

"First Followers"

Matthew 4:18-25

Overview



Most of us have a best friend (or a small group of people) that we enjoy living life with. Such people are the ones who know our joys and sorrows, who we go to for support, and who we may even consider to be closer to us than family.

Jesus had just such a group – 12 men who spent about 3 years with Him and who knew Him better than anyone else. They experienced all the heights and depths of ministry (the triumphs, the heartaches, and everything in-between).

In today's passage we see Jesus calling some of these men to follow Him. What an adventure it must have been in those early days to follow the Christ! But come to think of it - we can still choose that adventure today!!

Getting Started

Calling all BFF's!!



1. Did you have a best friend growing up? Who was it (and how (or why)) did that person become your best friend?
 2. What crew (either real or fictional) do you wish you could be a part of? Why?
 3. What would be your dream team? Pick a sport, an activity, a vocation, etc. and share who you think should be included in your "best of all time" group?
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The Text



¹⁸ As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." ²⁰ At once they left their nets and followed him.

²¹ Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, ²² and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

²³ Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. ²⁴ News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them. ²⁵ Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

Matthew 4:18-25 (NIV)

The Video (optional) *“First Followers” – Matthew 4:18-25* - by Kyle Corbin, Jan. 24/21
(view at www.immanuelonline.ca)



NOTES: _____

Understanding



1. Who does Jesus call to follow Him in verses 18-22? What are these men doing at the time of their call?
2. How does Jesus extend the call and what does that indicate about Jesus (given that usually at this time it was customary for the prospective student to be the one to initiate such a conversation with a rabbi)?
3. What does Jesus mean when He tells these individuals that they will be sent out to “fish for people” (vs. 19)? (NB: Consider also Jer. 16:16-18 and Matthew 13:47-50). Do you think these men understood what this meant? Why or why not?
4. What does the response to Jesus’ call (vs. 20, 22) indicate to you about these men? What does it say about how they viewed Jesus?? (NB: Check out Matt. 3:11, John 1:29-42, Luke 5:1-11 to see that these men knew Jesus for some time before this call). What does their response say about Jesus Himself (check Matthew 7:28-29)?
5. What activities does Jesus engage in as He expands His ministry (vs. 23-24)? Which people does Jesus seem to be focusing on (note where the people are coming from and consider also Luke 4:18-19)?
6. Jesus does not simply draw people out to hear Him. The crowds actually follow Him around (vs. 25)? Why would people go to such efforts? What were they expecting from Jesus? How might their response help explain the negative reactions of the people and religious leaders later on?

Applying



1. Have you ever called anyone to follow you in some way? Would you ever do that? Why or why not? Should you (and again – why or why not)? Consider Matthew 16:24, Romans 12:4-8, Eph. 4:15-16, Phil. 4:9.
2. Do you see much of this intentional calling (people being asked to follow in discipleship) happening in the church today? What do you think is the reason for what you are observing in this area? What, if anything, do you think needs to change in this aspect of church life?
3. Does Jesus involve all the men mentioned in this passage to the same degree in His ministry (check Matthew 17:1, 26:37)? How does Jesus' example in this impact our understanding of community and ministry?
4. What does the call of Jesus mean for the lives of these men (check also Matt. 8:19-22, 19:21-22; Luke 9:23-27)? What has following Jesus' call meant for your life? What did it change? What did it cost you? What did it give you?
5. Fishermen were not the elite of their society, yet Jesus begins His ministry with men such as these (consider also Matt. 13:31-32). Does this fact encourage you, challenge you, or impact you in some other way? Explain.
6. Jesus' ministry is accompanied by many miracles of healing (vs. 23-24)? Does God work in this same way today and in our culture? Why or why not? What role, if any, should miracles play in our evangelistic efforts?
7. In His ministry, Jesus has a few devoted followers that truly leave all to follow Him and a much larger group (or "crowd") made up of people that tend to come and go. What do you believe the church is made up of mostly today ("followers" or "crowd")? Why do you think this is so?
8. What do you need to do to be more "fully-devoted" in your discipleship and following of Jesus Christ? What "nets" or things do you sense God calling you to give up in order to follow Jesus completely (and/or to become more effective as a "fisher of people")? NB: The "nets" Pastor Kyle mentioned are a 1) current life without Jesus, 2) safety and comfort, and 3) a focus on church life which avoids going "out" to talk to others.

Memory Verse(s)



- ¹⁹ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."
²⁰ At once they left their nets and followed him.

Matthew 4:19-20 (NIV)

Extra Resources



- ❖ “*First Followers*” – *Matthew 4:18-25* - by Kyle Corbin, Jan. 24/21 (view at www.immanuelonline.ca). Pastor Kyle reviews the importance of Christ’s call for us to be “fishers of people”.
- ❖ “*The Master Plan of Evangelism*” – by Dr. Robert E. Coleman (Revell, 1993). Originally released in the 1960’s, this timeless classic outlines the method Jesus used to share the Good News.
- ❖ “*Follow Me*” – by Jan. D. Hettinga (NavPress, 1996). In this book Hettinga addresses the obstacles that keep us from following Christ (as he challenges us to submit to Christ’s leadership).