

## **The King's Call To Discipleship**

### **Matthew 4:18-25**

#### **Introduction**

The chapter began with Jesus and the Devil (vv.1-11). The chapter continued with Jesus and the desperate (vv.12-17). Now the chapter ends with Jesus and His call to discipleship (vv.18-22).

The King begins His Kingdom by calling ordinary people to an extraordinary task.

What is that task? Jesus said, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men". The normal expected outcome of Discipleship is Evangelism. The Lord Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). In Luke's Gospel (4:18-19) when Jesus opens the scroll of Isaiah and says; "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord"; the task—is rescue—rescue people from sin!

The Lord in His wisdom elects to use people to reach people through discipleship that leads to evangelism. Evangelism has been called the sob of God. God sent Jesus into the world to teach, to preach, to die and rise from the dead.

I recall vividly hearing the news that God loved people. But I didn't believe it. When I finally came to believe that God really loved people; and that God loved someone like me; and was willing to save someone like me; like the hymn says; "I scarce could take it in". I am still amazed by God's love and God's grace. But there is another wonder! God desires you and I to be Christ's disciples. The Lord desires to include you and me in His plan to reach the world with His love; to preach the gospel and teach the Bible and minister and serve hurting people! I believe with all my heart that God is quite capable of reaching every person in this world without you and without me. The real wonder—isn't that God is simply willing to save us; but to use us in His plan in building His Kingdom.

#### **The Call To Discipleship: Follow Me (vv.18-22)**

*Matthew 4:18 (NKJV) 18 And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.*

In John's Gospel we learn that Andrew was a 'disciple' of John the Baptist; and that John called Jesus "the Lamb of God" and "the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus" (John 1:37). John's Gospel describes Andrew finding his brother Simon and introducing to Simon Peter to Jesus. There seems to be a great deal of evidence that there was a call or invitation to come to Jesus as Savior and then follow Jesus as Master. The true Christian does both; a call to salvation and a call to service.

**The King's Call To Discipleship**  
**Matthew 4:18-25**

*19Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."*

In this single sentence we find the secrets of discipleship.

<b>The Source Of The Call</b>	<b>"He said"</b>
<b>The Direction Of The Called</b>	<b>"Follow"</b>
<b>The Object Of The Called</b>	<b>"Me"</b>
<b>The Results For The Called</b>	<b>"I will make you"</b>
<b>The Work Of The Called</b>	<b>"fishers of men"</b>

Jesus is the source of the call. In the end the call to discipleship must come from Jesus.

When Jesus says follow me; it isn't simply a reference to intimacy or proximity—but it includes both of those ideas. How can we know the character of Christ if we do not follow Christ?

We are invited to embrace and cultivate Christ's character in our lives. The Bible does not invite discipleship absent Christ's character in our lives.

Eloquence or education can never serve as a satisfying substitute for a right heart and a right life.

You may be an expert on fish. You may be an expert on lures; have vast knowledge where the fish are swimming and be able to endure discomfort or hardship to catch fish.

Have you heard the call? Have you received the invitation to follow Jesus? For Peter and Andrew and James and John the ministry will begin with teaching, preaching and healing. But their journey with Jesus will not be all fun and games.

Billy Graham: "Jesus invited us, not to a picnic, but to a pilgrimage; not to a frolic, but to a fight. He offered us, not an excursion, but an execution. Our Savior said that we have to be ready to die to self, sin and the world."

*20They immediately left their nets and followed Him.*

The call to discipleship results in an immediate response! We might add to our list;

<b>The Response Of The Called</b>	<b>"They immediately. . .and followed Him"</b>
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*21Going 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. He called them,*

## **The King's Call To Discipleship**

### **Matthew 4:18-25**

*22and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.*

Once again the response is prompt, immediate, full, and permanent. W. Griffith Thomas likened their response to hearing the commands of a King; to be obeyed; “without hesitation, reservation, or change of heart” (See *Outline Studies in Matthew*; p.58). In this case they leave “the boat” (the source of employment) and “their father” (strong family ties).

What is your priority in life? For James and John—it wasn't employment or family! The radical call to discipleship supersedes all earthly ties!

Billy Graham said; “Salvation is free, but discipleship costs everything we have.”

### **The Method Of Discipleship: Copy Me (v.23)**

*23And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.*

The verse serves the function of both summary and survey for the rest of Matthew's Gospel. In Matthew chapters 5-7 Jesus will teach and chapters 8-9 will give examples of Christ's miracles!

The call to discipleship begins with the command to follow Jesus and continues with the example of Jesus. Jesus reveals and employs three methods;

1. **Teaching:** We might think of this as instruction; not just the impartation of information, but direction. The chief place was “their synagogues” or meeting halls. In the Jewish culture of the first century we believe these meeting places were widely used and played an important role in the Jewish communities.

2. **Preaching:** Matthew says it is “the gospel of the kingdom”. This appears to be the emphasis of the preaching. The emphasis was to be on the rule of God; and the rule of His Son. I believe the focus was not simply on a future reign in the eternal state—but an invitation—to believe and receive Jesus as King in that Kingdom. Here we see the expectation that this Kingdom set up on the earth. This is the first mention of the “gospel” in the New Testament. **The word gospel means the good news about salvation! In every age in the history of their world there has only been one gospel.** God has provided a Savior. William MacDonald writes; “When Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom, He was announcing His coming as King of the Jews and explaining the terms of admission into His Kingdom. His miracles showed the wholesome nature of the kingdom” (see *Believer's Bible Commentary*; p.1215).

3. **Healing:** The healing includes “all kinds of sickness” and “all kinds of diseases among the people.” The presence of disease and sickness speaks to the broken conditions of fragile humanity. The healing speaks of the powerful presence of power; nothing is too hard for

## **The King's Call To Discipleship**

### **Matthew 4:18-25**

our Divine Savior and King. We do not wish to trivialize or erode our confident faith that God can and will heal His servants, and saints and sinners! But I also want to bring a little balance and perspective. Teaching and preaching precede healing. And yet teaching and preaching bring also the revelation of need and a new expectation of hope in Christ! The word “healing” incorporates a restoration to wholeness and wellness and the vanquishing of sickness and disease.

### **The Results Of Discipleship: Fame; Faith; Following (vv.24-25)**

*24Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them.*

The results of discipleship include fame, faith and following. But the words and their applications are different than how our culture and society think of fame, faith, and following.

The word ‘fame’ translates the Greek *akoe* (from the verb *akouo*—hear); the noun means “that which is heard”. We call this “news” (NASB; NIV).

Matthew means the Roman province of Syria which would incorporate the areas we know as Syria and Lebanon and the whole of Israel.

The call to Discipleship does not insure your fame; but His fame.

Are there famous followers of Christ? Can you imagine if Peter and Andrew and James and John would have declined the invitation?

Much of the world has heard “the news” about Jesus. The news of Jesus generated “faith”. And “they” (disciples and others) brought to Him all sick people. . .”faith on behalf of those who were sick; faith on behalf of those who were afflicted, tormented by demons, insanity, paralysis.

Some people want to debate the existence of demons or whether they can cause harm. The Bible does not debate the issue; but rather lays out a strong case that some “had devils” (demons; Luke 8:27). In Mark’s Gospel we find a demon possessed man in a cemetery (among the tombs; Mark 5:3). The demon possessed sometimes had supernatural strength (they bound him with chains; Mark 5:4); uncontrollable outbursts of anger; crying, cutting, naked. But the Bible’s consistent testimony that Jesus set the demon possessed free—“demons were departed” (Luke 8:35); and the person was in his right mind and sat at the feet of Jesus (Luke 8:35); Jesus spoke and the demons left; and the demon possessed were found sane, in their right mind and invited to go home!

## **The King's Call To Discipleship**

### **Matthew 4:18-25**

Did Jesus heal people out of love and care and compassion and concern? I think so. Did Jesus heal people to confirm and authenticate both Himself and His message? I think so.

One of great narratives throughout the gospels are the stories of men and women and children before they meet Jesus and after they meet Jesus.

B.B. Warfield wrote; "Disease and death must have been almost eliminated for a brief season from . . .the region."

Fame, faith and following. . .

*25Great multitudes followed Him—from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.*

“. . .Great multitudes followed Him” from all parts of the region; North (Galilee); East (Decapolis) and South (Jerusalem, Judea and beyond the Jordan).

The multitudes followed Jesus. For healing, for bread for hope.

But the vast majority will not follow Him to Jerusalem and to the cross.

Mary S. Wood said, "When no mark of the cross appears in our discipleship, we may doubt the ownership. We should be branded for Christ."

Vance Havner; "What our Lord said about cross-bearing and obedience is not in the fine print. It is in bold print on the face of the contract."

## **Conclusion**