

Do You Have What it Takes to Be a Disciple?

Texts: Mark 1:16-20, Mark 8:33-37, Mark 16:14-16

General Direction

To explore the training Jesus gives his disciples as he prepares them to be his witnesses after his departure. [Deliver this message after the reading for Week 11 is completed.]

Back Story

The story of the Bible has been leading to this point, where God himself will enter the world he has created in the person of Jesus. Since the early pages of the Bible it has been foretold that a messiah will come to the Jewish people, and that through him, the whole world will be blessed.

At age 30 Jesus began his public ministry, and we rarely find him alone. He immediately selected a group of disciples to train and develop. These disciples will carry on Jesus' work after his death, resurrection, and ascension. Much of the story of Jesus involves his interaction with the disciples.

Sermon Purpose and Outline

This message will focus on the selection, training, and commissioning of Jesus' disciples. We will examine the faith it takes to be a committed disciple of Christ.

Sermon Question: How do you know if you are a committed disciple of Christ?

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| 1. When he calls, you follow | Mark 1:16-20 |
| 2. When he corrects, you respond | Mark 8:33-37 |
| 3. When he commissions, you go | Mark 16:14-16 |

Sermon Introduction

One of the most chilling questions Jesus asked his disciples was:

"Why do you call me Lord and not do what I command?" Luke 6:46

With this single question, Jesus exposed a chasm that you have probably seen, and maybe you're caught in it yourself. It's the chasm between those who are committed disciples of Christ, and those who merely give lip service to following Christ. It can be downright embarrassing to call yourself a "Christian," when so many people know so-called "Christians" who claim Christ as their Lord, but don't actually follow him or obey him.

Illustration

According to pollster George Gallup, there is very little difference in ethical behavior between churchgoers and those who are not active religiously. The levels of lying, cheating, and stealing are remarkable similar in both groups. Eight out of ten Americans consider themselves Christians, yet only about half of them could identify the person who gave the Sermon on the Mount, and fewer still could recall five of the Ten Commandments. Only two in ten said they would be willing to suffer for their faith.

So, how do you know if you are a committed disciple of Christ's? What is it about your life that makes you discernibly different from your co-worker or neighbor who claims no affiliation with Jesus? Is it possible that you are a professing Christian, but only a half-hearted disciple? The reputation of Jesus depends largely on the behavior of those who claim to be his followers. This is serious business if we represent him poorly. Would Jesus have to speak these words to you?

"Why do you call me Lord and not do what I command?"

Connection to the Overarching Theme: The Journey of Faith

Being a devoted follower of Jesus requires faith. Discipleship demands that we set our own agenda aside in order to discover his. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "*Salvation is free ... but discipleship will cost you your life.*" We do not follow Jesus to get where we want to go; we follow Jesus to get where he wants us to go. Once again, as with Abraham, Moses, Gideon, and David, God asks: Will you trust me? Let's continue the journey of faith as we watch Jesus interact with the disciples.

Sermon Question: How do you know if you are a committed disciple of Christ?

1. When he calls, you follow

Mark 1:16-20

¹⁶As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." ¹⁸At once they left their nets and followed him.

*¹⁹When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰Without delay **he called them**, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and **followed him**.*

Textual Explanation

Jesus is forming a group around himself. These men will be his closest friends and supporters. Their primary responsibility is to follow him and learn from him. One day he will send these men out with his message. Along the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus calls Peter, Andrew,

James, and John to be four of his disciples. But, in order to follow, they have to be willing to leave their homes, their families, and their fishing trade. Notice that Jesus did not say, "I will give you a job." He said, "I will make you..." Being a disciple means being made into something different. Jesus informs Peter and Andrew that he will make them into "fishers of men" where formerly they have been fishers of fish. The scripture tells us that they left their nets and followed him. That took faith!

Creative Teaching Tool: Fishing Nets

Use actual fishing nets as a visual aid to represent what Christ might be calling us to leave behind.

Note that the text reads: *they left their nets and followed him.* Often the reason we are not committed disciples of Christ is that we are unwilling to leave something behind.

What "net" is Christ asking you to leave? Make no mistake about it, when Jesus calls you to follow, it will mean leaving something. Meet him on the beach today. Listen to his command "follow me!" What nets will you have to leave behind?

Following implies leaving something behind. This takes faith! When Jesus calls us to follow, he calls us to leave...

- Our bitter resentments and petty gossip
- Our destructive volcanic rage
- The lie that our self worth is the equivalent of our net worth
- The deception that we are the center of the universe
- Our narcissism
- Our materialism
- Our racism

So, if following implies leaving, what are the nets that you haven't left behind yet? What are the things you're hanging onto that make you look no different than your friend who has never claimed to be a follower of Christ's? What has your lack of faith caused you to hang onto way too long? If you are a committed follower of Christ, when he calls, you follow.

2. When he corrects, you respond

Mark 8:33-35

³³ *They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?"* ³⁴ *But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.*

³⁵ *Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."*

Textual Explanation

Tragically, this conversation occurs as Jesus is attempting to explain his upcoming death to his disciples. In a number of settings, Jesus clearly tells his closest friends that he will suffer and die. In the midst of this revelation comes the disheartening fact that the disciples are preoccupied with position and power.

Jesus explains that the path to greatness is the path of the servant. A short time after this incident, Jesus will declare that his own purpose in coming is that of a servant and savior.

⁴⁵For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Mark 10:45

As the disciples followed Jesus, he was faithful in teaching, training, and correcting them. One of the key responsibilities of discipleship is responding to this correction.

Timeless Principal

The path of discipleship is a path of growth and growth requires change. As we follow Christ we will inevitably come under his corrective hand. Christ desires to correct our actions, reactions, attitudes, and behaviors, and no area of life is to be off-limits to his correcting hand.

God desires not only to have our worship, but also to have the directive voice in how we handle our speech, our money, our marriage, and our work.

Whole-hearted discipleship involves responding to God's correction in our lives. The Holy Spirit will point out a behavior, attitude or habit that is not Christ-like, and prompt us to respond. This response is known as obedience, and it can take faith to obey.

Illustration: *National Lampoon's Vacation*

In the movie "classic," National Lampoon's Vacation, Chevy Chase as Clark Griswold takes his family across the country to their dream vacation at Wally World. Along the way, Clark gets lost several times. One time was in St. Louis, in a neighborhood that made Clark and his family feel more and more scared. As time wore on and the fear and distress increased, the family started asking, "Are you sure you know where we are?" Confidently Clark gave the answer every man knows by heart, "No problem, kids. We're just getting to see a part of America you don't see every day." Right then, several gun shots went off, and Clark quickly said, "Roll 'em up!" The family's trust in their fearless leader evaporated, and they were scared to death!

Isn't that the way we sometimes end up with our Good Shepherd? At the beginning of the trip, like good sheep, we say to Jesus, "I'll follow you wherever you go!" But then Jesus says to kids, "I want you to go the honest way - don't cheat." He says to teens, "I want you to take the high road - don't have sex." He says to adults, "I want you to take the faithful way - bring your children up in the nurture of the Lord. Have devotions. Be regular in church attendance." And we say, "Are you sure Lord? That's kind of hard." Then things start getting more difficult. Jesus says to spouses, "Be willing to turn the other cheek. Don't be so judgmental of your spouse." He says to kids, "Don't be so lazy with your parents. Do your chores." So we say, "Are you sure, Lord?" The true sign of a sheep is one who is willing to follow, even through the valley of the shadow of death. Sheep are so trusting and so dumb that they don't really think about where they're going. They're so enamored with their Shepherd's voice that they're willing to follow him anywhere! Are you a sheep? Are you willing to follow?

~ Contributed to Sermon Central by Joel Pankow

Cross References

Many passages in the scriptures speak of the transformation that obedience to God works in our lives.

Romans 12:2

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

1 John 1:8,9

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

If you are a committed follower of Christ, when he corrects, you respond.

3. When he commissions, you go

Mark 16:14-15

¹⁴*Later Jesus appeared to the eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen.*

¹⁵*He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."*

Textual Explanation

This event occurs after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. He commissions the disciples to preach the good news. This is why they have been with him all along.

Mark 3:14 prepares us for this moment.

He (Jesus) appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach.

Jesus' purpose in selecting the twelve disciples was to train them in order to send them out. Now the time has come to leave them. He commissions them to carry on his work.

Cross References

There are two other references to Jesus commissioning his disciples. Look at what responsibilities he gives them to carry out after he leaves:

Matthew 28:18

¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Acts 1:8

⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Timeless Principal

What occurred with the disciples is intended to happen within us too. We draw near to Christ in order to be sent out. We learn from him in order to represent him in the world.

Application

- How would your life change if you viewed yourself as “one who is sent”?
- How would your conversational patterns at work change if you viewed yourself as a representative of Jesus sent into your company?
- How would your reactions with your children be altered if you viewed yourself as representing Jesus to your children?
- How would your actions change if you saw yourself as a representative of Christ when interacting with friends at the gym or at a social gathering?

If you are a committed follower of Christ, when he commissions, you go.

Closing

The first disciples were radically transformed by their relationship with Jesus. Following the resurrection, when Peter and John are interrogated by the religious leaders, the conclusion is stunning.

Acts 4:13

*When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that **these men had been with Jesus.***

Illustration: "How Christ's Followers Changed" quote

So many people were dramatically transformed by being with Jesus.

Peter, the "sandpile," ultimately became the Rock who would not move in his dedication to the cause of Christ, even in the face of death.

Zacchaeus, the wicked tax-collector, became a champion of the poor.

Mary Magdalene, the woman of the streets, became the woman who stood weeping outside the tomb of Jesus.

The Apostles James and John, the ridiculous "Mama's boys," became Christ's men, proclaiming the Good News of God's unconditional love with wisdom and strength.

Doubting Thomas, the all-star bullhead became an all-star believer in the resurrection power of God.

The thief hanging on the cross who had lived a life of crime became an instant saint.

—*Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations*

Like Peter and Zacchaeus and Mary Magdalene and Thomas, when we become a committed follower of Jesus, he transforms us, and that transformation should make us discernibly different from people who do not claim to be Christians.

So, are you a committed disciple of Christ? When he calls, do you drop any hindrances and follow? When he corrects, do you respond in obedience? When he commissions, do you go as his representative? When people look at your life, is it obvious, as with Peter and John, that you have "been with Jesus"?