

:: summary

The world is full of followers. We're all students of our role models or those we follow and emulate, from luminaries in various professions to religious authorities, celebrities, and social media influencers. Emulation is the heart of being a disciple, or student who follows the example and teaching of another, and so it was with rabbis and disciples in the time of Jesus. *Rabbi* is a Hebrew word that literally means "my master," and was commonly used by disciples to address the one they followed. Jesus is a rabbi unlike any other, and he invites you to trade your life goals for eternal ones, as you focus your time, energy and effort on becoming like him.

:: discussion

We all aspire to something. Aspiration is a steadfast longing for a goal or something beyond yourself, more literally rendered from Latin as "panting with desire," the way a baby does before a feeding. We all have longings to achieve specific goals or become something we are not, things we often call our "dreams." We seek mentors who can help us realize our aspirations, wanting to become students of those we emulate.

What did you aspire to as a child? What do you aspire to now?

Read Matthew 4:18-20

People in Jesus' day and culture panted after deeper experience of God and His personal attributes. They hungered and thirsted for wisdom and knowledge of God from rabbis who could offer it. Rabbi Jesus, God incarnate, offered more of that to these disciples than they could possibly have imagined.

How would you articulate your spiritual aspirations?

In the time of Jesus, Jewish boys were handpicked from the very best to study the *Torah* (Old Testament Law) with a local rabbi. In the trial process, potential disciples would live with rabbis to learn their ways and prove their worth. If a student wasn't worthy of continued discipleship, they would be encouraged to return to their home and practice the family trade, and if they proved their worthiness of discipleship, a rabbi would say, "Come, follow me." This was an invitation to be powdered in the dust of their feet, meaning to follow so closely along the dirt road that their dust covers you. In other words, the invitation was to receive everything the rabbi had to offer for the sake of being changed and *becoming* like the rabbi as their dust is transferred to you.

With this in mind, how does Jesus invitation to follow him challenge your current life goals and aspirations? How does this invitation shape your spiritual aspirations?

Read Matthew 4:18-20

Reconsider the invitation Jesus made to the two fishermen: they were practicing their family trade and not chasing after Jesus, yet rabbi Jesus seeks out ordinary people them to be his followers and invites them to walk in his ways and become like him. They aspired to flourish in the family trade, but, like them, even our best earthly aspirations in our professional and personal goals ultimately have no lasting significance apart from Jesus, and the smartest thing those fisherman did was drop their nets and follow him.

What *eternal* aspirations does the God of the universe have for you? What does Jesus aspire for you?

Jesus' invitation is one of relationship and aspiration for us, an invitation to follow his ways and become like him. Jesus is not a spiritual guru or a self-help coach who will help you live your best life on your terms. Jesus himself *is* the aspiration, and life with Jesus is about pursuing eternity. We follow him out of a desire to be changed, as we are covered in his dust and become like the master in every way.

