

### 3. Called to Discipleship by Jesus

**Biblical material:** Matt. 4:18-22; 5:46; 9:10, 11; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11; 18:10, 11; John 1:35-51.

#### Quotes

- His voice leads us not into timid discipleship but into bold witness. *Charles Stanley*
- The decision to grow always involves a choice between risk and comfort. This means that to be a follower of Jesus you must renounce comfort as the ultimate value of your life. *John Ortberg*
- Jesus tapped me on the shoulder and said, Bob, why are you resisting me? I said, I'm not resisting you! He said, You gonna follow me? I said, I've never thought about that before! He said, When you're not following me, you're resisting me. *Bob Dylan*
- Discipleship is the grooming of friends who can be trusted. *Larry Neville*
- Jesus promised His disciples three things: that they would be entirely fearless, absurdly happy, and that they would get into trouble. *W. Russell Maltby*

#### Questions

When it comes to discipleship, who calls whom? Is it really acceptable simply to drop everything and follow Jesus? What of our responsibilities? How did the disciples evaluate the validity of the call—or did they simply act on how they felt? What does the miraculous catch of fish “prove”? Why did Jesus call a tax-collector, knowing the disapproval this would cause?

#### Discussion/ Comment

The accounts of the calling of the disciples both in Matthew and Mark stress the immediacy of the response. Immediately, at once, without delay. There was no indecision on the part of the disciples and they just left everything to follow Jesus. Is this how it needs to be?

Andrew's clear report to his brother expresses conviction—but surely this is based on evidence. No one should follow another based on claims—and it's interesting that Jesus does not make claims, but simply gives the invitation. So what lessons here?

Jesus simply *is*. He does not need to make any claims. The evidence is in himself, as he truly is. That is why he was so negative regarding those who looked for signs. Because signs are used to replace evidence—they are like badges that “prove” who we are, when truly the best authentication is by recognizing someone. A security expert told me that once. “Don't rely on ID badges,” he said. “Just make sure that whoever is on security actually knows those who work in the building. Then you don't need to rely on badges, which give a false sense of security.”

Similarly, what validates our beliefs, our message? What makes us disciples—and how do we know who we should follow? So much of this is based on trust and truth, those two core concepts that mean so much to us.

Why not base your faith on some miracle? Answer: because miracles can be faked, because the Devil can perform miracles, but most of all because God does not want a faith based on a response to the miraculous, but on a personal relationship with Him. The miracle focuses on *what* God can do (especially for me!) rather than *who* He is (His saving nature and character). That is why Jesus rejected discipleship based on material benefit (and this in turn was why so many gave up following him). The miracles, though they confirmed Jesus' ministry in the minds

of many, eventually could become a liability, with people following purely for the tangible, physical miracles rather than the greater spiritual miracle of salvation.

God does not choose to overwhelm us with His supernatural power, or seek to convince us by demonstrating His miraculous ability. God is still God, whether He performs a miracle or not. And what does it say about us when we say “before I’m convinced I want a miracle”? Is that the kind of contract necessary for salvation? Is that the basis for a true and lasting relationship?

The Bible does not endorse the provision of a miracle as the foundation of faith. In fact when Thomas wanted his ‘miraculous’ proof in terms of putting his hand in the wounds of the resurrected Jesus, the context is one of reproof for needing such supernatural demonstration.

Is it “better proof” of our commitment if we abandon our boats and nets and follow? How does this relate to God-given responsibilities to care for those around us, especially families. What did Jesus say about those who said “Corban” and so denied their duties of care for their parents in preference for religious observance? (see Mark 7:11).

Sometimes in the fresh flush of discipleship, we can overzealously represent God in ways less than ideal. We need to ask ourselves, How do others view us and our actions? Are we acting wisely in representing God?

### **Ellen White Comments**

With the calling of John and Andrew and Simon, of Philip and Nathanael, began the foundation of the Christian church. John directed two of his disciples to Christ. Then one of these, Andrew, found his brother, and called him to the Saviour. Philip was then called, and he went in search of Nathanael. These examples should teach us the importance of personal effort, of making direct appeals to our kindred, friends, and neighbors. . . . {CC 280}

Christ has expressed his love for man in that he has given his life for the ransom of the world. And this love is to measure the love that his disciples shall ever manifest for one another. “These things have I spoken unto you,” he says, “that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.” “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples,”--disciples of Him who laid down his life for them whom he loved. “Ye are my friends,” he says, “if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” {RH, November 9, 1897}

Jesus did not oppose education. The highest culture, if sanctified by the love and fear of God, receives his approbation. An objection is sometimes brought against education because Jesus chose ignorant fishermen for his disciples. But these men were subject to his refining influence for three years, and the Saviour was the most perfect educator the world has ever known. The Prince of Life did not choose the learned lawyers, the scribes and elders, for his disciples, because they would not follow him. Therefore he chose the humble peasants for his helpers. The rich and educated among the Jews were exalted by their own worldly wisdom and self-righteousness, and felt all-sufficient in themselves, realizing no special need of a Redeemer. Their characters were fixed, and they would not receive the teachings of Christ. But the humble fishermen were rejoiced to be connected with the Saviour, and become co-laborers with him. {2SP 186}