesus showed up in your workplace?

1. Consider a “what-if”. Take about 30 to 60 seconds to ponder this question: “What if Jesus had never called Andrew, Peter, James, and John to follow Him?” Although hypothetical, in the space below, list as many repercussions as you can to the haunting notion of “what if” – what if Jesus had not asked the first four disciples to follow Him?

Read Matthew 4:18-22

After forty days in the wilderness—praying, fasting, being tempted by Satan, and then hearing of the arrest of John the Baptist—Jesus leaves Judea and heads north to His hometown. But notice after arriving in Nazareth, Jesus doesn’t stay but quickly moves on to Capernaum (Matthew 4:12-13).

2. What happens in Nazareth, according to Luke 4:16-30?

In the “village of comfort” (Capernaum) by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus soon sets up His ministry base. After considering the following Scriptures, jot down some possible reasons why you think Jesus made His way to the Sea of Galilee to call His core disciples, teach, and heal.

Luke 5:1

Matthew 8:5-13

Matthew 9:35-38

Isaiah 9:1-2

Jesus intentionally fulfilled prophecies written about Him and went where God’s Spirit led Him, which early on was into “Galilee of the Gentiles.” As He does today, Jesus met each person where they lived and worked—at their point of need or struggle. As a result, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light” (see Isaiah 9:1-2, Matthew 4:15-16). Does the light of Christ shine in your world?

3. Our Plain Truth states: Jesus enters into our daily life so we can experience new life daily as we follow Him. How have you seen this to be true in your life or perhaps in the life of someone close to you?

The Lord is gracious to meet us where we live and work. Although skeptics are always close at hand (modern-day scribes and Pharisees), Jesus wants us to connect with people from all walks of life. The thing that distinguished people who believed in Jesus from people who did not believe in Jesus, was not whether or not they were Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, secular or religious. The distinguishing factor among those who said yes to Christ is that they acknowledged Jesus’ power and authority and were willing to admit their need for Him.

There are people all around us who sense a hole in their heart. Nothing seems to really satisfy, and at the end of the day, the distractions of this world still leave them empty, dry, and in need of hope and healing. It’s important that we befriend people in our sphere of influence, people who want to believe but just don’t know where to place their faith. True discipleship is activated when we share that salvation is a Person, and then simply introduce them to that Person, the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Have you said yes to Christ? Are you inviting others to know Him? If yes, what sort of “ripple-effect” are you beginning to see?

Witnessing life-transformation firsthand can really motivate us to follow even more closely in Jesus’ footsteps. What is thrilling about being a piece-of-the-puzzle when someone you know comes to faith in Christ?

Not only did the disciples themselves experience life-change, they witnessed life-change in others. Because Jesus invited them (and they followed!) they had a front-row seat to people from Galilee, Samaria, the Decapolis, Syria-Phoenicia, Tyre, Sidon, Jericho, Jerusalem, and beyond—coming to salvation. It is important to understand that we can respond to the Lord only because His call is already pressing upon our hearts. Too easily, we fall into the trap of thinking that being a Christ-follower is something that we’ve achieved or accomplished, when in reality, it has nothing to do with what we’ve done and everything to do with what Christ has done.

5. In what ways are you beginning to see that your relationship with Christ is because He has graciously invited you to His side?

How does this change your perspective on evangelism—your attitude toward others who are broken and don’t know that God loves them?

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Text: Matthew 4: 18-22

The Gospel story is replete with people responding to Jesus' invitation. Peter, James and John leave their nets. The Roman officer says, "Jesus just say the word" and I know my servant will be healed. Jairus believes his little girl can live again. The blind see. The deaf hear. Outcasts are set free from demonic possession. Although "Galilee of the Gentiles" was not so beautiful when Jesus first embarked upon His mission, this region once filled with sickness and death soon begins to be a place of beauty as news of the Savior spreads across the hillsides. "For those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow, a light has shined" (Matthew 4:16b).

6. Do you hear Jesus calling you? How are you responding to Jesus' invitation to "Follow Me"—are you following and inviting others to know Him or does something have you side-railed right now?

Some people become excited and alive at the thought of being called. For others, there is something about the invitation to follow Christ that makes them angry and resistant. Why is this and where are you right now?

Thank God, the Lord called those rugged fishermen. Thank God He called Saul of Tarsus, John Wesley, Billy Graham, our pastors, the person who won us to Christ—you fill in the blank. Thank God He called you and me! We don't have to wonder "what if" — but instead rejoice in the glorious truth that because Jesus does call disciples, millions upon millions of people can know Him and believe upon His name. And yet, our work is cut out for us because there are still millions upon millions who don't know Christ as Savior. As Christ-followers, we don't have the luxury of life-as-usual. From this day forward, commit to winning souls for Jesus. May you and I do our part — follow Him — and live to fulfill His great commission.

When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish." "Master," Simon replied, "we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, I'll let the nets down again." And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking...Jesus replied, "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!" And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus.
Luke 5:4-7, 10b-11

One Year Bible Reading

Oct. 25: Jeremiah 48:1-49:22, 2 Timothy 4:1-22, Psalm 95:1-96:13, Prov. 26:9-12
Oct. 26: Jeremiah 49:23-50:46, Titus 1:1-16, Psalm 97:1-98:9, Proverbs 26:13-16
Oct. 27: Jeremiah 51:1-53, Titus 2:1-15, Psalm 99:1-9, Proverbs 26:17
Oct. 28: Jeremiah 51:54-52:34, Titus 3:1-15, Psalm 100:1-5, Proverbs 26:18-19
Oct. 29: Lamentations 1:1-2:22, Philemon 1:1-25, Psalm 101:1-8, Proverbs 26:20
Oct. 30: Lamentations 3:1-66, Hebrews 1:1-14, Psalm 102:1-28, Proverbs 26:21-22
Oct. 31: Lamentations 4:1-5:22, Hebrews 2:1-18, Psalm 103:1-22, Proverbs 26:23

3 Follow Me Thoughts:

1. Jesus is _____ for people to follow him.
2. Jesus comes to your _____.
3. Jesus will help us find _____.

3 Questions:

1. Do you _____?
2. Can you _____ me?
3. Can I _____ you?

The Plain Truth:

Jesus enters into our _____ life so we can experience new life _____ as we _____ Him.