

THE CALL OF DISCIPLESHIP

Anyone who wants what Jesus offers must come to Him on His terms. People cannot experience the blessings Jesus provides without answering Jesus's call. However, there have always been people who want what Jesus offers or have some interest in Jesus but are only willing to come to Jesus on their own terms. Yet, what Jesus has always wanted and called people to is that they would follow Him as His disciples! This is the same call He gives to people today.

MATTHEW 4:18-22

Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James, and John to follow Him (John 1:35-42; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11). Although these would eventually be named as apostles (Luke 6:12-16), they were first disciples. This demonstrates what Jesus truly desires from people. He was *not* just looking for people to mentally acknowledge who He was, people who would join the crowds listening to Him, people who would come to Him for healing, etc. Instead, He wanted people to be His disciples! Verse 19 also provides a model for understanding Jesus's concept of discipleship. First, notice the phrase "Follow Me." Jesus's disciples are those who have accepted Jesus's call to follow Him wherever He leads (even when it means leaving other things and/or people behind, vv. 20, 22; Luke 5:11). Second, notice the phrase "and I will make you." Jesus's disciples must give themselves to being changed and transformed by Jesus's teachings and training to go from who they were to those who are useful in His service (Ephesians 4:17-34; Colossians 3:1-17). Third, notice the phrase "fish for people." Jesus's disciples join and commit to Jesus's mission of making disciples of others (Matthew 28:18-20).

JOHN 1:43-51

Jesus's call was for Philip to follow Him. Philip had come to recognize Jesus as the One prophesied by Moses and the Prophets (the Messiah). This resulted in Philip accepting Jesus's call and endeavoring to be Jesus's disciple (and eventually an apostle, Luke 6:12-16), along with Nathanael (Bartholomew). This call resulted in them attaching themselves to Jesus as their Rabbi (Teacher). The entire purpose of such was to learn whatever Jesus desired to teach them and allow Him to shape their character and lives to conform to those teachings.

LUKE 5:27-32

Levi (Matthew, Matthew 9:9-13) had also come to know enough about Jesus that when He received the call to follow Jesus, He saw it as an extraordinary opportunity and accepted the call, even when it meant leaving everything behind to follow Jesus. Note that Levi (as a tax collector) was likely a wealthy individual. Then, you should notice Levi tried to introduce his new Teacher to others he had known (tax collectors and sinners). This was precisely how Jesus had intended for people to respond to His call, that they would join His mission!

MATTHEW 19:16-22

This passage demonstrates that not everyone accepted Jesus's call of discipleship. Though this rich man professed to keep the commandments (under the Law of Moses), Jesus called Him to more. In this, we can see that Jesus is not interested in people just checking boxes of things they are or are not to do. Today, this can include things like church attendance, Bible reading, prayer, and basic morality. Instead, Jesus is interested in people who are truly willing to seek God's kingdom first by following Him, even when it involves giving up everything/everyone else (Matthew 6:19-34; Luke 14:25-35)! Sadly, like this man, many who may want the good things Jesus offers will be unwilling to truly follow Jesus as His disciples.

JOHN 12:20-26

Though many were expecting Jesus to be glorified, Jesus's glorification would come in an unexpected way – through His death. Then, anyone who would be Jesus's servant must follow Him and go wherever He goes. There should be no separation between where Jesus is and where His servant would be. This means that Jesus's followers must follow Him even to the point of losing and hating their physical lives (considering them less important and valuable than their allegiance to Him). Only when His servants follow Him in this way will they then be honored and get to go where Jesus would go (i.e. to the Father in Heaven, John 14:1-7).

ACTS 11:19-26

Even after Jesus ascended to Heaven and following Jesus no longer involved physically traveling with Jesus to learn from and be trained by Him, the concept of discipleship continued. This is one of many examples from the book of Acts (e.g. 6:7; 9:1-2; 14:21; 18:23; 19:9). Here, we can see that the gospel of Jesus Christ continues to call people to discipleship (2 Thessalonians 2:13-15). For, while we people often identify as "Christians," only those who are disciples of Jesus can accurately identify themselves as such (Acts 11:26)! These have obeyed the gospel to begin following Jesus and then continue to grow as disciples. Therefore, being a Christian is not just about going to church and other religious activities (though these things are involved), it is about being someone to has truly accepted the call to be Jesus's disciple, committing to following Jesus wherever He leads, being changed by Jesus, and joining the mission of Jesus!

CONCLUSION

The call of the gospel is not just for you to experience the salvation Jesus provides. It is not even for you to just be a churchgoer, a Bible student, or an overall good person. It is for you to be Jesus's disciple! Therefore, you must embrace the call to follow Jesus as His disciple in your life and learn exactly what being His disciple means, not settling for any cheap substitutes of a religion that stops short of true discipleship.

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

What did Jesus call people to do?

What did Jesus *not* call people to do?

What is involved in discipleship?

What does following Jesus cost people?

Why is it not enough to just check some boxes of things God wants people to do and not do?

Why do some not accept Jesus's call to discipleship?

How much separation should there be between Jesus and His servant?

Who is a true Christian?