

Becoming a Follower of Jesus

Mark 1: 16-20

This is early in the public ministry of Jesus. As He continued to preach and minister to the people, His fame began to spread. Many were beginning to talk of the Man, Jesus, and desired to see Him.

His fame had also begun to gather the attention of the religious elite of that day. They were looking for the Messiah to come, but Jesus did not meet their expectations. He was viewed as a common and lowly Man. Despite the wisdom and power with which He ministered, many never realized that Jesus was the Christ. His poor and humble childhood and lack of formal education was a great stumbling block for many.

In our text Jesus has passed by some common fishermen and extended the call to follow after Him. This common, humble Man from Galilee was seeking men to serve alongside Him. He didn't go to the Temple or to the Synagogues; Jesus went out among the world to find disciples. He was more concerned with their heart than their heredity. He sought those with passion rather than prestige. He chose men of faith instead of men of fame.

Jesus continues to seek the same characteristics these men had in the lives of people today. Our ability to know and serve the Lord is not based upon or limited to our possessions, our positions, or our prominence. Jesus is looking for those who have a desire to serve Him. I want to look at the encounter these men had with Jesus as He called them that day. We need to understand and embrace the truths of: [Becoming a Follower of Jesus](#).

I. Their Calling (17) – **And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.** The call that Jesus extended was very simple, but it reveals several things to us. Notice:

A. The Invitation – **Come ye after me.** These men had already met Jesus. They were familiar with who He was and even regarded Him as the Messiah. That initial encounter with Jesus would not be the last.

- Now Jesus has returned unto them with an invitation to follow Him in service. He wanted these men to come and work alongside Him.
- I rejoice to know that Jesus doesn't just come by or speak once and that is it. He is not obligated to speak more than once, but often He passes by again and again seeking the hearts of men.

- Just as it was with the disciples, we too must hear and heed the call of our Lord. In this passage, these men have received an invitation to service. But, before that invitation can be offered, one must accept the invitation to salvation. You have likely heard an invitation from the Lord. Whatever He desires of you, I would encourage you to respond and follow Him.
- We can't respond without an invitation. Salvation and our service unto the Lord is not something we choose the timing or decide the direction. **Jn.6:44 – No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.** We must listen as the Lord invites us unto Him.

B. The Intention – **Come ye after me, and I will make you...fishers of men.** Jesus was very clear in His desire for these men. (He is always clear when it comes to His desire for our lives. It often requires prayer and commitment to understand, but the will of God is not vague.) He had a specific work for them to do and revealed His intention for their lives.

- This was a specific call to the disciples, and yet it is the same call that all hear from the Lord. It is His desire that we all serve as fishers of men. The Lord wants us all to be a witness and bear His testimony among the world. There is not a soul who has ever been saved that the Lord did not desire to be a witness and reach others for His glory!
- I don't know where you are in the journey today, but I can assure you that God has a plan for your life. He has a purpose for you to fulfill. We are not here to simply coast through life and ease right into heaven. We are saved and set apart to serve the Lord. He intends for us to be of service in some capacity. I am convinced that most have a problem with obedience to the intentions of God rather than discerning His intention for their lives.

C. The Investment – **Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.** Jesus reveals that their lives will be a work in progress. Hearing and answering the call was an important decision, but it wasn't all that was involved. These men would encounter new and challenging tasks as they walked with Jesus. There would be seasons of difficulty and moments when their faith would be put to the test. These men had a lot to learn and needed to grow in the Lord. They were great fishermen, but it would take time for them to become fishers of men.

- The Lord was making a great investment in them and they too must be committed to making an investment in Him. There was much to learn and they must be determined to walk patiently and consistently if they were to fulfill the Lord's desire for their lives.
- God has a plan for each of His children, but that plan is not fulfilled over-night. There is a great work for all to do, but it is a work in progress. We must be willing to continue in the Lord's way, becoming what He would have us be. The children sing the song "He's still Working on Me," and there is much truth in that simple song. Are we willing to continue with the Lord and allow Him to make us what He desires us to be?

I. Their Calling (17)

II. Their Commitment (18-20) – And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.

[19] And when he had gone a little farther thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. [20] And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

The commitment that the disciples showed was revealed in three distinct areas. If we are to heed the Lord's call, the same commitment must be evident in our lives as well.

A. Commitment Involved Following – Andrew and Peter followed Him. James and John went after Him. They heard the Lord's call and they decided to follow Jesus. It would have been little value to have heard the Lord's call and yet not have responded. They had to make the choice.

- I know this is very simple and yet it is very profound. I am convinced that we've all heard the call of God, but have we responded? Have we decided to follow Jesus? Just knowing His will and purpose for our lives isn't enough. We must follow Jesus.

- This will not always be easy. The disciples had little information other than they were going to become fishers of men. Abraham was called upon to follow God unto a land that He would show him. Moses was called to take a journey back into Egypt. God has called us to follow Him in the path that He has chosen for us. If we are to enjoy victory and be of service unto our Lord, we must be willing to follow Him. This will likely require one step at a time, one day at a time, but we can rest assured that He is in control and will always lead us in the right path.

B. Commitment Involved Forsaking – Andrew and Peter forsook their nets and followed Jesus. James and John left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after Him. Keep in mind that this was all these men knew. They had worked hard, building a reputable fishing business. Jesus called and they walked away from the life they knew, including their families and their livelihood to follow Jesus. They forsook everything to follow Him. Jesus immediately became their priority.

- If we are to follow Jesus, we too must be willing to forsake some things in this life. We must be willing to lay aside and abandon anything that would stand between us and the Lord. We must be willing to sell out entirely to Christ and His will for our lives. **Lu.9:23 – And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. Lu.14:26 – If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Lu.14:33 – So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.**

C. Commitment Involved Faith – Just imagine the uncertainty that these men must've felt. They were walking away from everything and everyone they knew to follow Jesus. They were giving up the peace and security of the life they knew to follow Jesus into an unknown future. No doubt, they were certain of His ability and power, but they had no way of knowing what the future would bring. It took great faith for them to follow Jesus in this capacity. He wasn't asking for a couple of hours or a few days; Jesus wanted them to follow Him and do His will the rest of their lives.

- Making a commitment to follow Jesus will be a leap of faith. We come to Him in salvation by faith, and we must follow Him in service by faith. He may not ask us to pack up and move, and then again He might. He might not ask us to serve outside our comfort zone, but likely He will. He might not use us in ways we never imagined at first, but eventually He will. This will take faith!

I. Their Calling (17)

II. Their Commitment (18-20)

III. Their Character (16; 19) – These men reveal the true character of those who heed the call and decide to follow Jesus. We find that some are:

A. Casters (16) – *Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.* These men had already spent a long night fishing and rather than giving up or being satisfied with the catch they had, they continued to cast their nets.

- We need those who have determined to cast their nets for the Lord. Some have been gifted with the ability to reach out to those who need the Lord. Some are gifted with sharing their testimony and confronting the lost. If God has blessed you with that ability, use it for His glory.

B. Menders (19) – *And when he had gone a little farther thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets.* James and John felt as if their work for the night was complete and they were busy mending their nets. The word *mending* has the idea of “*rendering complete, or strengthening and preparing.*” They were already focused on the next day's work. They were making preparations to secure the fish that would be caught the next day.

- From the perspective of ministry, James and John differ from Andrew and Peter. They picture those who are concerned with maintaining the catch. These are those who care for and minister to the new converts. They care for them, disciplining them in the ways of God. They too serve an important role. Once folks are born into the family of God they must be fed and nurtured in the ways of God so that they can grow in Him.

C. Adapters – All of these men were asked to step out in faith and perform a task that they were unfamiliar with. The gifts and abilities they already possessed would likely come in handy, but they had to be open to change and learning new ways.

- We too must be willing and able to adapt. God has gifted us in certain areas, but that is no guarantee that He would never take us into uncharted waters. We must be willing to follow the Lord wherever He leads and trust Him to equip us for the task at hand. Keep in mind that God doesn't call the equipped; He equips the called. If God has brought you to it, He will lead you through it. If He is in it, He will provide. Are we willing to step out in faith and follow Him? Are we willing to adapt for His glory?

All of God's children have a work to do. Christ has called each of us to a life of service for Him. We must heed the call, follow Him, and develop as He strengthens us.

If you have never been saved, Jesus is calling you to salvation. If you have heard the call, I urge you to respond in repentance and confession.