

DISCIPLE - Week 1

Not a Class, a Call

Text: Matthew 4:18-22

Big Idea: Discipleship is not something you attend. It is someone you follow.

Series Line: It's not a class. It's a calling.

FULL TEACHING MANUSCRIPT

Good morning, church.

Today we begin a brand new series called DISCIPLE.

And for the next eight weeks, we are going to take a serious look at what it actually means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Not what church culture says. Not what western Christianity has reduced it to. Not what makes us comfortable. But what the Bible actually teaches.

Because if we are honest, a lot of people today think discipleship means this:

- "I go to church on Sundays."

"I attend a Bible study when I can."

"I know some Scripture."

"I believe in Jesus."

"I'm trying to be a good person."

And while some of those things may be good, none of those things by themselves define biblical discipleship.

In many churches, discipleship has been reduced to a class, a course, a curriculum, a program, or a gathering you sign up for. We have turned discipleship into something you attend for a few weeks, complete, and move on from.

But when you open the Bible, Jesus does not walk around inviting people to a class. He invites them into a life. He does not say, "Come learn a few ideas." He says, "Follow me."

That is what we are dealing with today.

Because the truth is this:

- Discipleship is not something you attend. It is someone you follow.

And if we do not get this right at the beginning, we will build a church full of people who know how to sit in rows but do not know how to walk with Jesus.

So let's go to the text.

Matthew 4:18-22 (ESV)

"While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them,

'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.' Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

And going 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, and he called them.

Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him."

This is the Word of the Lord.

INTRODUCTION: WHAT WE HAVE REDUCED DISCIPLESHIP TO

Before we walk through the text, let me set the burden for this message.

One of the great dangers in church culture is that we can confuse exposure with discipleship.

Just because I hear preaching does not mean I am a disciple.

Just because I own a Bible does not mean I am a disciple.

Just because I can explain theology does not mean I am a disciple.

Just because I attend church regularly does not mean I am a disciple.

A disciple is not merely a person who agrees with Jesus. A disciple is a person who follows Jesus.

That is why this first sermon matters so much. Because before we talk about cost, formation, community, multiplication, and mission, we have to begin here:

- Discipleship starts with the call of Jesus and the response of the believer.

This passage shows us at least three foundational truths about discipleship.

1. DISCIPLESHIP BEGINS WITH THE CALL OF JESUS

"And he said to them, 'Follow me...'" (v. 19)

The first thing we see in this text is that discipleship begins not with human initiative, but with the call of Christ.

Matthew says Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, and He saw Simon Peter and Andrew casting a net into the sea, because they were fishermen. Then Jesus says to them, "Follow me."

That is the center of the text.

- Not "improve yourself."
- Not "get your life together."
- Not "come hear a lecture."
- Not "sign up for a religious experience."

He says, "Follow me."

That is discipleship.

Now this is important, because in the first century, disciples often attached themselves to a teacher or rabbi. But here Jesus reverses the pattern. These men are not out shopping for a rabbi. Jesus comes to them. He sees them. He calls them.

That means discipleship starts with grace.

Before you ever followed Jesus, Jesus first came calling for you.

Before you ever wanted Him, He wanted you.

Before you ever moved toward Him, He moved toward you.

Before you ever cleaned yourself up, He set His gaze on your life.

Church, do not miss this. Christianity is not ultimately about your search for God. It is about God's gracious pursuit of sinners in Christ.

That is what Jesus is doing here. He is not recruiting volunteers for an organization. He is summoning men into a new life under His authority.

And the language matters. "Follow me" is not just geographic movement. It is a call to attachment, allegiance, submission, and imitation.

To follow Jesus means:

- to leave your old governing center
- to place yourself under His authority
- to learn His ways
- to walk where He leads
- to become the kind of person He is forming

This is why discipleship cannot be reduced to attendance.

You can attend church and still not follow Jesus.

You can sit in a service and still resist Jesus.

You can know Christian language and still not belong to Jesus in obedient surrender.

Because discipleship is not just being near Jesus-talk. It is being under Jesus' lordship.

And I think this is where many people in church need to be lovingly confronted.

Some people want the comfort of religion without the surrender of following.

- They want inspiration, but not submission.
- They want encouragement, but not repentance.
- They want a church they can visit, but not a Christ they must obey.

But Jesus does not say, "Admire me."

He says, "Follow me."

That means discipleship is personal.

He does not say, "Follow a system."

He does not say, "Follow a tradition."

He does not say, "Follow a denomination."

He says, "Follow me."

Real discipleship is always Christ-centered.

Not church-centered only.

Not knowledge-centered only.

Not experience-centered only.

Christ-centered.

That means the fundamental question of discipleship is not, "What class am I taking?"

It is, "Am I truly following Jesus?"

And that question cuts deeper.

Because you can pass a class and still not follow Jesus.

You can finish a study guide and still not follow Jesus.

You can know the right answers and still not follow Jesus.

But when Jesus calls you, He calls all of you.

- He calls your heart.
- He calls your habits.
- He calls your schedule.
- He calls your desires.
- He calls your relationships.
- He calls your identity.
- He calls your future.

He says, "Follow me."

And that is where discipleship begins.

Application

Let me ask you plainly:

- Have you mistaken being around Christian things for actually following Christ?

Because there is a difference between being around the sound of Jesus and submitting to the voice of Jesus.

There is a difference between attending church and obeying Christ.

There is a difference between liking sermons and following the Savior.

A disciple is not just a person who hears the call. A disciple is a person who responds to it.

2. DISCIPLESHIP REQUIRES A REORDERED LIFE

"Immediately they left their nets and followed him." (v. 20)

The second thing we see is that discipleship is not merely admiration for Jesus. It is a reordered life around Jesus.

Verse 20 says,

"Immediately they left their nets and followed him."

Then verses 21-22 say James and John were in the boat with their father, mending their nets, and Jesus called them. And again Matthew says,

“Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.”

Now notice the repetition: immediately.

Matthew wants you to feel the urgency of their response.

Jesus calls. They move.

Jesus speaks. They obey.

Jesus summons. They leave.

This is important because discipleship is not just mental agreement. It is movement.

They do not say, “Let us think about it for a few weeks.”

They do not say, “Can we follow you part-time?”

They do not say, “Can we keep our lives exactly the same and add you on top?”

No. The call of Jesus creates decisive movement.

Now let’s be careful here. This does not mean every believer must physically leave their profession in the exact same way. Scripture is clear that believers serve God in many kinds of vocations. The point is not that every disciple must become vocationally itinerant. The point is that no disciple gets to keep Jesus at the edge of life.

Their nets represented livelihood, routine, familiarity, and identity.

The boat represented security and normalcy.

For James and John, even the mention of their father highlights that the call of Jesus reaches into family structures and inherited expectations.

In other words, when Jesus says “Follow me,” He is not asking for a minor adjustment. He is claiming first place.

That is what discipleship does. It reorders life around Jesus.

This is one of the clearest ways we know if someone is truly stepping into discipleship. Not whether they feel emotional. Not whether they say the right words. But whether life begins to shift under the authority of Christ.

Because when Jesus becomes Lord, things move.

Priorities move.

Schedules move.

Relationships move.

Habits move.

Money moves.

Desires move.

Goals move.

Why? Because you cannot truly follow Jesus while insisting on staying exactly where you are spiritually.

And this is where many people in the church get stuck. They want inspiration without interruption.

- They want Jesus to help their life, but not rearrange it.
- They want Jesus to bless their plans, but not govern them.
- They want Jesus as Savior, but not as Lord.

But Jesus never called anyone to add Him into an already crowded life as one more interest. He called them to re-center everything around Him.

This is why discipleship is not a class.

A class can fit into your schedule.

Discipleship takes over your life.

A class can inform one part of your mind.

Discipleship reaches every part of who you are.

A class can be completed.

Discipleship is a life of continual surrender and following.

And I want to say this pastorally: this is where some people become uneasy, because they know Jesus is calling them, but they also know following Him will require change.

For some, it will mean cutting off compromise.

For some, it will mean changing your patterns.

For some, it will mean breaking from lukewarm Christianity.

For some, it will mean stepping out of comfort.

For some, it will mean giving up control.

For some, it will mean letting Jesus define your identity, not your past, your pain, or your preferences.

But hear me: whatever Jesus asks you to leave is always less than what you gain in Him.

These men left nets, but found a kingdom.

They left boats, but found purpose.

They left an old way of life, but found the Son of God.

And that is always the logic of discipleship: what you leave behind is never greater than the One you follow.

Application

So here is the question:

- What in your life is still arranged around you instead of Jesus?

Because that is where discipleship becomes real.

- Maybe you have attended church, but your life is still centered around convenience.

- Maybe you know truth, but your decisions are still ruled by comfort.
- Maybe you love Christian content, but your actual rhythms have not shifted.

A disciple responds to Jesus with realignment.

Not perfection.

But realignment.

Not instant maturity.

But decisive surrender.

Not having it all figured out.

But saying yes to His call.

3. DISCIPLESHIP LEADS TO TRANSFORMATION AND MISSION

“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” (v. 19)

This part is powerful.

Jesus says,

“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

That means discipleship is not just about leaving something. It is about becoming someone.

Do not miss the order:

- Follow me - relationship and surrender

I will make you - transformation by Christ

fishers of men - mission and purpose

That is the pattern of discipleship.

Jesus does not merely call people away from an old life. He calls them into a new identity and purpose.

He says, in effect, “If you follow me, I will form you.”

That is important because discipleship is not self-manufactured spirituality. It is Christ-shaped formation.

He does not say, “Make yourself into something impressive.”

He says, “I will make you.”

That means discipleship is not just your effort. It is also His work.

Yes, discipleship requires surrender.

Yes, discipleship requires obedience.

Yes, discipleship requires intentionality.

But ultimately, transformation is the work of Christ in those who follow Him.

And that is good news, because if discipleship depended only on your strength, none of us would make it.

The hope of discipleship is not that you are strong enough to become like Jesus on your own. The hope is that Jesus is committed to forming those who truly follow Him.

But He does not stop there.

He says, "I will make you fishers of men."

That means discipleship is never only private. It always has a missional direction.

These men had been catching fish. Jesus says, "Now your life will be caught up in the gathering of people."

In other words, true discipleship does not terminate on personal spiritual enrichment. It moves outward.

A real disciple follows Jesus, is changed by Jesus, and begins participating in the mission of Jesus.

This matters because in modern church culture, we often define maturity as what a person knows. Jesus also defines maturity by what a person becomes and how a person joins His mission.

A disciple is not merely a person with more information. A disciple is a person being transformed by Christ and drawn into His redemptive purpose.

So if I can say it plainly:

If your Christianity never moves beyond personal inspiration, you are missing part of discipleship.

If all your spiritual life is about "what I got out of the sermon," "what I felt in worship," "what I learned for myself," but there is no concern for others, no burden for the lost, no desire to help others follow Jesus, then something is incomplete.

Because Jesus does not just call us to be with Him. He calls us to be changed by Him and used by Him.

That is what it means to be fishers of men.

Now let's be clear. This is not just about public evangelism. It includes the broader life of disciple-making. It is about joining the mission of God by helping people come to Christ and follow Christ.

Jesus is saying, "Your life is no longer just about your trade, your comfort, your plans, your small world. I am giving you a kingdom purpose."

And that is one of the great differences between attending church and being a disciple.

Attending church can leave you mostly self-focused.

Discipleship turns your life outward toward the purposes of God.

A class might increase your notes.

Discipleship changes your direction.

And some of us need this shift badly.

Because it is possible to be around church for years and still think Christianity is mainly about receiving instead of following, mainly about consuming instead of being sent.

But Jesus says, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Application

Ask yourself:

- Is Jesus only helping me live my life, or is He redefining my life around His mission?

Am I simply attending Christian environments, or am I being shaped into someone who helps other people know and follow Jesus?

That is discipleship.

BRINGING THE TEXT TOGETHER

Let's pull the whole passage together.

In Matthew 4:18-22, Jesus gives us the basic pattern of discipleship:

- Jesus calls people to Himself

Those who follow Him reorder their lives around Him

He transforms them and gives them mission

That means a disciple is not just someone who believes something about Jesus.

A disciple is someone who:

- hears His call,

responds in surrender,

follows in obedience,

is transformed by His power,

and joins His mission in the world.

So no, discipleship is not a class.

Classes can help.

Teaching matters.

Doctrine matters.

Biblical instruction matters.

But if all we do is give people information without calling them to actual following, then we have not made disciples. We have merely created informed spectators.

And I believe this is one of the great burdens for the church today.

We have many attenders.

We have many consumers.

We have many people familiar with Christian language.

But Jesus is still asking the deeper question:

- Will you follow me?

PASTORAL CONFRONTATION

Let me press this home for a moment.

There are some people who have been in church for years, but if they were honest, they are still standing at a distance from the actual call of Jesus.

They attend, but they have not surrendered.

They listen, but they have not followed.

They agree, but they have not obeyed.

They admire, but they have not reordered their life around Christ.

And Jesus is not looking for more admirers.

He is not looking for people who are impressed.

He is looking for people who will follow.

The call of Jesus is still disruptive.

It still interrupts normal life.

It still demands first place.

It still requires surrender.

It still changes direction.

It still creates disciples.

So I want to ask you:

- Are you following Jesus, or are you just attending around Him?

Because there is a difference.

A WORD TO THE CHURCH

As a church, we have to be careful here too.

We must never confuse offering discipleship environments with actually making disciples.

Midweek matters.

Tables matter.

Teaching matters.

Groups matter.

Classes matter.

But none of those things are discipleship unless they are helping people actually follow Jesus.

We are not trying to build a culture where people say, "I took the class."

We are trying to build a culture where people say, "I'm following Christ. My life is being shaped by Him. My habits are changing. My heart is being transformed. I'm living under His authority. I'm helping others follow Him too."

That is discipleship.

So yes, invite people into tables.

Yes, invite people into community.

Yes, invite people into spaces of learning.

But make sure the invitation goes deeper:

- Not just, “Come hear something.”

But, “Come follow Someone.”

CONCLUSION

Let me close with this.

When Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, He did not call the most polished, the most impressive, or the most prepared. He called ordinary men in the middle of ordinary life.

And that should encourage every person in this room.

You do not have to have everything figured out before Jesus calls you.

You do not have to be impressive before Jesus calls you.

You do not have to already be fully formed before Jesus calls you.

- He calls you, and then He forms you.

But the call is real.

And the question is not whether Jesus is still calling.

The question is whether you are willing to respond.

So today, here is the call:

- Leave the shallow version of Christianity behind.
- Leave the consumer mindset behind.
- Leave the idea that church attendance alone is discipleship behind.
- Leave the comfort of distance behind.

And hear Jesus again:

“Follow me.”

Not just on Sundays.

Not just in services.

Not just in agreement.

But with your life.

Because you do not sign up for discipleship.

You step into it.

ALTAR / RESPONSE MOMENT

I want us to respond in two ways today.

1. For the believer

If you are a Christian, but the Holy Spirit is exposing that you have settled for attendance without actual pursuit, knowledge without obedience, or church involvement without real surrender, this is your moment to respond.

- Maybe you have been near Jesus but not following closely.
- Maybe your life is still centered on you.
- Maybe Jesus is calling you into a fresh yes.

Today is the day to say:

- “Jesus, I am not just attending around You anymore. I want to follow You.”
- “Reorder my life.”
- “Reshape my priorities.”
- “Teach me to walk with You.”
- “Make me a true disciple.”

2. For the person who has never truly responded to Christ

- Maybe you have been around church, but you know you have never really surrendered your life to Jesus.

Hear me clearly: Jesus still calls sinners to Himself.

He died for our sins.

He rose again in victory.

He offers forgiveness, new life, and lordship to all who repent and believe.

The call to follow Jesus begins with surrendering your life to Him.

So if you are ready to turn from sin and trust Christ, today is your day.

PRAYER

“Lord Jesus, thank You that You still call ordinary people to follow You. Forgive us for reducing discipleship to attendance, information, and routine. Forgive us for settling for a version of Christianity that costs little and changes little. Today we hear Your voice again: ‘Follow me.’ Give us grace to respond with surrender, obedience, and faith. Reorder our lives around You. Form us into true disciples. And for those who need to trust You for the first time, draw them to Yourself even now. In Jesus’ name, amen.”