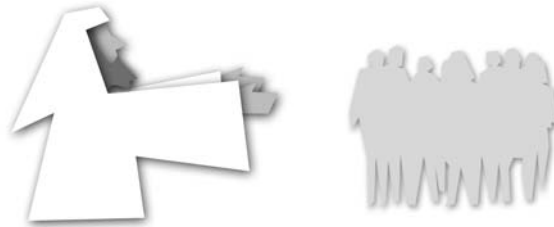


Called to Discipleship¹ by Jesus



SABBATH—JANUARY 12

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Matthew 4:18–22; Matthew 5:46; Matthew 9:10, 11; Mark 1:16–20; Luke 5:1–11; Luke 18:10, 11; John 1:35–51.

MEMORY VERSE: “Faith is being sure of what we hope for. It is being certain [sure] of what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1, NIV).

“**GARIBALDI, A FAMOUS GENERAL**, announced to his soldiers after they invaded Rome, ‘Soldiers! I have nothing to offer you but hunger, thirst, hardship, death. Let all who love their country follow me!’ He knew many brave young soldiers would follow him. They would accept hunger, thirst, and death.”—Adapted from A. Gordon Nasby, editor, *Treasury of the Christian World* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), page 92. Unlike Garibaldi, Jesus’ call is not for love of country but for love of God. This call probably involves hunger, thirst, hardship, and death. But it also offers the promise of eternal (forever) life. So, people, then and now, accept His call to follow and to dedicate (give) their lives to Him. By doing so, they make a difference in this world now and in heaven.

This week we study again the earliest calls to discipleship to learn what lessons they teach us.

THIS WEEK'S LESSON IN BRIEF (SHORT): What were the first calls to discipleship like? What part did the Bible have in those calls? What can we learn from the call of Levi Matthew? There may be differences, but what are some of the things that are the same in the call to discipleship? What advantages² do we have today over the early disciples (followers) of Jesus?

1. discipleship—surrendering (giving) fully our lives and hearts to God; being willing to sacrifice (give up) our desires to follow God; being willing to suffer for God's way.

2. advantages—things, events, or conditions (the way things are right now) that can help a person gain what he or she wants.

SUNDAY—JANUARY 13**THE FIRST CALLS (John 1:35–51)**

Read John 1:35–51. Then answer the following questions:

1. How did John the Baptist help prepare the stage for the call of these first disciples? From what John did, what can we learn for our mission as a people?

2. Did the Bible feed the first disciples' desire to follow Jesus? What message is there for us?

3. How important was it for the early disciples to call others to follow Jesus? What does that tell us about our own calling?

4. What did Jesus do to help Nathanael overcome his prejudice?³

Andrew spent some time with Jesus. Afterward, Andrew believed that Jesus was the Messiah. But he also quickly did what the Master expects every disciple to do. He spread the joy of discipleship. Andrew seemed to understand a very important principle (rule) of discipleship. He knew that discipleship was not for private or personal use. It does not belong to a gated (closed-in) community or a first-class club. Rather, it is an experience that must be shared

with others.

From Andrew's answer to discipleship, a pattern develops. Andrew heard John speak and followed Jesus. Next, he told his brother Peter of his experience and brought him to Jesus. And Peter became a follower too.

In the same way, we hear the truth about Jesus. Then we promise to follow Him. We also tell others about Jesus. This is done day by day, all over the world.



As soon as Andrew heard from John the Baptist about Jesus, Andrew told his brother Peter that Jesus was the Messiah. Disciples spread the joy of discipleship with others.

If you were to tell someone about Jesus, what would you say? How deep is your experience with the Lord? What would you say

³ prejudice—an opinion already formed against someone or something before hearing both sides of the issue; a pre-judged idea.

about Jesus that could interest someone in following Him?

MONDAY—JANUARY 14

THE FIRST CALL IN MATTHEW AND MARK (Matthew 4:18–22)

In Matthew 4:18–22 and Mark 1:16–20, we are given other examples of the first call to discipleship. In both examples, Peter and Andrew, and James and John dropped their nets and followed Jesus. What does that mean?

This is not the only time and place this principle (rule) is found in the Bible.

Look up the following verses. Genesis 12:1; read also 1 Kings 19:19–21; Philippians 3:8; Hebrews 11:8; Hebrews 11:24. How is the same principle being used in the verses, even though the situations may be different?

This point must be made: The Lord demands the whole heart. If we refuse to give up to the Lord something very dear to us, this something becomes an idol (something we love more than God). And we consider it to be more important than the Lord. What is worse, those things we hold dear become the hooks the devil uses to pull us away from the Lord completely. That is why we must be willing to give up anything and everything the Lord asks us to. As the Lord

said, we cannot “serve two masters” (Matthew 6:24).



The Lord demands the whole heart.

TUESDAY—JANUARY 15

THE CALL IN LUKE (Luke 5:1–11)

Luke 5:1–11 tells Luke’s side of the story about God’s call to the disciples. As with the other Gospel stories,⁴ it brings in parts not found in other Gospels. But it also lacks parts found in others. Some thinkers claim that the stories do not match. Instead, careful study usually solves any issues. It shows that details may be different, but the stories do match on important points.

What examples are there in Luke 5:1–11 that show that Peter already had some faith in Jesus?

Think about it. Peter and his brother Andrew have fished all night when fishing is the best. But they catch

4. Gospel stories—the stories about the life of Jesus found in the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

nothing. Jesus then comes along and tells them to drop the net into the water. Peter may have thought, *Is He joking? If we did not catch anything all night, how are we going to during the day?* But, for some reason, Peter obeys. Did Peter already have reasons to trust in Jesus?

What was Peter's answer? How does that answer show the important part of discipleship and the everlasting (forever) gospel?⁵ Isaiah 53:6; Romans 5:16–21; 1 John 1:7–9.

We have fallen natures. We have faults and weaknesses. Like Peter, we are sinful. But God does not leave us. It is natural for us to say, "Leave us, because we are sinners." But, under the blood of the Cross, we can remain in the presence of God. Under the blood of the Cross, we can be His disciples.



Like Peter we are fallen, but God does not leave us.

Think carefully about what Jesus did for us on the cross. Think about the promises of His acceptance, forgiveness, and peace with God because of the Cross. We do not claim the promises because we feel worthy of them. Did Peter? We claim them because God has promised them. We also claim them because we want to take Him at His Word.

WEDNESDAY—JANUARY 16

THE CALL OF LEVI MATTHEW (Matthew 9:9)

Compare⁶ the call of Levi Matthew in Matthew 9:9; Mark 2:14; and Luke 5:27, 28 with the call of the other early disciples. How is it the same as the calling of the other disciples? How is it different?

Up to this point, those whom Jesus called to discipleship were clearly faithful Jews, as John 1:44, 45 suggests. But the call to Levi Matthew is different. Matthew was a publican (a hated tax collector) and was judged to be among the worst kind of people in society.

What do Matthew 5:46; Matthew 9:10, 11; Mark 2:16; and Luke 18:10, 11 tell us about how people such as Matthew were judged as low-class citizens?

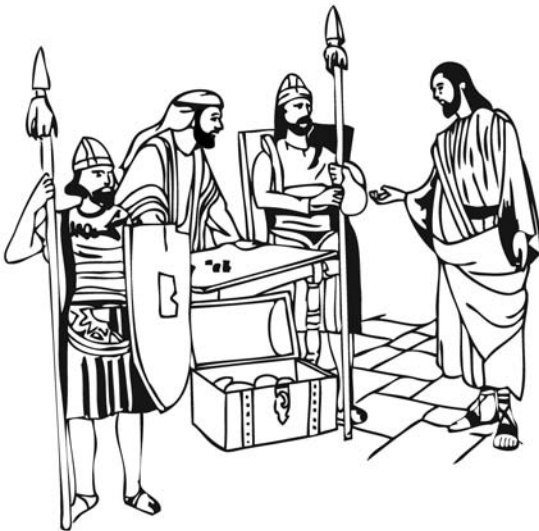
Matthew was probably the last person anyone expected to receive a

5. gospel—the good news that Jesus saves us from our sins; the good news of salvation.

6. compare—to show how two things are the same.

call to discipleship. First, Matthew was called from the tax collector's booth. Roman writers put these people in a class with the owners of brothels.⁷ The rabbis thought of tax collectors as robbers. Tax collectors were seen as cheaters (Luke 3:12, 13). The tax collectors were thought to be very dishonest. They were hated by everyone because they were Jews who often tricked their countrymen for the enemy and also cheated the government.

How could a tax collector with such a character⁸ have been called to discipleship by Jesus! But that is exactly what happened. Christ's call here shows that everyone has a chance to be saved.



Christ's call to Levi Matthew shows that everyone has a chance to be saved.

Who are the outcasts (unaccepted

people) judged unacceptable for church fellowship? What kind of attitude (feeling) do you have toward these people? What can we learn from the story of Levi Matthew's call about not judging others too quickly?

THURSDAY—JANUARY 17

THE CALLING (Hebrews 11)

We have studied this week (and in past weeks) about the call to discipleship. From these calls, what special message can we find for ourselves in Hebrews 11:1?

How little the disciples must have known about what was coming and about what they were getting into by leaving everything to follow Jesus!

As we saw this week, the disciples had some Bible proof at that time for believing that Jesus was the Messiah (John 1:45). But a study of the Gospels shows how much they did not know of Jesus' work. They did not know of the most important part of His work. That was His death on the cross. As we know, they had a serious misunderstanding about what was to come.

What does Mark 10:35–40; John 18:10; and Acts 1:6 tell us about just how little they really understood?

Think about the advantages that

7. brothels—houses or places where someone pays another person (a whore) to have sex with him or her.

8. character—who you are; all the things a person does, feels, and thinks are what a person is made of; your character is the sum of the choices you make, such as a choice to be honest or to cheat.

we, as modern-day disciples, have over those early disciples. Yes, they witnessed many wonderful miracles. But at the same time, they did not know what we know about the work, the mission, and the final victory of Christ over death. But even so, the early disciples moved ahead in faith, the kind of faith shown in Hebrews 11:1.

Are you weak in faith? If so, why? Could it be the things you are watching (TV)? Could it be the things you are thinking about? Could it be the things you are devoting (giving) your time to? What positive steps can you take now that will help your faith grow?

FRIDAY—JANUARY 18

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Luke 5:1–11; Ellen G. White, “The Call by the Sea,” pages 244–252, in *The Desire of Ages* (read also Matthew 9:9; Luke 5:27, 28; John 21:1–11); *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 5, pages 352, 739, 909–911.

“Here were the four partners [Peter, Andrew, James, and John], with the largest catch of fish they had ever brought to shore. But, at the moment of their greatest success they dropped their business. . . . They had seen a great miracle. But still, it must have taken a real measure of faith for the fishermen to leave their chosen work

for an uncertain [unsure] future as followers of a traveling teacher [Jesus]. At that time, Jesus had experienced only small success in His work. . . . But the disciples wasted no time in making their decision [choice]. They quickly decided to drop their successful partnership as fishermen for a higher partnership with Jesus as fishers of men. This decision was made quickly and wisely. They needed no time to think things over, no time to make arrangements with their families. They had sailed out into the ‘deep’ sea as common fishermen. But when they returned to shore, they stepped out by faith into the ‘deep’ where Christ now called them, to fish for men.”
—Adapted from *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 5, page 739.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ In what ways do you need to make God first on your list so that you can better serve Him in your discipleship?
- ❷ In Thursday’s lesson, what are the advantages⁹ that we today have over the early disciples? What do we know about that they did not? Make a list of these things and bring them to class. Discuss what you each find. Then ask yourselves: What are we doing with these advantages to help us grow in grace¹⁰ ourselves? How can these advantages help us go out and make new disciples?

9. advantages—things, events, or conditions (the way things are right now) that can help a person gain what he or she wants.

10. grace—God’s gift of forgiveness and mercy that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

③ Study the question about the call of Levi Matthew. In class discuss the question of prejudice against certain groups. What groups of people are judged to be outcasts¹¹ in your society? How can you help them? So

often churches are no different than the culture¹² around them. How open are you to the “Matthews” of your own society? What can you do to help your own church overcome this terrible kind of prejudice?

11. outcasts—people who are not accepted by members of society.

12. culture—the ideas, skills, arts, tools, and ways of life of a certain people at a certain time; civilization.