

BURN THE SHIPS

"COURAGEOUS OBEDIENCE"

MATTHEW 4:18-22

This Week's Core Competency

Giving Away My Life – I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes. Romans 12:1, *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.*

Spiritual formation is the process we go through to become like Jesus. Everyone is being formed spiritually, believer and unbeliever alike; who drives the process and in what direction are what differs. Formation is a process, not an event. Three passages use three related words—"form," "conform," and "transform"—to make this perfectly clear. Concerned for the Galatians' spiritual development, Paul reveals the goal of his ministry to them. "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is *formed* in you, how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you" (4:19). And in a passage to the Romans chock-full of theology, he declares, "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be *conformed* to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers" (8:29). Finally, to the Corinthians he writes, "and we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being *transformed* into his likeness with ever-increasing

One thing is sure: You are somebody's disciple.

– Dallas Willard

glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2Co 3:18; cf., Ro 12:1).

Spiritual formation is God's work, but requires our participation. *Discipleship* speaks to our part in the process; it speaks to the disciplines involved in following Christ that the Spirit uses to affect our transformation. Our choices matter; our choice of whom to follow matters most. On this business of discipleship, Dallas Willard writes:

"Who teaches you? Whose disciple are you? Honestly. One thing is for sure: You are somebody's disciple. You learned how to live from somebody else. There are no exceptions to this rule, for human beings are just the kind of creatures that have to learn and keep learning from others how to live. Aristotle remarked that we owe more to our teachers than to our parents, for though our parents gave us life, our teachers taught us the good life . . . Probably you are the disciple of several 'somebodies,' and it is very likely that they shaped you in ways that are far from what is best for you, or even coherent. You are quite certainly, as I am, the student of a few crucial people, living and dead, who have been there in crucial times and periods to form your standard responses in thought, feeling, and action. Thankfully, the process is an ongoing one, and is to some extent self-correcting.

"Originally we are the disciples of our parents or other family members most intimately related to us. Usually this is very good. They may be dear, strong people who know God and walk in his ways. It has mainly been so for me and for many others. But not always. Our original family connections

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may be anything from mildly debilitating to disastrous. We know much more about this today than we did just a few decades ago. We have a pretty good idea, for example, of how children raised with alcoholic parents turn out. They learn from their relationship to this alcoholic parent how to be in this world—fairly tragically in many cases.

"Then we are the disciples of our teachers, then of our playmates and peers—one of the most potent of 'disciplining' relationships—then perhaps again of our teachers. But now, in our teens and twenties, our teachers play quite a different role. They do much to set in stone the major thrusts of our more or less consciously chosen self-image that will make or break us in the important connections of our life. These last teachers often include some very glamorous and powerful people. They may indeed be teachers—instructors of some type, as in the armed services, or even academic professors. But they may also include public figures of various kinds: artists, musicians, writers, professionals. Nearly always they convey to us a strong impression of what life as a whole is all about. This provides the absolutely necessary orientations of conscious behavior toward ourselves, others—and God. We must have such orientations, even if they be wrong.

"It is one of the major transitions of life to recognize who has taught us, mastered us, and then to evaluate the results in us of their teaching. This is a harrowing task, and sometimes we just can't face it. But it can also open the door to choose other masters, possibly better masters, and one Master above all" (*The Divine Conspiracy*, 271-72).

For Discussion

From whom did you learn how to live? Whose disciple are you?

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Matthew 4:18-22

18 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 19 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." 20 At once they left their nets and followed him.

21 Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, 22 and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Cf., another translation

18 As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee he saw two brothers, Simon (called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea (for they were fishermen). 19 He said to them, "Follow me, and I will turn you into fishers of people." 20 They left their nets immediately and followed him. 21 Going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in a boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. Then he called them. 22 They immediately left the boat and their father and followed him. (NET)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

* Underline "fishermen" in v. 18.

* Highlight v. 19.

* Double underline "come, follow" in v. 19.

* Circle "I" in v. 19.

* Underline "fishers of men" in v. 19.

* Circle "at once" in v. 20.

* Bracket "left their nets" in v. 20.

* Double underline "followed" in v. 20.

* Highlight "Jesus called them" in v. 21.

* Circle "immediately" in v. 22.

* Bracket "left the boat and their father" in v. 21.

* Double underline "followed" in v. 22.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. What do you *infer* about the men in this passage from their occupation?
2. Jesus said, "Come, follow me." Is this to be read as an *invitation* or a *command*? Explain.
3. Explain the relationship of *their* part to *his* part in discipleship (v. 19).
4. Put the meaning of the *metaphor* "fishers of men," i.e., "fishers of people" (NET) in your own words.
5. What do you make of the use of "at once" in verse 20 and "immediately" in verse 22?
6. Explain the *practical implication* of the parallel ideas "left their nets" in verse 20 and "left the boat and their father" in verse 22.
7. Explain what "followed him" (vv. 20, 22) *actually* means.
8. The decision of the four men in this passage seems hasty given its importance. Don't you agree? Explain.
9. **Discussion:** To follow Jesus, the four men in this passage had to abandon their occupations and give up everything (19:27). Is that what following Christ requires of everyone? Talk about it.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Discipleship is an important theme in Matthew's gospel. The Greek word translated "follow," which Matthew uses in 4:19, is a technical term often used "of the willing and obedient disciple who follows his teacher as one who learns and one who serves" (Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, 11). Matthew uses this term more often than Mark or Luke. What's more, his Gospel ends with the Great Commission. Jesus' last words to the eleven were: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the end of the age" (28:18-20). Jesus commanded them to "make disciples," which involved "baptizing them" and "teaching them to obey everything" he had commanded. To make sure his readers had the basic information they needed to become disciples and to carry out the commission, Matthew organized his Gospel around five great discourses containing what Jesus had taught concerning: 1) righteousness (5-7), 2) ministry (10), 3) the kingdom of heaven (13), 4) humility in the church, and 5) the coming of the Son of Man (24-25). In a nutshell, disciples are to live righteous lives, share the good news of the gospel, understand the nature of the kingdom, humbly forgive and show mercy to one another, and keep watch for the return of Christ.

Matthew 4:18-21 describes Jesus' call to Simon, Andrew, James, and John to be his disciples. Matthew's purpose goes beyond simply reporting what happened. He is *defining* what it means to be a disciple and *describing* how one should respond to Jesus' call. The simple two-word command "follow me" is pregnant with implications. Jesus is saying, "Live with me and learn by watching me. Own my values and priorities. Learn to become passionate for the things I live for. And follow my example by doing the ministry I have come to do" (Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew*, HNTC, 45). "The calling of these disciples serves as a model of the nature of true discipleship generally. The call of God through Jesus is sovereign and absolute in its authority; the response of those who are called is to be both immediate and absolute, involving a complete break with old loyalties. The actual shape of this break

with the past will undoubtedly vary from individual to individual, but that there must be a fundamental, radical reorientation of a person's priorities is taken for granted. As the first disciples were called and responded, so are Matthew's readers called to respond" (Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 33a, *Matthew 1-13*, 78).

The passage consists of two parallel sections: 1) the calling of Peter and Andrew (vv. 18-20) and 2) the calling of James and John (vv. 21-22). Both sections refer to the movement of Jesus, his observation of the two brothers, their fishing activity, his command to follow, and their response. Their response is described in nearly verbatim language except for what they left behind. In both instances, the men followed immediately, which seems a bit odd in that this appears to be their first encounter with Jesus. However, we know from John's Gospel that it was based on an extended prior relationship with him. One commentator explains: "This is not the first encounter between them and Jesus. The Fourth Gospel helps to fill in some of the background to the relationship. Andrew was one of the two disciples of John the Baptist who left him to become a disciple of Jesus, and he immediately brought his brother Peter to Jesus (John 1:35-42). The other unnamed disciple has been traditionally identified as the apostle John. In all likelihood at least, Andrew, Peter, and John (and perhaps James?) were the ones who accompanied him to the wedding at Cana, where they observed the miracle and believed in Jesus (2:1-2, 11). They also most likely are the disciples of Jesus who ministered with him in Judea during the first year of his ministry (cf. 3:22-23; 4:1-3). Thus, by the time of the incidents here in Galilee, about a year later, they have had plenty of time to consider Jesus' mission . . . This was no emotional, spur-of-the-moment decision. They must have been waiting for this momentous occasion to join Jesus as he embarks on his kingdom mission, so they respond at once when he calls" (Michael J. Wilkins, *The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew*, 178-79).

But how exactly are we to follow an *invisible* Jesus? The disciples could follow him and be with him, but what about us? Dallas Willard writes: "If I am to be someone's apprentice, there is one absolutely essential condition. I must be with that person. This is true of the student-teacher relationship in all

generality. And it is precisely what it meant to follow Jesus when he was here in human form. To follow him meant, in the first place, to be with him. If I am Jesus' disciple that means I am with him to learn from him how to be like him. To take cases from ordinary life, a child learning to multiply and divide numbers is an apprentice to its teacher. Children are with their teachers, learning from them how to be like them in a certain respect— similarly for a student of the piano or voice, of the Spanish language, of tennis, and so

forth. The 'being-with,' by watching and by hearing, is an absolute necessity" (*The Divine Conspiracy*, 276). Matthew has provided us with an opportunity to be with Jesus, to see and to hear what he did and said. That was his purpose for writing. Even better, Jesus comes to us in the person of "another Counselor" (Jn 14:16) whom he identifies as "the Spirit of truth" (v. 17). "I will not leave you as orphans," Jesus promised, "I will come to you" (v. 18).

The Message of the Passage

Respond to Jesus command, "follow me" by immediately reorienting your priorities around learning how to live from him.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 "living questions" to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

- Write about how God is making himself known to you . . .

- Write about how God wants to change you . . .

- Write about how God is calling you to change your world . . .

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 18 *Sea of Galilee* "The 'Sea of Galilee,' located about sixty miles north of Jerusalem, is called 'Sea of Kinnereth' in the Old Testament. Elsewhere in the New Testament it [is] called (1) the 'Sea of Tiberias' (John 6:1; 21:1), because Herod Antipas's capital city, Tiberias, lay on the west shore; (2) 'Lake of Gennesaret' (Luke 5:1), derived from a town and plain by that name situated above the west/northwest shore; and (3) sometimes simply 'the lake' (Luke 5:2; 8:22; 23:33). This lake is located in the great Jordan rift valley, at least 636 feet below sea level. The Jordan River enters the lake in the north and exits to the south, where it finally terminates in the Dead Sea about 65 miles to the south. Ancient writers all acclaim the Sea of Galilee for its fresh waters and pleasant temperatures, unlike the Dead Sea. It had clear sandy beaches rather than swampy marshes along the seashore, and it was well stocked with fish. The lake's low elevation provides it with relatively mild, year-round temperatures, so that people could sleep outdoors in the surrounding areas (e.g., 15:32; Mark 8:2). However, encompassed as it is with mountain ranges to the east and west that rise over 2,650 feet from the level of the lake, its low-lying setting results in sudden violent downdrafts and storms (cf., Matt. 8:24; Mark 4:37; Luke 8:23; John 6:18)" (Wilkins, 176).

v. 18 *Simon . . .* "Peter, Andrew, James, and John were fishermen (all involved in a family business) living in Capernaum or nearby Bethsaida (see John 1:44). This was apparently also the home of Matthew at the time of his calling (9:1, 9), and of Philip and possibly Nathanael (John 1:43-45). This fishing profession in that day probably carried with it the same kind of social stigma that 'common laborer' does today. Three of the four (Peter, James, and John) would become Jesus' closest earthly friends. And Andrew played a significant role in his ministry more than once (Mark 13:3; John 1:40; 6:8; 12:22).

"Matthew left his readers with the impression that this was Jesus' first encounter with these four men. However, John recorded that some of the Twelve (at least Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael) had been with Jesus during his earlier ministry (John 1:35-51; 2:2, 12, 17; 3:22; 4:1-2, 27-33). Jesus had known his disciples for some time and had even seen them in ministry situations. Thus, their decision to follow him was not hastily made" (Weber, 44).

v. 18 *net, fishermen* "Here alone in the NT does the technical word [*amphiblestron*] occur (Mark uses the cognate verb). It describes a circular casting net used in fishing" (Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 33a, Matthew 1-13, 76). "It was a circular, about 20-25 feet in diameter, with lead sinkers attached to the outer edge. Gathering the net on his arm, the fisherman would throw it out onto the water, either while standing in a boat or in shallow water. The net was pulled down by the sinkers on the outer ring (like a parachute), sinking to the bottom with fish trapped inside. *This is tedious work*" (Wilkins, 176-77 italics added). "The call of the disciples constitutes the only place in the Gospels where the word 'fishermen' (*alieis*) is used. Here the word prepares the way for the saying of v 19" (Hagner, 76).

v. 19 *follow me* "The verb [*akolouthein*] 'to follow' (a technical term), is important for the stress on discipleship throughout the Gospel (see Kingsbury). It occurs more often in Matthew than in Mark or Luke, and in eight instances it is redactionally inserted in material drawn from Mark or Q (cf. 4:22; 8:22; 8:23; 10:38; 19:28). Although [*akolouthein*] can at times be neutral (e.g., 8:19, 23), it is the special word for discipleship, as can be seen in Jesus' use of the word (e.g., 8:22; 10:38; 16:24; 19:21, 28). Peter and Andrew here are said to leave their nets, and in v 22 John and James leave their boat and their father. The point to be understood is that they left everything behind, as they themselves later will assert in the question of 19:27 (cf. Luke 5:11 where 'they left everything')" (77).

v. 19 *fishers of men* Cf., "fishers of people" (NET); "the Greek term (*anthropos*) is used here in a generic sense, referring to both men and women, thus 'people' (the NET Bible, 29^{tn} on Mt 4:19). "The phrase 'fishers of men' recalls Jeremiah 16:16. There Yahweh sent 'fishermen' to gather Israelites for the Exile. Here Jesus called fishermen to announce the end of Israel's spiritual exile (cf. 1:11-12; 2:17-18) and to prepare for His messianic reign. Later, after experiencing rejection by Israel, Jesus recommissioned these men for duty in the inter-advent age (28:18-20; John 21:15-23)" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Matthew," 2014 ed., 76, www.soniclight.com).

v. 20 *at once* "The brothers' immediate response is significant for Matthew, as can be seen from its redactional repetition in v 22 [cf., "immediately they left the boat"]. He apparently sees in this verse the pattern of true discipleship: the leaving behind of past preoccupations and the unhesitating and unconditional response of following" (Hagner, 77). The same word occurs in verse 22 where it is translated "immediately."

v. 21 *preparing their nets* "These nets are most likely the trammel net, which is a compound net of three layers, made up of five units each over a hundred feet long, which were used by at least two crews of boats at night when the fish couldn't see the entangling nets . . . Probably after a night of fishing with their father and others of their hired crew (cf. Mark 1:20), James and John are preparing their nets for the next commercial excursion on the lake. Caring for this equipment took up much of a morning after a night of fishing" (Wilkins, 177).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Parents, let's be honest. Sometimes it just easier to not make our kids obey. We are tired, busy and if we reacted to our kids' disobedience EVERY time, we would be doing it all day long! While showing grace and not choosing to fight every battle is wise, teaching our kids to obey is necessary for their physical and spiritual development. When I was a teenager I watched my oldest sister as she was raising three small children. Her expectation was for them to have "immediate obedience". They were to obey first and then if they had a question (or complaint) if could be addressed later. I remember thinking she was a drill sergeant. One day, however, when her children were young school-agers, her house caught on fire in the middle of the night. She went to their rooms and calmly said, " I need you to get up and go to the front yard now." Not knowing what was happening, all three got up and left the house without hesitation. God protected her family that night and they were spared tragedy. My sister was so grateful that her children immediately obeyed without hesitation. Years later, I tried to follow her parenting advice. I want my kids to respond to me in obedience but more than that I want them to respond to God in immediate obedience. When He says "Come!" I want them to obey!

What Does The Bible Say

Read: Matthew 4:18-22

1. What were Peter and Andrew doing when Jesus walked up to them?
2. What did Jesus ask them to do?
3. What did they do?

What Do You Think

1. Why do you think these four men did not hesitate to follow Jesus?
2. What would you have done if it had been you?

What R U Going To Do

For the next six weeks we will be memorizing Philippians 3:8-11. Start working on it today! It is a great passage on knowing Christ. Also, work on obeying your parents immediately this week—without hesitation. You will be ready to quickly obey when Christ calls you to "Come."

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Giving Away my Life - I give away my life to help with God's work.

Memory Verse

Philippians 3:8a - *What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse ____ . Family completed **Say** ____ **Think** ____ **Do** ____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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