

The Kind of Person Called (Matthew 4:12-23)

Matthew begins his account of the Lord Jesus' public ministry by telling us of his return to Galilee. He makes his home and base of operations in Capernaum. He goes there not just because it is his home territory but, more importantly, because it also fulfills the prophecy in Isaiah 9:1-2, which states that the Messiah will begin his ministry there. And since there was a large Gentile population present, another possible reason is that it demonstrates that Jesus is Savior of all nations, not just of the Jews. Like John the Baptist, Jesus preached the kingdom of God, but where John promised its coming, Jesus heralds and embodies its arrival.

What kind of person does Christ call? This passage shows that Christ calls ordinary people who will simply make themselves available to him.

Note where Jesus called his **first** disciples. They were not in a religious center nor a learning center. Neither

were they in a position of authority and power, nor did they possess wealth or financial security. They were out in the work-a-day-world. This is not to de-emphasize the importance of religion or of learning, but it does teach at least **two** things.

First, position and power, wealth and security, religion and learning can hurt and keep a person away from God. Such things can make a person so self-confident and assured that he becomes useless to God. God is unable to work his power through him. The man's own abilities and energy block God's gifts and power from flowing through him.

Second, God can use and call anyone who is really available, whether religious or nonreligious, learned or unlearned, ordinary or extraordinary. The main ingredient is to be available and willing to respond.

There were **five** traits that were in the first men that Jesus called, traits that show what kind of person is called by Christ. The **first** trait of the men called by

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Christ was that they were brothers who worked together. The fact that they were working together says at least **three** things. **1st**, they had good parents who had taught them to love and care for one another. **2nd**, they came from a closely knit family, a family that worked together. And **3rd**, they followed and obeyed the teaching of their parents and maintained a brotherly spirit throughout life.

The disciples' brotherly and cooperative spirit shows us **three** things. **#1**, the need for a brotherly spirit—the kind of spirit Christ desires of his followers. Christ is building a kingdom of followers with a brotherly spirit. **#2**, the need for reaching families for Christ: brothers and sisters reaching each other. **#3**, the need for parents to train up their children in the way they should go. There is one essential for serving Christ that must be stressed among God's people: cooperation—a nature and willingness to serve together.

The **second** trait of the five I traits I mentioned earlier is the men called by Christ were industrious workers. Note how Peter and Andrew were busy at work when Christ called them. This is a **second** essential for serving Christ that must be stressed: energy, industry, a willingness to work, and to work hard. When Christ calls a person, the person is working, not sitting. God does not choose the lazy and inactive, but the energetic and industrious. Too many believers are sitting and are inactive. Therefore, they miss out on the higher calling of God.

The **third** trait is of the men called by Christ was to follow him, and they were to *immediately* follow him. The point is this: the disciple is called to follow Christ personally, to attach himself to Christ before he does anything else. Personal discipleship, that is, personal attachment, is essential. A person must first learn Christ before he can serve Christ. The

Lord's call is to a personal relationship, to become attached to him.

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The disciples, although unlearned, were given about three years of the best and most extensive training in the world. They were taught by Christ himself, God's own Son. Every believer needs to get alone with Christ and to do it often, to study and meditate upon Him and His Word.

The **fourth** trait of the men Christ called was that they were called to another work. This was a call to a different kind of employment, to another work and profession. It was a drastic, traumatic change. Let's make note of several facts. **1st**, the call to a personal relationship had already been issued. John tells us this (Jn 1:35-42). A personal relationship must always be stressed before service. **2nd**, this call, the call to "fish for men," was a call to service. It was a call to care for men, to help and minister to them. No greater call can come to a man, for helping another human being is the greatest act in all of life.

Imagine a person who gives himself to nothing but ministering and

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helping people. What greater call is there? And the **3rd** fact I want to make note of is the call was to immediate and total detachment from all else and to immediate attachment to Jesus and his mission. So, the Lord's call is twofold: follow him, the Messiah; before doing anything else, a disciple must first learn Christ. And second, to become a fisher of men.

The **fifth** trait of the men Christ called was that they responded immediately. The call of God is critical and it demands a decision. It is immediate—right now! A person is to get up now, not tomorrow. And it is unequivocal. It demands a positive response—immediately. How tragic that many are called, but few are chosen.

Now, let's look at the **second** set of men Jesus called. There are **four** traits that are seen in these men, traits that also show what kind of person is

called by Christ. **First**, they were obedient sons working with their

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father. They were from a closely knit family, and a closely knit family has an important influence upon the lives of its children. The point is that obedience is essential, both as a child and as a servant.

Second, they were industrious and frugal. Note how they were mending their nets, making use of what they had instead of running out to secure new nets. The point is that God does not care for wastefulness. The person God calls is frugal and thrifty, not wasteful.

The **third** trait of this second set of disciples is they were simply called. There was nothing dramatic or spectacular about their call. A dramatic experience was not necessary to reach them. Some receive very simple calls, but they are as equally called as those who receive more dramatic and spectacular

calls. God's call matches the nature and needs of a person. God's call considers a person's emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual needs. Some need more emotional calls than others. Some need more rational calls.

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And the **fourth** trait of this second set of disciples is that they were responsive; they left their livelihood and family. Some are called to leave more. Some leave not only businesses, but fathers and mothers. In some cases, this involves persecution and even the threat of death. God's call involves a drastic change. It involves both a change of life and a change of one's primary profession.

Many of us have sat in darkness and heard the same call: "Follow me." Every true disciple of Jesus surrenders all. Some have done it literally, while the rest have done it potentially, ready to leave everything in order to announce and build the kingdom. We too demonstrate by word and deed that the true King has come to save and to rule.

Reflect on what Jesus' command, "Follow me," means for you personally and practically. Matthew tells us that both sets of brothers "immediately" left everything and followed Jesus (vv,20, 22). What do you

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think Matthew was trying to tell us in describing the immediacy of their response? What does that mean for our own lives of discipleship?

So, what are the lessons we can learn from this Scripture reading in Matthew?

This Scripture reading in Matthew teaches us about radical discipleship, emphasizing the call to repentance, leaving behind old ways (like fishing) for a better future, and following Jesus into his kingdom work, which includes proclaiming good news and bringing healing, transforming ordinary people into his partners in restoring the world. Key themes are

prioritizing God, embracing change, and trusting Jesus as the ultimate guide, even when the path is unexpected.

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Please bow your heads as I pray,

Lord Jesus, thank you for relentlessly calling us from darkness to your light. Help us to immediately leave our old ways, like the fisherman left their nets, to follow you and become fishers of people. Grant us courage to abandon comfort for your extraordinary grace. Help us, Jesus, to turn from our proud ambitions and selfish ways. Remind us that your love never fails. Transform our fears and doubts into something beautiful, drawing us out of the shadow of death into your eternal life and love. We ask this in the name of your Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**