



Part 17: The Call to Be Disciples Matthew 4:18-22

Christians are disciples of Jesus.

I. Necessary Excavation Work

The gospel is the good news that God has kept His promises to Israel to rescue and renew His groaning creation from Satan, sin, and death through King Jesus (his life, death, resurrection, and ascension). Life in God's beautiful kingdom is available now and forever to all who entrust themselves to King Jesus and follow him as Lord.

The word “disciple” occurs 269 times in the New Testament. The word “Christian” is found three times and was first introduced to refer to Gentile disciples rather than Jewish disciples (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). In the book of Acts, Christians are continually called “disciples.”

“The New Testament is a book about disciples, by disciples, and for disciples of Jesus Christ.” – Dallas Willard, The Spirit of the Disciplines

II. “Follow Me” – Called to be Disciples (Matthew 4:18-22)

These men had some previous experience with Jesus before he called them to be his disciples – perhaps for over a year (John 1:35 – 2:11). Now Jesus is decisively calling them to be with him as his disciples (Matt. 4:18-22).

A disciple of a rabbi was a student, learner, or apprentice, who was called to make three decisive commitments:

- Be with Jesus
- Become like Jesus
- Live on mission with Jesus – learn to do what he was doing

“Discipleship was a life that began in relationship with the Master and moved into all areas of experience. This is the beginning of Kingdom life.” – Michael Wilkins, The Matthew NIV Application Commentary, 180.

“The Gospels make it clear that his significance lies not simply in his death, but also especially in his person, life, and teachings...In his gospel, the twelve disciples play the role of learners who are to model life in the kingdom.” – Gordon Fee, How to Read the Bible Book by Book, 267, 271

A. Be with Jesus.

Our salvation is more relational than transactional. We are entrusting ourselves to the person of Jesus not an arrangement God has made.

Ex. Covenant of marriage vs. a frequent flyer program

“Christ doesn’t save by going around handing out tickets to heaven. He saves by giving himself.” – Patrick Ramsey (quoted by John Ortberg, Eternity is Now in Session, 44)

Faith is relational loyalty.

B. Become like Jesus.

Our salvation begins with the forgiveness of our sins, but it also includes the kind of people we will become. Our salvation is both our legal declaration of justification and the healing of our soul through our union with Jesus.

Modern, secular culture disciplines us to look inside to discover “our truth” and our authentic self. Jesus disciplines us to look to him for truth and identity.

C. Live on mission with Jesus.

We are called to live with Jesus now in his Kingdom to see it extended on the earth as in heaven. Our whole life is an arena for the gracious rule of God’s beautiful Kingdom to permeate like yeast in dough.

See YouTube “Sheep Among Wolves, Vol. 2” (underground church in Iran) (0:13:15 – 0:15:30; 0:16:30 – 0:17:00): Iranian Christian and Dalton Thomas talking about the difference between living as a disciple and convert.

D. The need for decision

“Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.” – Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, 59

“The greatest issue facing the world today with all its heartbreaking needs is whether those who are identified as Christians will become disciples – students, apprentices, practitioners of Jesus Christ steadily learning from him how to live life in the Kingdom of the Heavens into every corner of human existence. That’s it. Jesus is not looking for converts to Christianity. He is looking for apprentices to the Kingdom of God.” – Dallas Willard

“Simply put, discipleship is the means by which we learn to live the life that Jesus offers. Christianity was never intended to produce Christians. Just disciples.” – John Ortberg, Eternity is Now in Session, 52.

A disciple lives in union with Jesus to learn to joyfully live in God’s beautiful Kingdom.

See proposed definitions on separate card.

III. The Greatest Invitation Possible: “Come, follow me.”

Discussion Questions:

1. How was being a “Christian” explained to you (explicitly or implicitly)? Were you taught that a Christian is a disciple of Jesus? If so, how was this communicated to you?
2. What made the biggest impression on you in this sermon? Why?
3. To be called to be a disciple of Jesus included three commitments: 1) Be with Jesus, 2) Become like Jesus, and 3) Live on mission with Jesus. Which of these raises the most questions for you? Which most excites you?
4. What difference could it make if professing Christians committed to these three commitments as disciples of Jesus? Do you agree this is a needed change today in the Western church?
5. If possible watch You Tube video “Sheep Among Wolves, Vol. 2”(see 0:13:15 – 0:15:30; 0:16:30 – 0:17:00) about the difference between a disciple and a convert? What’s your response?

Recommended: *The Chosen* (see YouTube) – scenes of Jesus calling his disciples.