

The Call of Discipleship

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[0 : 00] Your Bibles turn to Mark chapter number one, Mark chapter number one. Before we start the sermon, I just wanted to take a moment and let you know this past week was one of the greatest weeks of my life.

You guys didn't go with me, but I was in Indiana at a place called the Good News Boys Home with Good News Ministries. If you don't know, it is a program that finds young men who are either on probation or in some kind of trouble or their parents just don't know where else to send them.

And they take these guys and for about six weeks in the summer, they have church with them three times a day, discipleship with them, mentoring, teaching these guys. This is the only picture we get together. It was hard rounding up all these guys. Trust me, I tried my best all week, but it was right before I left.

And the difference they're making is real. We can go to the next picture now or the next verse in Mark chapter one. But while I was there, it was a great time getting to spend time with them, preach to them, and they're making a difference.

They really are. They're finding guys who don't know the gospel, teaching the gospel. Some of those young men who believe in the gospel and then go back to their communities. And it's incredible to see the impact they're making. I say that because the Vacation Bible School comes up for our penny march.

[1 : 04] The money that the boys raised, we're going directly to Good News Boys Home up in Indiana. So that's exciting. I wrote down a couple of things while I was up there or just a couple of thoughts out while I was up there about what I was seeing and what I got to do.

So the first thing is, without Jesus, we would be the exact same as those young men in the picture. It's easy to think because it's Indiana and they're far away and so on and so forth in different cities that, you know, that doesn't happen much or anything like that.

But without Jesus and a few good decisions on behalf of our predecessors and ancestors, we would be in the same exact situation. The next thing is, I wrote, the gospel is the best help for these young men.

These young men have been medicated. Some have been incarcerated. Different kinds of indoctrination, anything like that. They've been all different kinds of programs, but the best help for these young men is the gospel.

The third thing I wrote is this. Boys need men in their life. I'm going to say about 90% of these guys here lived most of their life without a male role model in their life and really shows.

[2 : 05] Sadly, due to, I guess, our state, we have better foster care than most other states in the country. The other states don't have foster care that's so good, so these guys have been placed in not good foster homes or they're both not a nuclear family with mom and dad or anything like that.

And I wrote down, boys need men in their life. And this week, I got to preach to them and spend time with them. And my main thing I tried to tell them was, essentially, they need to follow Jesus.

Fall in love with Jesus. Fall in love with his word. We'll follow him, follow him, follow him, follow Jesus because it will make life so much better. And as we turn to Mark chapter number one, and I thought about that, Atticade asked me this week.

I said, you need to follow Jesus. He goes, where's he going? I was like, that's a very good question. A few years ago, we went to China. I went with, I guess, a certain missionary to a creative access country.

He was a staff missionary named Austin. And we went to this creative access country. And it was me, it was a guy named Nate Bowman, a guy named Paul Tofolo, and we're in the L.A. airport. And suddenly, Austin gets real serious, and he gathers us all up together.

[3 : 05] And he looks at me, and he says this, when we land in China, when we get out of this airport, make sure you follow me. And I'm like, what do you mean by that? Like, Austin, I know what cities are like. I can do this. You don't have to tell us that.

You know, whatever. We land in China, and very quickly, I realized what he meant. And as we navigated real cities with millions of people, it was real easy to lose him. And thankfully, he does not look very Chinese, if you know what I mean.

And it was pretty easy to follow him. We would not have gotten to our destination. How have we not followed him? In Christian life, if I can tell you, just like Austin invited me to follow him in China, quite literally, Jesus is in the business of inviting people to follow him.

We have it plastered up on the banners. You're helping people find and follow Jesus. What does that even look like? I mean, it seems almost abstract in the sense of Jesus isn't here. Yes, we're two or three galaxies in the middle, but he's in heaven at the moment.

What does it mean to follow Jesus? Is there like a GPS you pull up and you punch in Jesus and you go there? What does that mean? It's more than Christianese. We see in the Bible, Paul pens things like this. Follow me as I follow Christ.

[4 : 06] Luke 9.23 says this. If any man will come after me or follow me, he has to deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me. We see in John 12.26, if any man serve me, let him follow me. So repeatedly over and over and over again, Jesus is inviting people to follow him.

But how is that done? What does that look like? How do we do it? How can we become better God and Christ followers? How can that help us? What does it matter? Today, we're going to look at what it means to follow Jesus, how we can become better followers of Jesus, and how we can maybe help other people follow Jesus too.

As Kyle and Hannah get ready to go to Chile, very excited for them. What are they going down there to do? They're following Jesus down there. They're going down there to help other people find and follow Jesus. It is our goal and it is our mission. The first thing we're going to look at, Mark chapter number one.

I like the gospel of Mark. They believe, wow, it is loud outside. Okay. Lord bless this. While they're, Mark chapter one, the gospel of Mark is a really awesome gospel. They believe it was written by John Mark, primarily with Peter as his source.

But the great part about the gospel of Mark is it moves faster than the other gospels. There's less dialogue in it. So if you're a guy like me, I like stories and pictures and videos and so on and so forth. So Mark does a really good job of next scene, next scene, next scene, next scene.

[5 : 16] It actually has the word straightway or immediately in it over 40 times. So it does a really good job of showing us repeatedly that the next thing's coming, the next thing's coming, the next thing's coming. Written to non-Jewish people who just wanted to cut straight to the point is Jesus, son of God.

And according to Mark chapter one, verse number one, it says the beginning of gospel, Jesus Christ, the son of God. It lets us know that right off the rip. But as we read this, the first thing that Jesus is going to get us to see in Mark chapter number one, verse number 14, is he's going to come in.

John was put in prison. Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God and saying, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent ye, leave the gospel. Now, as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew's brother casting a net into the sea for they were fishers.

First couple of verses in our paragraph here. In the paragraph that precedes this, Jesus and God, they let us know that Jesus is the son of God. How we know that? Because God himself says, this is my son. That's cool. Next verse, Jesus is tempted in the wilderness, proves he's son of God by his actions.

The verse after that, John is then cast into prison because he did the right thing. And Jesus then starts his ministry here. It says he walks by the sea of Galilee and there he preaches. But notice what his message is.

[6 : 22] He says in verse 15, in saying, the time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent ye and believe the gospel. That was the message of Jesus. The first thing we're going to see about being a disciple or somebody who follows Jesus is we've got to see the creed of discipleship.

Jesus' message was the gospel of the kingdom of God. That is what he showed up to preach. The kingdom of God in the biblical sense, yes, it one day will quite literally be a kingdom that is honored, that rules and reigns.

Yes, you could say at one point the kingdom of God was Israel on this earth. But when Jesus is teaching and preaching it, it is essentially God's dominion. The realm over which he rules and reigns as king is promised throughout the entire Old Testament.

It's quite neat. And I think it's awesome in Luke 1.32 when Jesus shows up, this is what's promised about him. It says this, he shall be great and shall be called the son of the highest and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.

So this kingdom of God is a theme. We see all throughout scripture, Jesus shows up and he says the kingdom of God is at hand. It is near because Jesus sits as the ruler, the king of that kingdom, and he has now arrived.

[7 : 20] I think that's pretty neat. That's the message he shows up preaching. So the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent ye, believe the gospel. The kingdom is near because Jesus, the ruler of that kingdom, has now arrived. Yet the only way into this kingdom, as Jesus tells us in verse number 15 and 16, is to repent and believe the gospel.

He makes it very clear for us. The kingdom of God is here. Jesus is that king. Thankfully, he came as a servant this first time. And the way the end of this kingdom is through Jesus himself. He was the Messiah and the king at the center of it all.

Mark 1, 1 reads the beginning of the gospel. Jesus Christ, the son of God. Christ literally means anointed one, ruler, Messiah, the one who sits in this throne, the one who's anointed to rule. He just shows up preaching this message.

And the way we are brought into this kingdom, the way you can be part of this kingdom, or join in, according to John chapter 3, is this. Let's read it. One of the Pharisees named Nicodemus ruled the Jews. The same came unto Jesus by night and saith unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher from God.

No man can do these miracles that you do except God be with them. And Jesus answered and saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

[8 : 20] So that Jesus lets us know the only way to be into this kingdom, the only way to be saved into this kingdom is to be born again. It is to repent and to believe the gospel. It is not enough just simply to repent, because repentance without belief is just remorse, and that doesn't do anything but make you feel real sad.

We have to believe the gospel. We have to trust him. The response to this message, as Luke 5.32 would tell us, is this. Is to repent, to turn from sin, to turn from ourselves, to turn from idolatry, sin, any other belief system, ourselves, our works, anything else, and it is turned from that, and it is turned entirely, wholly, independently to Jesus.

That is what the gospel, that is the response, the appropriate response to the gospel. Luke 5.32, I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Jesus came to call people to repent, to turn from their sins, and to believe him.

Jesus preached that people should repent, change their minds, change their thought processes, change what they believe, and then turn and believe God, according to Acts 20, verse number 21. Repentance alone is not enough to save us.

It then takes believing the gospel. Turn from me, and what I believe, and what I want to do, and turn completely to Jesus in his way. And the great part about this kingdom is two. First thing is, Jesus is here as the king of the kingdom.

[9 : 27] He's here to rule it. Second thing is, it's God's kingdom. It's amazing, promised all the Old Testament. But not just that. Jesus also rules and reigns in this kingdom. Colossians 2.10 is going to read this. And you will complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.

So what was the message or the creed that Jesus taught here? It was this. The kingdom's here. Jesus is the king of this kingdom. The way you're going to get in is by faith and believing in it. And the great part about it is, Jesus rules and reigns in this kingdom.

He's in charge. He is the one who is the king of it all. And that's a great premise there. But this kingdom, this message, this gospel that Jesus preached, also merited a response further than salvation.

Yes, it's one thing to just simply believe the gospel, get your getting to heaven passed, sure. But the gospel is so much deeper than that, so much better than that. It's more revolutionary than that. It's just more than going to heaven. The gospel changes all of life.

My favorite thing about this camp is, they just didn't teach these guys proverbs and cliches and things to help self-improve themselves. They taught them the gospel, because the gospel is what changes life and revolutionizes life.

[10 : 26] It changes everything. Let's look. We've looked at the creed. Let's look at the call of discipleship. Mark 1, verse 17. Look at what Jesus says. Jesus saith unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you become fishers of men.

So Jesus walks by the Sea of Galilee, the coast of Galilee, at a lake. I would imagine there's quite a lot of fishermen. And Jesus, in verse 16, says he sees Simon and Andrew, his brother, casting their net into sea, for they were fishers.

17. And Jesus says, Come ye after me, and I will make you become fishers of men. To follow Jesus simply means to come ye after him. I think Jesus says it really well. Come ye after me. Hey, guys, come behind me.

Follow me. What makes this really neat is most teachers don't actively recruit students. You know, if you want to go sit under a famous teacher, they're not actively going out and saying, Hey, you should come sit at my feet.

Come learn from me. What makes Jesus different in the teacher today is he sought his pupils out. That's pretty neat. And there he says, Come after me. Come follow me. Come behind me. What does that look like? What does it mean to follow Jesus or to come after Jesus?

[11 : 23] One, it means to listen to God's word. Look what the Bible says about coming after Jesus or following behind Jesus in Ephesians 5, 1 and 2. Be there for followers of God as dear children. That is what is written to people who say they want to follow Jesus, who want to follow God, who want to follow him according to his word.

We got to follow him like dear children. On Sunday mornings, you know, we do check-ins and things. It's pretty cool watching, watching like people walk in. They have their babies. When they walk in, like they have a toddler, they may be walking pretty fast, but like you see, you hear like little footsteps right behind them because where mom or dad goes, toddler's going to go with them and we are commanded in the same way to follow God in that area.

Look at what John 8, 31's going to read. Jesus says to those Jews which believe in him, if you continue my word, then you are my disciples indeed. Coming after Jesus, following Jesus, it's done by the word. Follow him like a dear child.

Look at what John 8, 31. Continue ye in my word. We follow Jesus with his word, by his word, in his Bible. It's not that abstract. We read God's word and there we are able to follow Jesus.

Ephesians chapter 4, verse 21 is going to read this. But you've also learned Christ. If so, ye have heard him and have been taught by him as a truth is in Jesus. There's a principle there. There's a principle there.

[12 : 32] We can learn how to follow Jesus from the truth of God's word. That is how we follow Jesus with his word. And Jesus gave an invitation to those men in the boat. Come ye after me. Follow me. Come behind me.

And he gives the same invitation to everybody. We can follow Jesus. We can really be his disciples. To follow Jesus also entails becoming what he would have us to become.

I think it's pretty neat. He says, come ye behind me. But notice in verse 17 he makes a statement as well. Come ye after me, comma, and I will make you to become fishers of men. Do you notice what's neat about that? Most of the time people want to change themselves, right?

There's like a 12-step program for everything or this and this and this. But what's incredible about this story is that it's Jesus who's doing all the changing. He's doing all the changing for them. Notice what he says.

He says, I will make you become. Not that you will become in and of yourselves, but I will make you become. There's a principle there. If we follow Jesus, he will do the work. He will change us. Look at what the Bible says in Luke chapter 6, verse 40.

[13 : 30] To follow Jesus, we are going to become what Jesus wants as well. He says this in Luke 40. The disciple is not above his master, but everyone that is perfect shall be as his master. Which means this. No, we will not be absolutely perfect like Jesus, but it means that as we follow him and we seek him and we follow God's word, we will become more and more and more like him.

And the Bible teaches us that it's him who's doing the work. It's him who works in us. It's him who is. We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus. It is God who does the work. And as we follow Jesus, he does the working and the changing and the building and the growing and the molding.

He does all the changing. It's neat. We follow Jesus according to his word. We come to you after him, follow his word, sit at his feet, follow his teachings. That's cool. And in doing so, he does the changing and the transforming and the renewing.

All of that sin we used to have no power over as we follow him according to the gospel. The Bible teaches he's doing some cleaning and some changing, making us more and more and more and more like himself. It's pretty neat. As we follow him, we become more like him.

But not only do we see the creative discipleship, which is the gospel, believe in the gospel, we then follow Jesus, the king of this kingdom. We follow him according to his word and the Bible and all the good stuff there.

[14 : 35] But also, following Jesus, according to this passage, we see the creed, the call, but then there's also the cost of discipleship. Let's look at what the Bible says in Mark chapter 1, verse 19 through 20. The next verse is in these stories here.

And when he had gone a little further, thence he saw James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, who also in the ship, mending their nets, verse 20, and so he called them and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants and went after him.

Wow, I mean, that's pretty intense. You know, could you imagine you're at your mom and pop business with your kids and Jesus shows up and he says, hey, come follow me, and your kids just drop what they're doing and leave?

That is intense and that's essentially what happens here. They forsook their nets. They left what they had. Discipleship has a cost in this world. Incredibly, Jesus will pay it back with some, but in this world, discipleship has a cost.

Notice in this, they forsake their nets. Peter and his brother, they dropped their nets. What do the sons as ever do? They dropped their nets. Look what the Bible says in Mark chapter 1, verse 19 and 20.

[15 : 35] It teaches us that essentially to follow Jesus, there's a cost. Nets aren't a bad thing, but here's the thing. They couldn't mend their nets and follow Jesus at the same time. They couldn't actively fish and follow Jesus at the same time.

They couldn't cast their lines and walk behind where he went. They couldn't do that and follow Christ at the same time. See, what he's showing us here is that to follow Jesus, Jesus then takes priority. You can't mend nets and follow Jesus at the same time.

Something had to budge and they dropped their nets to follow Jesus. As people who would hear tonight and say we'd want to find and follow Jesus or help others do the same, what is in our life that we need to let go of or drop to follow Jesus?

I think it's amazing. They left the family business behind to be better Christ followers. How many things in our life can we drop or leave behind to become better followers of Jesus? Maybe it means deleting it out. Maybe it means forgiving somebody.

Maybe it means, as Hebrews would say, you need to lay aside every weight that does so easily beset you. Maybe it means letting go of that pet sin you've had. Anything like that. Maybe it means letting go of some money or some pride or whatever.

[16 : 32] Maybe it means a better prayer life. What do we need to let go of to be better followers of Jesus? What must we forsake to follow him? Look at what Jesus says about following him in Matthew chapter 16 verse number 24 through 26.

Then Jesus says unto the disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever loses life for my sake shall find it.

For what is a man profited if he gained the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? What does it mean to have a Benz in the parking lot but to be bankrupt spiritually? What does it mean to have all the money but no relationship with Jesus?

What does it mean to have all the stuff and the clout and the fame and all the accolades but to have no relationship with Jesus? What do we need to lay aside to become better followers of Jesus? I think the answer looks different for all of us, but there are things in our life that we can lay down, put down, to become better followers of Jesus.

Also notice the attitude in which they follow Jesus. I think it's incredible. Look at verse number 18. What's the adjective given there? It says, and straightway they forsook their nets and followed him. What do we have that we need to forsake immediately?

[17 : 34] Notice they didn't hesitate, they didn't pause, they didn't delay. When Jesus said, follow me, it was straightway. It was instant. It was right then, right there. They put down what they're doing and they follow Jesus. Oh, don't delay in obedience.

Obedience delayed is essentially obedience denied. Let's make sure we follow Jesus as he would tell us. Look at what he says in Matthew 10, 39 about following him. He that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me and he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me.

He that findeth this life shall lose it and he that loses his life for my sake shall find it. Jesus takes priority in everything. Relationships, money, finances, jobs, work, whatever it is, he is in charge.

He takes priority. As we just talked about, he is the king and to follow Jesus, he gets the preeminence. They followed him with haste. There was a cost associated with it it seems. But what's incredible about following Jesus is there may seem like there's an upfront cost but he repays it with dividends that says that they followed him in haste and following Jesus there's blessings.

Notice he says I will make you become fishers of men. I think that's pretty great. He reached them on their level but notice him being fishers of men. You're actively pulling people out of the lake of sin, out of where they're stuck at, out of the pit of despair, bringing them to Jesus and in doing so one, God is glorified by that.

[18 : 51] God receives glory when people turn from their sins, turn to the gospel and trust them. The Bible says heaven rejoices when one sinner comes to repentance. That is great. But also in becoming a fisher of men notice you're also helping you're also helping men as well.

It may seem within the story like man becoming a fisher hurts the fish while we're fishers of men we're helping the people that we catch. As we follow Jesus and become these fishers of men notice that God is glorified and there's blessings in it.

There's real blessings in following Jesus. It'd be incredible over the years to come these men they would lead what would seem on earth some pretty terrible lives. Peter crucified many of the disciples beheaded, speared, they believe some were exiled for life things like that and it may seem that they paid this great great cost but the awesome part about following God is he repays it with dividends.

Look what the Bible reads in Matthew chapter 19 verse 27. Then answered Peter and said unto him Behold Jesus we have forsaken all so Peter makes a good statement Hey Lord don't you remember how I left my net and my boat and you know the fishing business for you?

We've forsaken all and we've followed you What shall we have in return therefore? Jesus answered and said unto him Verily I say unto you truly I say unto you that which you have followed me in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory notice he is his king status you sit upon twelve thrones judging the tribes of Israel and everyone that hath forsaken everyone that hath forsaken houses or brethren or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands for my name's sake shall receive an hundredfold and inherit everlasting life That's a great promise Jesus gives there Anything we sacrifice now the Lord will repay much better in heaven One hundredfold A hundred times return Way better Better than imaginable on this earth It may seem small to give up friendships on this earth to follow Jesus but it may seem small to give up job hours to follow Jesus but it may seem small to give up finances or whatever it may be to follow Jesus better on this earth but notice that he repays it The Bible says he will give a hundredfold better things things that perish now if we give those the Lord the Bible teaches us that things that won't perish will receive later It's a much better trade up if anything not a sacrifice or a cost

[20 : 55] Notice what Jesus says in John 8, 12 about following He says this I am the light of the world He that follows me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life Following Jesus changes our life It changes everything Yes, there's an eternal world but you can't tell you there's a reward right now It may not be the most glitz what is that the glitz and the glam as we find out not as the Bible says but following Jesus it changes life Look at this it says we shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life As we follow Jesus as we do what He says do as we follow His Word as we grow as He grows us the Bible says we walk in light not in darkness This is a much better life Notice what Jesus also says in Matthew 10, verse 28 Fear them not which kill the body but are able to kill the soul but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell are not two sparrows sold for a farthing and not one of them fall to the ground without your father but the very hairs of your head are numbered for fear ye not therefore ye are of more value than many sparrows Jesus teaches us a principle there because He's saying this to these men and in the moment

I'm sure they don't understand but the lives they go on to lead to be quite dangerous quite perilous I mean you read Acts and look at some of the things they went through just in the short years that we see in the book of Acts and He tells them this that God cares for them and as people who follow God and seek God can I tell you that as we follow Jesus we come into direct care of Him as well it may seem scary to try to give up things for Him it may seem tiresome keep trying to keeping to try to serve Him and live the life He'd have us to live and why do we do what we do and why do we keep doing this and doing this can I tell you you come into direct protection and care of God as we follow Him He cares about us He helps us and I think this story this account here of Jesus calling His early followers offers so much truth and goodness for us what do we need to lay aside to become better followers of Jesus what are the things in life that we can put down to become better followers of Jesus can I tell you that the way you follow Jesus is according to the gospel He's the King one throne He's on it we're just on our faces before it we follow Jesus actively according to the gospel we follow Him according to His word we let His word work in us but what do we need to lay aside to follow Jesus better as we bow our heads we're going to pray we'll finish service here but I challenge you as we pray and as we sing think about how we can be better followers of Jesus let's pray

Father thank you for your goodness and your mercy thank you for the opportunity you give us to study your word together Lord I pray that we would become the best disciples of you we possibly can Lord help us follow you help us follow you according to your word thank you for loving us Lord thank you for allowing us to follow you God I pray that you would give us the faith to lay aside anything we need to lay aside to become better followers of you Lord I pray that you give us clarity as you make those decisions wisdom as you make those decisions Lord give us zeal and eagerness to become better followers of you Father thank you for your goodness and your mercy to us all in your name I pray Amen