

Dig Deeper – Follow Me

8/9/26

Matthew 4:18-22

Sunday AM

Let's begin w/ a game we all learned as kids – **Simon Says**. The rules are easy: when Simon says to do something – you do it. Otherwise – don't move.

Stand Up. Simon Says – Stand Up | Simon says Clap Simon Says – Look Up | Look Down | Spin Around. Simon Says – Say Jesus | Say Amen | Sit Down

As simple as this game is – following isn't always easy. Have you ever tried to follow someone in Atlanta traffic? Why? B/c following means allowing someone else to determine your direction. It requires listening, watching, trusting, responding – and going somewhere you might not have chosen on your own.

Years ago, while living in Europe, we took students skiing in the Alps – where we'd play – **Follow the Leader**. It wasn't bad when the skier leading wasn't skilled, but when they could ski, it got interesting.

One time in Austria, I had to follow a crazy Canuck by the name of Pat White. Pat was a legit hot dog skier. Well... he took off on double black diamond mogul and popped a helicopter. Being 2nd, I popped the jump only I didn't make it all the way around. The next thing I remember was some German man standing over of me saying, "*das muss wehgetan haben.*" Translated means – "Dude, that had to hurt?"

DYR – all of us follow someone or something? It might be a person, a political party, a group of friends – or something as simple as the Dow Jones. Whatever consistently captures your mind's attention, heart's affection, and life's ambition is discipling you!

I know what you're thinking... NOT ME! Yes you! B/c to this person or thing you've given you attention, affection, ambition, and actions. You've given your time, talents, money, and energy to learn it, engage it and support it.

This brings us to the shore of the Sea of Galilee where (2) young guys were fishing when a new rabbi, named Jesus, showed up and offered them an invitation.

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. Jesus said, "Come, follow Me and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed Him. Matthew 4:18–20

Have you ever wondered why these guys could just drop their nets, their livelihood, their families to just go walk-a-bout w/ some random teacher? If any of us did this today, people would think we've lost it.

Believe it or not – there's a perfectly good reason that most of us have never heard or pieced together. In Jesus' day, the rabbi was the spiritual teacher and rock star – and most little boys aspired to become a rabbi. Yet to become a rabbi was no easy task/process.

It all began at age 6, when a Jewish boy would begin his education in a school room often attached to the synagogue in what was called **Bet Sefer** – **House of the Book**. In Bet Sefer, the child would memorize the first (5) books of the O.T. (Torah – Gen. thru Duet.) Upon completion of this school, most boys went back to the family business to begin apprenticing to be a carpenter, fisherman, etc., yet a boy who was considered the best of the best would be invited to continue his education in **Bet Talmud** – **House of Learning**. In Bet Talmud, from age 10-15, the student would learn the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures and oral traditions – memorized! And they'd also learn how to answer questions w/ questions.

From here – if the student was the best of the best of the best, he could interview for **Bet Midrash** – **House of Study** to become the disciple of a Rabbi. Here, he'd go to a Rabbi where he'd be quizzed on his knowledge of the Torah/Talmud. If the Rabbi thought he had the chutzpah, he'd invite him to be his *talmidim* (disciple).

This required the young man to leave everything – his family, job, girlfriend, etc., to follow and live w/ his Rabbi for the next 14 years to learn his Rabbi's *yoke* – his interpretation of the Law/traditions – to be w/ him, to become like Him, to be able to do as he did.

SEE – In the Jewish world, a disciple did more than learn information from his rabbi; he attached himself to his teacher, studied his life, to imitate his ways.

When Jesus broke onto the scene and extended a call to these guys to follow Him, He was giving them a 2nd chance at a lifetime dream – and this is why Peter and Andrew dropped their nets to follow. They weren't the best of the best, and yet a Rabbi invited them to follow – so in a NY second – they accepted and engaged.

And this is the calling Jesus has extended to you/me. It's not a call to fill our heads w/ Bible knowledge, to be religious, or to obtain fire insurance – He's invited us to follow Him, to know Him, to become like Him, so that we can do as He did.

This brings us back to Jesus' invitation in Matthew 4:19 – *Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men*. Let me offer (4) essentials to following Jesus.

I **WALK** in His Proximity

Following Jesus begins w/ proximity. We have to stay close enough to hear His voice, see His ways, and experience firsthand who He is and what He's doing.

After all – the (12) didn't learn Jesus from a distance. They watched Him pray, heal, teach, encourage, and engage people from every walk of life. They learned His way by walking closely w/ Him.

Truth is – we can't consistently become like someone we rarely spend time w/. We'll never recognize their voice, learn their ways, or understand what matters to them unless we stay close.

Spiritually speaking – **a weekly glance at Jesus will never produce a daily resemblance to Jesus**. This is why we must be intentional in God's Word, in prayer, in worship, in fellowship w/ His people, and in service.

The problem is, most of us don't deliberately choose spiritual shallowness – we just prioritize the wrong things. We allow the urgent to crowd out the essential. Work, family, schedules, phones, culture, and other demands begin setting the priorities of our lives – and Jesus gets pushed to the side w/ whatever time is left.

But Jesus can't be just another event on a congested calendar. He must be the Lord over the calendar. He must be the priority relationship of our lives.

Digging deeper to follow means walking close enough w/ Jesus that His voice, His ways, and His priorities begin shaping our lives.

II **SUBMIT** to His Priority

Matthew says that when Jesus called Peter/Andrew, they immediately left their nets to follow Him.

This matters b/c these guys didn't negotiate, delay, or ask if following Jesus would interfere w/ their plans. He called, and they responded. Even more, their nets represented more than fishing. They represented their livelihood, identity, security, and future. So, in that moment – ***they had to have an exchange of priority***. They had to decide if they truly wanted to be a rabbi or not. They had to count the cost in a moment's notice b/c Jesus wasn't calling them to admire Him from a distance but to follow Him closely as His apprentices. **LMO some perspective:**

Imagine you're a high school dropout who dreamed of becoming a college professor but could never afford school. Instead, you're stuck working a minimum-wage, dead-end job you can barely tolerate. One day, a world-renowned professor walks in, takes an interest in you, and says, "*I want to help you. Come w/ me right now. Live in my home, study under me, and I'll teach you everything I know. I'll give you access to my resources b/c I believe you can one day do what I do. It'll be hard, but it'll change your life. But you have to come now.*" What would you do?

NOW – in calling us to be disciples – God isn't necessarily asking us to leave our careers, sell our possessions, and move overseas – like Jordan/Nicole are doing. Yet it does mean making Him our first and highest priority and surrendering our right to tell Him what He may or may not ask of us.

SEE – God may call one person to go and another to stay, one into vocational ministry and another to serve faithfully in a classroom, hospital, office, factory, or athletic field. The issue is our availability – b/c our greatest ability is always our availability!

Question is – can Jesus interrupt your plans, redirect your ambitions, change your schedule, confront your attitude, and call you to something outside your comfort zone – and you say YES?

SEE – truth is, no one can cling to their nets and closely follow Jesus at the same time. No one!

May I ask a tough question? What net is Jesus asking you to release? What *habit, ambition, relationship, or good thing* has taken priority over Him? We can't cling to our nets and follow Jesus at the same time.

Digging deeper to follow means surrendering anything that prevents our immediate/wholehearted obedience to Jesus as our first priority.

III **TRUST** His Process

Jesus continued, "*Follow Me, and I will make you...*"

This is one of the great promises in this text. Jesus didn't say, "Follow Me b/c you're already what you should be." He said, "Follow Me, and I'll make you."

Peter was impulsive. James/John were ambitious. And Thomas doubted. They all misunderstood, argued, failed, and even abandoned Jesus. Yet Jesus looked at these unfinished men and said, "***I will make you.***" Their weaknesses didn't surprise Him, and their immaturity didn't disqualify them. **SEE** – Jesus knows who we are – and what His grace can make of us.

Meaning – following Jesus isn't just about where we are going; it's also about who we're becoming.

SEE – the goal of following is becoming like Jesus. We learn to *love, forgive, serve*, and *obey* like Jesus. And this is transformational work of the H.S.

This doesn't mean we're passive. God works in us as we yield, obey, train, and pursue godliness. ***We work out what God is working in.*** Sometimes it's thru encouragement; while at other times it's thru adversity, correction, disappointment, and difficulty.

But if we keep following, He will keep forming.

BTW – the evidence of our becoming isn't perfection. It's continually returning to Jesus, receiving His correction, and trusting His grace to keep forming us.

Which raises a relevant question – where is Jesus shaping you? Your pride? Your patience? Your need for control? Your speech? Your thought life? Where? Don't resist the hands of the One who is making you.

Digging deeper means trusting Jesus enough to submit every part of our lives to His transforming work.

IV **JOIN** His Purpose

Jesus finished the invite – *I'll make you fishers of men.*

Jesus chose an image they understood. These guys knew fishing, so He redirected their *patience, persistence, and teamwork* toward an eternal purpose – influencing others for Him. TBS – Jesus wasn't calling them to pressure people, but to love them, share the gospel, and make disciples who'd follow Him.

Yet notice the order – *follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.* It starts w/ following that leads to having influence – meaning **G.C. ministry is the natural overflow of following Jesus.**

So – whether your fishing hole is your home, school, workplace, neighborhood, team, or circle of friends – your calling is to follow Jesus so your life influences others for Him. And the best part is you don't need every theological answer or a dramatic testimony; you just have to be willing to *pray, listen, serve, and share* what Jesus has done and is doing in you. You can invite someone to come and see – and invest the Jesus in you into them to show them Jesus.

Bottom line – our calling is to follow. It's God's job to form us. Ministry is the overflow of following. Digging deeper to follow means joining Jesus in His purpose of helping others to know and follow Him.

What This Means for Our Church

1 – We must prioritize followship, not attendance.

2 – We must measure maturity by Christlikeness, not by our Bible knowledge or religious activity.

3 – We must help others meet and follow Jesus.

IOW – we don't just need more people sitting in rows. We need more disciples walking in His footsteps. And every disciple should be helping others to do the same.

Years ago that day in Austria, I learned something valuable about following: ***following is only as wise as the person you're following.*** After all, following Pat that day didn't work out too well. But here's the difference today: ***Jesus knows where He's going.***

He may lead you somewhere difficult or ask you to release something you've been holding tightly. He may confront something in you that needs to change or lead you into an assignment you never expected. **But He will never lead you in the wrong direction.**

So, the question isn't whether Jesus knows where He's going. The question is whether we're willing to drop our preferences and priorities – and follow.