

Follow Me: Jesus' Invite into Discipleship

Series Introduction

Today we are going to begin a new series of messages that is going to take four weeks to get through. It is a series of simple messages that traces the demanding and life-changing path Jesus set before His first followers. And, if we allow it to do so, this series will invite us to continue walking that same path today. Jesus initiated their walk with a simple invitation: ***Follow Me***. But what was He really inviting them into? Do you think they really knew or understood what was ahead for them? Jesus invited them into a new life, a new way of thinking, a new way that reordered their priorities and set them on a course that not only changed their lives but is still changing lives today. And Jesus continues to invite each of us to follow Him every day. It is this daily walk we will focus on in this series: ***Follow Me: Jesus' Invite into Discipleship***.

The Call – Matthew 4:18-22

Let's begin by **Reading Matthew 4:18-22**

This short scene gives us a picture into the whole drama of discipleship. In four simple verses we meet a Savior who pursues and initiates. We see a call that is simple, but a with cost that is real. And our Savior gives a purpose that transforms. Today I want to unpack some truths from this passage in hopes that we might hear Jesus' call more clearly and then respond more faithfully.

Jesus Initiates the Call

Notice that He comes to them first. Matthew's account begins with Jesus seeing. He notices. And then He approaches. Discipleship does not start because the fishermen were especially spiritual or because they had a perfect résumé. It begins because Jesus saw them and came to them.

Grace before effort. The initiative is His. If you pay close attention you realize this is the pattern of the gospel: God sees us. God pursues us. Think of Zacchaeus in Luke 19, who climbed a tree so he could see, but it was Jesus who saw him, found him, and went to him. Think of John 1 where Andrew and John are invited to "come and see." The initiative is always from God's side first. That means our starting place is not from a place of guilt or performance but the reality that God, through His Son and His Spirit has already reached out to us. If you feel unqualified, remember that the call begins with Jesus' insight, not your résumé. Perhaps you need to begin by receiving His attention as grace. Or invite you to begin your week by pausing and saying something like this: "Lord, thank You for finding me." Then, let that thought shape how you respond to His call. **John 6:44** reminds us, "*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.*" The Father sees, the Father draws; we respond. That is the rhythm of the Gospel. That is where discipleship begins. I pray you will open your ears and heart to His call and will respond faithfully and obediently.

The Simple Call with a Real Cost

Follow Me is relational, not religious. Jesus did not hand out a list of rules or a program. He simply issued an invitation: **“Follow Me.”** That two-word summons is profoundly simple, yet profoundly personal. It is an invitation into a relationship with Him rather than a demand to follow a set of religious tasks.

Relational invitation. To follow Jesus is to walk behind Him, to learn from Him, to be with Him. It is the same language used of the earliest disciples in John 1 and of the call seen here in Matthew 4 and echoed in Mark 1:16–20. The emphasis is on companionship and formation. Jesus invites us to Himself, not merely to a set of behaviors. Here’s the truth; however, the cost is real. Therefore, the call is not cheap. The fishermen left nets, boats, and family. Matthew informs us that they left immediately. That immediacy shows both the authority of Jesus and the seriousness of the call. Paul later echoes this when he says he counts all things as loss compared to knowing Christ (Philippians 3:7–8). Following Jesus requires surrender and sacrifice. Answering the call demonstrates a willingness to let go of what anchors us to our old life. Sometime today, or this week, will you identify what anchors you. Is it a habit, a relationship, a pursuit, or a comfort that competes with Jesus for your loyalty? Write down one thing you will intentionally loosen your grip on and make a concrete step to remove a temptation, to set a boundary, or to reallocate time toward spiritual formation. Here’s the thing: surrender is not a one-time act but is a daily posture. Romans 12:1–2 calls us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. That is surrender. **Galatians 2:20** describes the believer’s identity: *“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”* The cost is the old self; but the gain is Christ.

The Purpose of the Call

“I will make you fishers of men” Jesus does not call people to aimlessly follow. He calls them into a transformed identity and a purposeful mission. The call is both inward and outward: it changes who we are and what we do. It gives us a new identity. These normal fishermen become disciples. Later they become apostles. Their identity shifts from being defined by occupation to being defined by who they were in Christ Jesus. Is this true of you? **2 Corinthians 5:17** says, *“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.”* The call of Christ redefines who we are in this world. The metaphor – “fishers of men” – turns their skill into service. Their nets, once used for catching fish, become a picture of gathering people into the kingdom. The purpose of following Jesus is not personal escape but participation in God’s redemptive Kingdom work. Acts 1:8 and Matthew 28:19–20 expand this idea: followers of Christ are sent with power and authority to witness and make disciples. If you do not already, I want to invite you to begin praying for one person. Jesus’ call moves us outward. Who is one person you can begin to pray for daily, who you can invite to church, or who you can share the gospel with, in a natural way? Make it a point to pray their name each morning, to look for one way to serve them this month and ask God to open a door. Small, consistent steps are how nets are cast. Ephesians 4:1–3 urges believers to

walk worthy of the calling, with humility and patience. Look, you need these Jesus, character traits for mission work. 1 Peter 3:15 reminds us to be ready to give a reason for the hope we have, with gentleness and respect. Again, you need these Jesus characteristics on the mission field.

Conclusion

These truths form a single invitation that moves us into discipleship: **Jesus initiates, we respond in relational surrender**, and **we are sent out with purpose**. Notice how Matthew emphasizes immediacy and obedience. The disciples did not negotiate. They did not ask for a trial period. They simply left and followed. That radical response was possible because they had encountered a person worth following.

Imagine a man mending nets in a boat. His hands are calloused; his life is predictable. Then a stranger walks by and says, **“Come with me.”** The man could have said many things. He could have listed reasons for staying. But instead, he follows. That image is not meant to shame those who hesitate; it is meant to show the power of a true encounter with Jesus.

If you are hesitant today, know this: hesitation is not the end of the story. Peter himself would later deny Jesus and yet be restored and sent. The call of Jesus includes restoration. If you have drifted, the same Jesus who called you the first time is still calling now. Return to the simple invitation: **“Follow Me.”**

Jesus’ call in Matthew 4 is simple, immediate, life changing and if you will allow, it can be world changing. He calls ordinary people; fishermen, tax collectors, lawyers, doctors, women, and men like you and me into an extraordinary relationship with Himself. The call is not to a program but to a person. It asks for surrender, but it promises transformation and purpose.

Let’s pray.