

Fishing for Men - Matthew 4:18-22

得人如得鱼—马太福音 4:18-22

Matthew 4:18-22 (NASB1995)

“Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was 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. 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.”

Background

While on earth, **Jesus never left Israel**. Have you ever thought about that?

Although Jesus’ ministry had a somewhat limited geography, this was by design. Jesus ministry was one of preaching and teaching (Matthew 4:17). Preaching was **central** to His ministry.

But preaching to the crowds was not the only focus of Jesus’ ministry. A significant portion of His ministry was spent with 12 men. **The disciples**. These men, save one, would become the apostles who were entrusted with the message of the gospel after Jesus ascended into heaven. Jesus’ plan from the very beginning was to pass on the truth of the gospel to a group of twelve ordinary men who would be used by God to take that message to the world.

The message of saving grace was not just for Israel – it was **to reach all the nations**. But how would this be accomplished? Through twelve ordinary men.

Here in **Matthew 4:18-22** we read about Jesus calling four of these men. We see, in these brief verses **four realities of the call of Jesus**. These **four realities of the call of Jesus** not only teach us about the men that He selected to carry on the message of the gospel in the first century, but also teach us about Jesus Himself and how we must respond to Him.

1. Jesus’ call is to **average characters**
2. Jesus’ call is an **authoritative command**
3. Jesus’ call includes an **astonishing commission**
4. Jesus’ call requires **absolute compliance**

1. Jesus’ call is to average characters – 18 and 21
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¹⁸ He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.

Although this first mention of Peter and Andrew in Matthew, this is **not the first time that Jesus has met them.** (see John 1:35-42; Luke 5:1-11).

According to the gospel of John, Andrew and possibly John (unnamed disciple in the passage) were disciples of John the Baptist when he was told that Jesus was the Lamb of God. This passage also tells us that Andrew told his brother Simon and brought him to Jesus.

In John 1, Jesus is calling these men to conversion. Here at the Sea of Galilee, Jesus calls them to full-time ministry. No longer would they be fishermen – they would now be fishers of men.

Peter and Andrew

The job of being a fisherman at that time was not a glamorous profession – it was tough physical labor. The rest of the New Testament reveals much more about them.

Peter

Peter was a **natural leader** among the disciples. Peter was almost always the one who spoke up first. **He spoke his mind** – whether it was a bold confession that Jesus was the Messiah or a rebuke of Jesus washing his feet. It was Peter who unthinkingly suggested pitching tents at during the Transfiguration for Moses and Elijah. He so often spoke before he thought!

Peter always took the lead. Every list of the 12 in the gospels lists Peter first. Even outsiders recognized it – those collecting temple tax came to Peter to ask if their Master would pay.

We also know Peter well because of his triple denial of Christ before the crucifixion. The leader, the one who proudly proclaimed he would remain faithful to death, denied Jesus out of fear.

After being restored by the Lord, Peter became **a dominant figure in the book of Acts** – the first 12 chapters focusing on how the Holy Spirit used him in the explosive growth of the church.

God took an **outspoken, impulsive, vacillating** person like Peter and made him into an amazing preacher and pillar of the early church.

Andrew

In contrast to Peter, Andrew is **hardly mentioned** in the gospels. John 1:44 tells us that Peter and Andrew were from Bethsaida, the town adjacent to Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee.

Although Andrew was Peter's brother and one of the key disciples, he was often **left out of some key events** in Christ's life (Matthew 17:1; Mark 5:37; 14:33) where only Peter, James, and John were invited to come with Jesus. In fact, he is often referred to as "Andrew – Peter's bother."

How do you like to be known as "the brother/sister of someone"? It can be tough to be the person in the background, the person in the shadow of a more dominant personality.

But it was Andrew who led his brother Peter to Christ (John 1:35-40), who took the boy with the loaves and fish to Christ (John 6:8-9, who took a few Greeks to Christ (John 12:20-22). God used him – a **more quiet and reserved guy** – to lead individuals to Christ.

James and John

²¹ **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.**

James and John, like Peter and Andrew, are fishermen brothers. Mark 1:20 says their family fishing business included hired servants; therefore, they must have been well-off financially.

James

Nothing is said about James as an individual in the gospels, though we know that he was **one the three closest** disciples to Jesus. In Acts 12 he became the first apostle to be martyred.

James and his brother John did receive a nickname from Jesus, “**Sons of Thunder**” (Mark 3:17), or “hot-heads” if today. They once asked Jesus if they should **command fire to come down from heaven** to consume a village that didn’t receive Jesus (Luke 9:51-56). Jesus rebuked them.

Jesus also had to rebuke them for their **request to be at prime locations** in the kingdom (Mark 10:35-41). Jesus had to teach them that their role was to serve, not to seek personal glory.

So James was **naturally a hot-headed impatient selfish man** who was quick to bring down judgment on a village and seek his own position of authority. But God took the zeal of James and taught him patience and submission. Jesus took time with this passionate man, taking him into his inner circle. Finally, God gave him the distinction of being the first of the 12 to die for Him.

John

We typically think of John as the “Apostle of Love,” but he was **originally a “Son of Thunder.”** In Luke 9:49 he rebuked a man for casting out demons in Jesus’ name. Just like James, John was a passionate, sectarian and personally ambitious man.

Jesus called this “hot-headed” man to follow Him and turned him into the apostle of love. Unlike his brother James who was the first of the twelve to die, John was the last to die. He lived until the end of the first century, becoming the pillar of the church after the other apostles died.

The gospel of John refers to John as “**the disciple Jesus loved**.” Certainly Christ loved all the disciples, but John was particularly close to Jesus – he was the one next to him at the Last Supper and the one who was entrusted to care for Jesus’ mother at the crucifixion. Jesus’ love turns Son of Thunder into a wise and loving leader in the early church.

❖ Application

If Jesus can use these men, can He use you? The question is not whether there is enough good in you for Him to use – but do you trust that He can use you no matter what your background or personality. **God is able to take an ordinary person like you and use you in great ways.**

2. Jesus' call is an authoritative command – v.19

¹⁹And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

²¹... and He called them.

This is no invitation – it is a command. Jesus hand-selected those who would take the gospel message to the world. The call of Jesus required obedience – **it was a call of discipleship**. He didn't call them to be listeners, but disciples – to be trained by Him, to imitate His behavior.

This call was **accompanied by a promise** “I will make you fishers of men.” Up until now their life had been spent trying to catch fish – it is now men's hearts that they will seek. To be a fisher of men is to seek to win others to follow Christ.

Be clear on **what the command is and what the promise is**. The command is to follow Christ. The result is that God will make you into a person that will reach out to the lost.

Matthew 10:38 “And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.”

Luke 9:23 And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.”

You may not be called to full-time ministry as the 12 were, but you are called to be His disciple.

What does it mean to follow Christ?

- ◆ **Repentance:** Look up at verse 17. To truly follow Christ is to recognize that you have failed to live according to God's perfect standard and need His mercy for you to live differently.
- ◆ **Submission:** To follow Christ is to recognize that He is leading! There must be a submission to His leadership (1 John 2:4).
- ◆ **Perseverance:** To follow Christ is not just a one-time act. It's a lifetime commitment! If you truly intend to follow Christ, you better be prepared to follow Him to the end.

❖ Application

Does this sound like you? **Have you truly followed Christ?** Do you live a life of repentance and submission? Is it a lifelong commitment? Examine your heart whether you are truly His disciple.

3. Jesus' call includes an astonishing commission - 19

“I will make you fishers of men.” Consider the magnitude of these words! We were **formally those who were the fish**. We are now made into fishers of men ourselves! Although there is

certainly the gift of evangelism (Eph. 4:11) to which some people are particularly gifted, we are all to be faithful witnesses for Him (Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Corinthians 5:17-19).

He has **committed to us the word of reconciliation!** That is our mission. If you do not desire to see others come to Christ, if you are not seeking the salvation of the unsaved people in your life, it is an indication that perhaps you are not truly following after Christ.

“But,” you may say, “I cannot share the gospel with others. **I am not a bold person** like Peter. I will never stand up in front of a large group and preach.” Well Christ did not promise that you would! Perhaps you will be more like Andrew – quietly leading individuals to the Savior.

Illustration **Edward Kimball** led **D.L. Moody** to Christ, who then led countless people to Christ, including great missionaries like **C.T. Studd.**

Listen to the words of Charles Spurgeon:

If you are saved yourself, the work is but half done until you are employed to bring others to Christ. You are as yet but half formed in the image of your Lord. You have not attained to the full development of the Christ-life in you unless you have commenced in some feeble way to tell to others of the grace of God; and I trust that you will find no rest to the sole of your foot till you have been the means of leading many to that blessed Saviour who is your confidence and your hope. His word is—Follow me, not merely that you may be saved, nor even that you may be sanctified; but, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Be following Christ with that intent and aim; and fear that you are not perfectly following him unless in some degree he is making use of you to be fishers of men. The fact is, that every one of us must take to the business of a man-catcher. If Christ has caught us, we must catch others.

4. Jesus’ call requires absolute compliance – 20 and 22

Look with me at the response of Peter and Andrew in verse 20 and James in John in verse 22.

²⁰**Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.**

²²**Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.**

What word jumps out at you in both of these verses? **Immediately!** These working men were ready to leave behind their professions and all that was familiar to them to follow Jesus.

Not every person is called to leave his job. God uses many people in the profession where they are for the gospel. Many are able to reach those in their workplace who would otherwise never hear the gospel.

At the same time, **following Christ will radically reorient your priorities.** Your purpose for living is totally changed – you will be willing to leave your job if that is what is required. You are willing to be fired for refusing to falsify work documents. You consider nothing in this world as

important as doing what your Savior says. Following Jesus means He is Lord of your life no matter the cost.

The **cost is high to follow Christ** – for these disciples it meant leaving their professions. For every follower of Christ it means losing your own life to find life in Him.

The great thing is – it is worth it! (Matthew 13:44-46)

Conclusion

What was the result of their following after Christ? God made them fishers of men, just as He promised. From Peter's first recorded sermon in Acts 2 we read that over 3000 souls were saved. God used these unexceptional men to do extraordinary things for Him.

Do you seek to do extraordinary things for the Lord? Do you want to see others come to know the Lord through you? Follow Christ!

Obey, repent, submit and persevere and He will make you a fisher of men.

C.T. Studd, a missionary to China, who was led to Christ by D.L. Moody and indirectly by Edward Kimball, said this:

Let us not glide through this world and then slip quietly into heaven, without having blown the trumpet loud and long for our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Let us see to it that the devil will hold a thanksgiving service in hell, when he gets the news of our departure from the field of battle.