

Discipleship series

The call to discipleship

At the close of life, the question will not be,

"How much have you gotten?" but "How much have you given?"

Not "How much have you won?" but "How much have you done?"

Not "How much have you saved?" but "How much have you sacrificed?"

It will be "How much have you loved and served," not "How much were you honored?"

Nathan C. Schaeffer

Matthew 4:18-22

While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

1) A call to Himself

- We so often mistake discipleship as a list of doing things for God, the spiritual disciplines in particular
 - Read your Bible daily
 - Prayer
 - Fellowship
 - Fasting
 - Giving
- These disciplines, and others, are good and necessary for spiritual growth, but they in themselves don't constitute discipleship or even lead to spiritual maturity.
- The rich young ruler wanted to know what he could do to inherit eternal life
 - Mark 10:17-21 And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother." And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."
 - The young man was happy to do all the right things, do the spiritual disciplines, but he didn't want Jesus
- It's easy for us to want to do the right things, but not want Jesus
 - Many people go through a ritual of having a quick Bible reading and prayer in the mornings, but never connect with the living Saviour
 - Plenty of unbelievers attend church every Sunday, but have never come to know the Chief Shepherd of the church
- In simpler terms, being a disciple is like being an apprentice. Consider how an electrician or other tradesman grows in skill: by looking to and following someone we become able to do what that person does. Dallas Willard writes, "A disciple of Jesus is not necessarily one devoted to doing specifically religious things as that is usually understood. ... I am learning from Jesus how to lead my life, my whole life, my real life.
- When Jesus calls us to discipleship, He calls us to Himself to have a relationship with Him and to learn from Him
 - Matthew 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
- It is in knowing Him and walking with Him that we become all that He intends us to be

2) A call to transformation

- When Jesus calls us to Himself, He meets us where we are but intends to make us what He wants us to be
 - Matthew 4:19 And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."
 - Peter, Andrew, James, and John were fishermen and so Jesus used terminology that made sense to them
 - Jesus meets us all where we're at and draws us to himself in ways that make sense to each of us
- When we follow Jesus we submit to His call for transformation into what He wants us to be.
- Discipleship with Jesus is more than us learning how to do spiritual disciplines
 - It's a complete change of lifestyle that affects every part of our lives
- Jesus matured holistically, and, in the same way, transforms his disciples holistically
 - Luke 2:52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.
- He transforms us:
 - Mentally: He grew in wisdom
 - Ephesians 4:22-23 Put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds.
 - Physically: He grew in stature
 - 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.
 - Spiritually: He grew in favour with God
 - 2 Peter 3:18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
 - Socially: He grew in favour with man
 - Colossians 4:5-6 Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.
- Discipleship never happens in isolation; it happens with a mentor in community
 - Jesus called His disciples to Himself – He was their mentor
 - Timothy had Paul as a mentor
 - He called them together – He created a community of disciples
 - Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.
- Who is your Paul – your mentor?
- Who is your Timothy – your disciple?

3) Potential obstacles to discipleship

- When Jesus called the disciples, they left their nets immediately and followed Him
- They could have had obstacles that prevented them from resisting Jesus' call to discipleship
 - They were fishermen by profession. To leave their nets to follow Jesus would have been a call to leave their livelihood behind to follow Him. The same was the case for Matthew, a tax collector.
 - James and John were mending their nets with their father, which meant that they would leave the work to him to do in order to follow Jesus.
 - Zebedee could have prevented them from following Jesus
- Other excuses that stop us from being disciples
 - Moses claimed that he couldn't speak well
 - Exodus 4:10 But Moses said to the LORD, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue."
 - Jeremiah claimed that he was too young
 - Jeremiah 1:6 "Alas, Sovereign LORD," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am too young."
 - Abraham was too old
 - Hebrews 11:12 And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.
 - Isaiah was too sinful
 - Isaiah 6:5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."
- God has heard every excuse that ever existed not to follow Him in discipleship
 - What excuse do you have that prevents you from submitting to His call to Himself and discipleship?