



session 5 group study guide

the gathering of Jesus' disciples

message

After Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist and His temptation in the desert, he begins His ministry at around the age of 30. One of the first things He does is to call His disciples. Although many times the word "disciple" is used only in reference to the 12 disciples or apostles who were closest to Jesus, a disciple is anyone who learns from someone else and follows that individual's teachings.

Read the following passage in Matthew 4:18-22. As you read, keep the following questions in mind: (1) How did Jesus convince Peter, Andrew and the others to follow Him? (2) How do the future disciples respond to Jesus' call? (3) How would you respond?

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. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him (Matthew 4:18-22).

dig

1. What does Jesus mean when He says, "I will make you fishers of men" (v. 19)?

2. It is important to realize that this wasn't the first time Jesus had met these men. He had probably developed a relationship with His disciples before He called them to follow Him. Still, all that Jesus said to Peter, Andrew, James and John was, "Follow me." No sales pitch, no long list of benefits, no persuading. A simple "follow me," and each of them dropped what they were doing and joined Jesus. What can we learn from the disciples' response?

3. The phrase "follow me" was a known one in Jesus' day; it implied Jesus was calling each of these men to be permanent disciples. None of the men were under the impression that Jesus was just asking them to walk with Him down the street. They all knew that He was asking them to walk with Him *for life*. To follow Jesus, they had to give up their professions, their homes and, at times, even their families. As a disciple of Jesus Christ, what does it mean to put God first in your life?

4. How did the disciples demonstrate that they were putting God first?

5. Each disciple was willing to leave his old life behind in order to follow Jesus. They were attracted to Jesus' call and believed in His ministry. Read Luke 14:25-27. What is Jesus' message to those who wish to follow Him?

6. The disciples were from all walks of life—fishermen, tax collectors, political zealots and even some high-society people. Throughout the ministry of Christ, God seemed to use people who were very different from one another. Why might Jesus have chosen people from all walks of life to be a part of His closest followers? Why didn't He just choose a handful of priests or religious experts?

7. The things today that try to grab our attention are often flashy, fast-paced, sexy or loud. Jesus was none of these things. What do you think attracted the disciples to Jesus?

8. What initially attracted you to Jesus? What attracts you to Jesus today?

9. When you think about sharing your faith with others, how can you convey the message of Jesus to a world bombarded by fast, flashy messages?

apply

1. How do you know if God is taking the lead in your life? (Ask yourself these questions: *How do I spend my time? How do I spend my money? How do I spend my energy? What occupies my thoughts?*)

2. God doesn't want to be first in your life just on Sunday morning or at weekly Bible studies. He wants to be first every minute of every day of every year. At times, we all have trouble keeping God as our first priority in life. What things, activities or people in your life do you find tend to bump Jesus out of that top position?

3. The difficult thing to understand is that these things that take up our time, energy and thoughts may be good things; they may even be great things like spending time with family or volunteering or participating in church activities. But, if these good things become a higher priority than giving ourselves to God, they aren't really good at all. What helps you (or what can you do) to keep God at the forefront?

4. What has being a disciple of Jesus Christ cost you?

5. What God-given gifts and talents do you have?

6. As a disciple of Jesus Christ, how can you use your gifts and talents for His glory?

7. Have you experienced Christ using your life, your story or your position to influence others in positive and life-changing directions? If so, in what ways?

8. In the same way that Jesus called Peter, Andrew and James, He is calling you today. What is *your* reply? What things hinder you from saying yes?

9. What are you willing to do in response to His call?

reflect

1. What might the disciples have been thinking after hearing Jesus' call to come and follow Him?

2. Would you have followed Him? Why or why not?

3. What causes people to follow Jesus?

4. What makes following Christ so difficult today?

5. The disciples had to give up various things in order to follow Jesus. Some gave up their jobs and positions in society, while others gave up their family and friends. If Jesus lived in the flesh today and called *you* to follow Him, what would be the hardest thing for you to give up for Jesus? Why?

6. Finish these sentences:

The first time I felt God's call to follow Him was . . . (If you've never sensed God's call to follow Him, share that as well.)

When it comes to putting God first in my life, I . . .

The hardest part about following God is . . .

One thing I can do to keep God at the forefront of my life is . . .

7. Jesus' influence has reached far beyond His first disciples and continues today. What strikes you the most about Jesus' impact on the world?

8. Our lives can be used to do great things through Christ. How does it feel to know that God can use your life to have a worldwide impact for His kingdom? How can you prepare for God to do great things through you?

meditation



A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

JOHN 13:34-35