

Mark 1:16-20 Discussion Guide

TEXT - Read Mark 1:9-13 (ESV)

¹⁶ Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men."^[a] ¹⁸ And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹ And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰ And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

- What sticks out to you in this text? Any questions that come up?
- What is going on in this text (summarize the main points)? What is the context for the text?
- How does this text connect with the Gospel? What Gospel themes do you see in the text?

THEOLOGY - What do we learn about God from this text?

- What attributes or aspects of the character and nature of God do you see in these passages? What else can we learn about God from the text? Take a moment to list these out together.

LIFE

- Rather than disciples seeking out a rabbi to follow Jesus takes a different approach (Get used to different!). He pursues His disciples. How did Jesus pursue you until you answered His call?
- The disciples had to leave EVERYTHING behind to follow Jesus. What did you have to leave behind to follow Him? What "old things" are you still trying to drag along behind you as you follow Him?
- Jesus recognized and respected the professions of those He called but reoriented what they were fishing for. What has He reoriented in your life so you can enjoying kingdom living now?

PRAYER

- Pray in response to what God revealed to you in this text. If there is sin, confess it to him in prayer. If there is a need, petition God in prayer. If there is encouragement, praise God and share with others.
- What is one personal need you have that we can pray for you as a group?
- Pray for one friend, family member, or coworker with who you want to share the love of Jesus with.

Commentary on Mark 1:16-20

v. 16 He saw Simon and Andrew: This was not the first time Jesus had met this group of men. [John 1:35-4:54](#) describes their previous meeting.

For they were fishermen: These were common men, without theological credentials or status in the world. Jesus met them as they labored as common men. Jesus chose these disciples not for who they were, but for what Jesus could do through them.

“Surely the good qualities of successful fishermen would make for success in the difficult ministry of winning lost souls: courage, the ability to work together, patience, energy, stamina, faith, and tenacity. Professional fishermen simply could not afford to be quitters or complainers!” (Wiersbe)

v. 17 Follow Me: With this invitation, Jesus shows what Christianity is all about: following Jesus. At its root, Christianity is not about theological systems, rules, or even helping people – it is about following Jesus.

“Nevertheless it is true, by New Testament times, the phrase ‘to follow’ had added to itself an ethical aspect, for it is always the superior who walks ahead, and the inferior who follows: therefore, at the least, a rabbi-disciple relationship was implied.” (Cole)

I will make you become fishers of men: Jesus said He would make them fishers of men. If these men received something wonderful in following Jesus, it was only right for them to give it to others, and to “catch” men into the same kingdom of God.

Jesus does not reject the earthly vocation of these men but reorients it. Jesus calls Simon and Andrew to be “fishers of people” (Mark 1:17), thereby affirming their former work as an image of the new role to which he is calling them.

When Jesus called them to be fishers of men, He called them to do what He did. He was the greatest fisher of men ever. But He wanted others to do the work He did; first these four, then twelve, then hundreds, then thousands and thousands upon thousands through the centuries.

I will make you become: “Implying a gradual process of training.” (Bruce)

v. 18-20 And immediately they left their nets and followed... This is more than just a challenge to leave behind income and stability or, as we might put it, to get out of our “comfort zone. They themselves were not hired men or day laborers, but rather were a part of what was probably a relatively successful family business. This “piling up of particulars underscores the full weight of the verb [to leave]: not just nets are left behind, but a named father, a boat and indeed an entire enterprise.” For these disciples to follow Jesus, they have to demonstrate a willingness to allow their identity, status, and worth to primarily be determined in relation to him.