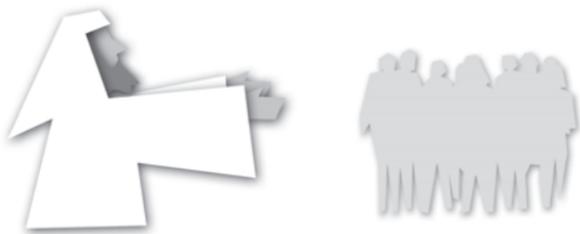


Called *to* Discipleship *by* Jesus



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Matt. 4:18–22; 5:46; 9:10, 11; Mark 1:16–20; Luke 5:1–11; 18:10, 11; John 1:35–51.*

Memory Text: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (*Hebrews 11:1*).

When Garibaldi published that famous proclamation to his soldiers after the storming of Rome, ‘Soldiers! I have nothing to offer you but hunger, thirst, hardship, death. Let all who love their country follow me!’ he knew many a gallant youth would follow him, accepting hunger, and thirst, and death.”—A. Gordon Nasby, ed., *Treasury of the Christian World* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), p. 92. Unlike Garibaldi’s, Jesus’ call was not for love of country but for love of God, a call that—though possibly involving hunger, thirst, hardship, and death—also offers the promise of eternal life. Thus, people then and now accept His call to follow and to commit their lives to Him and by so doing make a difference in this world now and for eternity.

This week we will take another look at the earliest calls to discipleship and seek to glean from them lessons for ourselves.

The Week at a Glance: What were the first calls to discipleship like? What role did Scripture have in those calls? What can we learn from the call of Levi Matthew? Despite many differences, what are some of the common elements found in the call to discipleship? What advantages do we have today over the early disciples?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 19.

The First Calls

Read John 1:35–51 and then answer the following questions:

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

2. How central were the Scriptures to the people's willingness to follow Jesus? What message is there for us?

3. What role do we see for the disciples in calling others to follow Jesus? What does that tell us about our own calling?

After Andrew spent a little time with Jesus, he not only believed that Jesus was the Messiah, but he immediately did what the Master expects every disciple to do: Spread the joy of discipleship. Andrew seemed to have understood a vital principle of discipleship: It is neither for private use nor does it belong to a gated community or an exclusive club. Rather, it is an experience that must be shared with others.

From Andrew's response to discipleship, a pattern emerges. 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, as well.

In the same way, we hear the truth about Jesus, make a commitment to follow Him, and then tell others about Jesus. This is repeated day by day, all over the world.

If you were to tell someone about Jesus, what would you say? How deep is your experience with the Lord? What would you say about Jesus that could make someone be interested in following Him?

The First Call in Matthew and Mark

In Matthew 4:18–22 and Mark 1:16–20, we are given other perspectives on this first call. In both examples, those He called dropped their nets and followed Him. What does that mean?

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

Look up the following texts. How do we see the same principle being manifested here, however different the circumstances?

Gen. 12:1 (see also Heb. 11:8)

1 Kings 19:19–21

Phil. 3:8

Heb. 11:24

The point cannot be repeated enough: The Lord demands the whole heart. That which we do not surrender to Him, that which we cling to, refusing to give up, becomes an idol, something we deem more important than the Lord. What is worse, those things we cling to become the hooks the devil uses to wean us away from the Lord completely. That is why we must be willing to forsake anything and everything the Lord asks us to. We cannot, as He said, “serve two masters” (*Matt. 6:24*).

The Call in Luke

Luke 5:1–11 contains Luke’s version of the disciples’ call. As with the other Gospel accounts, it brings in elements not found in other Gospels, while omitting elements found in others. Some claim that the accounts are, therefore, contradictory. Instead, careful scrutiny usually resolves any issues, showing simply that despite the different details or emphasis, the accounts harmonize, especially on the crucial points.

Read Luke 5:1–11. What indications are there that Peter already had some faith in Jesus?

Think about it. They had fished all night, when fishing was the best, and caught nothing. Jesus then comes along and tells them to let the net into the water. *Is He joking? If we did not catch anything all night, how are we going to in the day?* Yet for some reason, Peter listens. Did he already have reasons to trust in Jesus?

What was Peter’s response? How does that response, in many ways, capture the essence of discipleship and the everlasting gospel? *Isa. 53:6, Rom. 5:16–21, 1 John 1:7–9.*

Despite our fallen natures, despite our faults and our weaknesses, despite the fact that we, like Peter, are sinful, God does not abandon us. How natural it would be for any of us, in the presence of the Divine, to say, “Depart from me.” Under the blood of the Cross, we can abide in the presence of God. Under the blood of the Cross, we can be His disciples.

Dwell on what Jesus did for us at Calvary. Dwell on the promises of acceptance, forgiveness, and reconciliation with God because of the Cross. Claim the promises made to you, not because you feel worthy of them (was Peter?) but because God has promised them, and you want to take Him at His Word.

The Call of Levi Matthew

Read Matthew 9:9; Mark 2:14; and Luke 5:27, 28. Compare the call of Levi Matthew with that of the other early disciples. What are the similarities and the differences between the call of Levi Matthew and the other disciples so far?

Up to this point, those Jesus called to discipleship were apparently devout Jews, as John 1:44, 45 implies. The call to Levi Matthew, however, comes to one on the fringes of society. He was a publican and, as such, was deemed among the worst of society by the Jews.

Read Matthew 5:46; 9:10, 11; Mark 2:16; and Luke 18:10, 11. What do these texts tell us about how people such as Matthew were viewed in that society?

Matthew was the most unlikely candidate for a call to discipleship. First, he was called from the tax collector's booth. Roman writers linked these people with brothel keepers; the rabbis classed them with robbers. They were seen as extortionists (*Luke 3:12, 13*), notoriously dishonest and universally hated, especially since they were Jews who defrauded their countrymen for the enemy and also swindled the government.

How unlikely that one with such a character and a reputation should have been called to discipleship by Jesus! Yet, that is precisely what happened. Christ's call here speaks to the universality of the salvation He brought, the inclusiveness of His kingdom, and His willingness to give all a chance at salvation.

Who are some in your own society that are deemed outcasts, socially and morally unacceptable? What kind of attitude do you have toward those people? What can we learn, from the story of Levi Matthew's call, about not being too quick to pass judgment upon others?

The Calling

Based on what we have looked at this week (and in previous weeks) about the call to discipleship, what special message can we find for ourselves in Hebrews 11:1?

The amazing thing about the response of these disciples to Christ's call was how little they must have known about what was coming, about what they were getting into by leaving everything and following the Master.

Though, as we saw this week, they had some biblical evidence at that time for believing that Jesus was the Messiah (*John 1:45*), a study of the Gospels reveals how much of the work and ministry of Jesus was still unknown to them, especially the most important part of His work: His death on the cross. As we know, right up until the end, and even after, they had grave misconceptions about what was to come.

Read Mark 10:35–40, John 18:10, and Acts 1:6. How do these texts help us grasp just how little they really understood?

Think about the advantages that we, as modern-day disciples, have over those early disciples, especially right at the time they were first called. Sure, they got to witness many incredible miracles; but at the same time they did not know what we know about the work, the mission, and the ultimate triumph of what Christ was to accomplish. And yet, despite this, they moved ahead in faith, the kind of faith revealed in Hebrews 11:1.

Are you weak in faith? Could it be the things you are watching, the things you are thinking about, the things you are devoting your time to? What proactive steps can you take, right now, that will help your faith grow?

Further Study: Read Luke 5:1–11; Ellen G. White, “We Have Found the Messiah,” pp. 132–143; “The Call by the Sea,” pp. 244–252, in *The Desire of Ages; The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 352, 739, 909–911.

“Here were the four partners, in possession of the largest catch of fish they had ever brought to shore. At the moment of their greatest material success they abandoned their business. . . . Even in view of the higher significance of the miracle it must have taken a real measure of faith to leave their chosen occupation for an uncertain livelihood as followers of an itinerant teacher who, up to this time, had apparently had small success. . . . On the part of the disciples there was not the least hesitancy. The decision to dissolve their successful partnership as fishermen for a higher partnership with Jesus as fishers of men was made instantly and intelligently. They needed no time to think things over, no time to provide for the needs of their families. . . . They had launched out into the deep as ordinary fishermen; when they returned to shore they launched out by faith into the ‘deep’ to which Christ now called them, to fish for men.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 739.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 In what ways do you need to rearrange your priorities so that you can glorify God more effectively and be more consistent in your discipleship?
- 2 In reference to Thursday’s lesson, what are the advantages that we today have over the disciples? What are the things that we know about that they did not? Make a list of these things and bring them to class. Discuss what you each find and then ask yourselves: What are we doing with these advantages to help us grow in grace ourselves? How can these advantages help us go out and make disciples?
- 3 Dwell more on the question regarding the call of Levi Matthew. In class discuss the question of prejudice against certain groups. What about your church as a whole? What groups of people are deemed outcasts in your society? How can you minister to them? So often churches reflect the culture around them, including the prejudices of that culture. How open are you to the Matthews of your own society? What can you do to help your own church overcome this terrible symptom of fallen human nature?

Growing God's Church

by OD

I remember the day well. My cousin Tulga and I were chatting in his home in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. He started talking about Jesus and invited me to visit a Bible study he attended. I decided to go.

I really enjoyed the small group meeting in someone's apartment and attended whenever I could. My new friends were different from other people I knew. I felt safe there; no one was trying to hurt me or make me look bad. I began to come out of my shell.

The Bible texts they read were powerful and seemed directed straight at me. The principles I learned helped me deal with issues in my life. I began reading the Bible on my own, and I could see my life changing.

Tulga told me that Sabbath was the day God had set aside as holy, that humans changed the day of worship to Sunday. I realized he was right, that my church didn't teach the Bible as Adventists did. I eventually started attending the Adventist church. After months of deep Bible study, I joined the Adventist Church.

I love music and play the guitar and the piano. At first I wanted to introduce the livelier music that had drawn me to the Sunday church into the Adventist church. But my new church family helped me realize that some of this music was not appropriate to worship.

I joined a singing group that sang several styles of music—classical, traditional, and some modern. But all the music focused on Jesus. I realized that through our music we can touch people who don't know Jesus yet, and we can share our faith with other Christians.

God gave me musical talent, and I want to use it to build up the young church in Mongolia. I have translated some Christian songs into Mongolian and teach them to new groups.

Recently I helped some Korean young people hold evangelistic meetings in Mongolia. After they left, I was shocked to learn that someone wanted to sponsor me to study theology in Korea. I had finished high school and had planned to attend a university in Mongolia and study mechanical engineering. But I understand that this is God's will, and I am thrilled.

I used to look forward to being older and having authority and power. But now I realize that God is challenging the young people of Mongolia to use their talents for Him while they are young.

Your mission offerings have had a huge impact on growing the church in Mongolia. Thank you for your support.

OD is studying theology in Korea and will return to Mongolia to minister to his people.