

- I. I BELIEVE THERE ARE 3 KINDS OF PEOPLE IN THIS WORLD: SOME PEOPLE DECIDE WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE AND THEY GO OUT AND MAKE IT HAPPEN--THESE ARE THE LEADERS. SOME PEOPLE WAIT TO BE CHALLENGED WHAT TO DO AND HOW TO DO IT. THEN THEY RESPOND--THESE ARE THE FOLLOWERS. A THIRD GROUP DOES NOT DO ANYTHING. THEY HAVEN'T A CLUE AS TO WHAT IS GOING ON AROUND THEM. THEY DO NOT CARE BECAUSE THEY ARE TOTALLY WRAPPED UP IN THEMSELVES. THESE ARE THE VICTIMS.
- A. ***Here in the opening of Mark's Gospel, what Jesus says is more than an invitation. It is a summons, a command: "Follow me!" with an exclamation point.***
1. Jesus' summons is sudden, radical, decisive!
 - a. There is always an exclamation mark with Jesus!
 2. He shows up unannounced where the 4 fishermen are busy earning a living, doing what they do everyday at this time.
 - a. It is hard work. It begins at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning, when they set out in their fishing boats. Sometimes it is all night.
 - b. Simon & his brother Andrew are trying to catch fish unsuccessfully.
 - c. James & his brother Zebedee are mending their nets after 6 hours of fishing on a lake known for its rough winds and dangerous storms,
 - (1) quite similar to Yellowstone Lake where many have drowned:
 - (2) 136 square miles and 110 miles of shoreline.
 - d. Commercial fishermen have a routine, a regimented daily pattern.
 3. But Jesus says right up front, "Come with me now and I will make you fishers of men."
 - a. There is always a "now" with Jesus!
 - b. A confrontation, a challenge to everything that has been meaningful in your life up to this moment.
 4. Have you ever wanted to drop whatever you are doing on the spur of the moment and...?
 - a. I did that one time at the College of Idaho. On a Sunday afternoon I was studying for a tough psychology test the next day, a classmate Bob Benefiel came in and said, Let's go to Boise and eat pizza at the Shakeys or the Brass Lantern! I looked at him like he had taken total leave of his senses. Benny was also a psych major.
 - b. How are we going to get there? It was 25 miles away. In those days there was open country along the highway. "Hitchhike," was his answer. Now there is someth of the impulsive Peter in me. "Let's do it," I agreed.
 - c. Benny and I got 7 miles down the road, as far as Nampa. We were stuck along the roadside. We decided to give up 15 minutes later and crossed over to other side of Highway 30 to catch a ride back to Caldwell.
 - d. A man stopped to give us a ride. Once we were in the car, we noticed that the driver had a cast on his right leg up to his hi. backseat filled with empty beer cans, and he was obviously feeling no pain. "Where you all headed?" the driver asked as the needle hovered between 50 & 80 MPH. "Well, we were going to Boise to have pizza but now we're headed back to Caldwell," my friend said. "Oh," the driver replied, "I'm headed to Boise also." "Well, you're going the wrong way," I replied. So the one-legged driver did a quick U-turn and off we went. My friend and I held onto the seat and started praying. We got to Shakey's OK.

- e. Our hitchhike back to Caldwell is another wild tale. We did get back to the dorm around 10:30 PM. I got a "B" on the psych exam. [PAUSE]
- 5. The way Mark tells it, those 4 fisherman did not think twice about the summons. They abandoned their boats and their nets on the beach, they did not say "Goodbye" to their families.
 - a. Did they indulge in a foolish spur of the moment thing?
 - b. With Jesus there is always something your friends and the world views as foolhardy or irrational.
 - (1) maybe like moving to eastern Montana after you retire for one more job, or to experience a Montana winter! [PAUSE]

II. CHRIST CHALLENGES EACH ONE OF YOU TO MAKE AN IMMEDIATE DECISION, AS THESE 4 FISHERMEN DID.

A. **Consider for a moment how often people encounter Jesus and react "immediately."**

- 1. I say "react" rather than "respond," because it may not be a rationally thought out response. "Immediately" is an emotional, reactive word.
- 2. At his birth the shepherds went with haste to Bethlehem to see the baby.
- 3. Immediately the one leper were cleansed or healed by Jesus in this first chapter of Mark.
- 4.

The blind received their sight the very moment when touched by Jesus (Matthew 20.31)

- 5. And immediately the little daughter of the synag ruler was raised from the dead when the Lord took her by the hand (Mark 5.42), or in another account, the very instant Jesus spoke the word promising the healing while on the road.
 - a. And there is always amazement or being startled with Jesus.
- 6. Likewise, there is precious little you or I may do when Jesus' calls us.
- 7. You or I may make a decision to follow him, but it is seldom an immediate one; it often takes a lifetime.
 - a. Think back over your lifetime--how many spur of the moment, off the cuff decisions have you made? How many were really important decisions? Probably more of than you realize!
- 8. Not surprisingly, this word "immediately" is mentioned 9 times here in the first chapter of Mark.
 - a. Mark's Gospel might be characterized as a Gospel of urgency, crisis,
 - b. as if Christ cannot wait.

III.

WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS TO BECOME A FOLLOWER? YOU MUST BE TRUSTWORTHY, YOU MUST BE TEACHABLE, YOU MUST BE TASK ORIENTED, AND YOU MUST BE DECISIVE.

A. **First of all,**

TRUST.

- 1. If you say, "Follow me," to anyone, it is a test of trust, complete loyalty, confidence and openness. It is not negotiable.

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2. Ironically, Jesus calls Peter first here, yet it is Peter who will break the line of loyalty when He denies his Lord. In that tragic moment Jesus will look at Peter as if to say, 'Peter, I trusted you.'
 - a. What else can Peter do but to go out and weep.
 - b. If you ever go down to Eureka Springs, Arkansas, to see The Passion Play enacted out-of-doors in the Ozark Mountains, there is an interesting epilog to the crucifixion scene: after everyone is gone from Calvary, Peter returns to the foot of the Cross and weeps bitterly. He tries to explain why he denied Jesus and he pours his soul out. But it is too late, Jesus is dead.
 - c. Is it ever too late to make a decision for Jesus?
3. In the tragedy of Jonestown in NW Guyana on November 18, 1978, 918 devoted disciples followed Jimmy Jones in a "revolutionary suicide."
4. Martin Luther King's followers were willing to lay down their lives for his dream.
5. If only you or I could harness that kind of deep trust and loyalty in our Presbyterian Church leaders across Montana today!
 - a. But we have to lead the way ourselves, not look for someone else.
6. Jesus needs us as much as we need him; he cannot do it alone--he must trust us as we do him. A leader must be able to trust his or her followers,
 - a. to empower them, as Jesus does when he promises us, "Greater things you will do than I have done."
 - b. and, "No greater love can you have than this."
7. Thus in the Gospel of John, he calls us no longer his servants but his friends, his co-workers, his equal partners.

- B. ***Next, if you would follow, you must be TEACHABLE.***
1. Learning is a lifelong, and it is a growing process that multiplies exponentially.
 2. Have you ever heard someone say, "I am too old to learn new tricks."
 3. When we stop learning--that is when we start dying.
 4. "Not by accident (Jesus) chooses unschooled and unsophisticated fishermen. What a miserable start..." to set out "to change the world," says commentator Dr.

- David Mc Kenna.
5. Kenneth Gible in Harrisburg, PA., believes that once you make the choice to follow Christ, like the disciples, you are given strength to become more like him, even though you and I start out rather poorly.
- a. we receive courage, m
 - b. we are able to respond or react immediately.
 - c. an exclamation mark is added to our lives,
 - d. and the world starts looking at us, watching us as if we are, well, different!
 - e. You and I learn to grow day by day in our faith.
 - f. If the world thinks we are "fools," at least we are becoming disciplined.
 - g. The unexamined, unexplored, unquestioned faith is not blind, trusting faith; it is superstition and fantasy.

C.

Thirdly, Jesus

requires that we be TASK-ORIENTED.

1. This may be a little harder to accept. We want to think that being a Christian is simply a matter of the heart and will, saying "Yes" to Him within and feeling good. We have arrived! Let's sit back and enjoy it.
2. No, Jesus calls you to be "fishers of men and women." Fishing is a tough, back-breaking, get up before dawn, smelly enterprise. Disgusting work. At times it can be life-threatening.
 - a. And then of course, there is that insane venture you people up here call, "ice-fishing." I would much prefer the #4 green on the golf course with an downhill, fading putt in front of me.
 - b. Or a 100 mile bike event on a hot windy, July afternoon in west Texas!
 - c. The old spiritual I loved to sing as a kid insists, *chair, there."*
3. Jesus knows the skills required not simply to go fishing, but to catch fish.
 - a. How many of us here have actually caught any fish – in the church?
 - b.

Says McKenna, "it's a science, and an art...getting new members and more children in our church. Now that is hard work and especially for our senior citizens. You cannot call a new pastor and just pay him to grow

because he has kids and a nice wife.

4. After the Resurrection, Jesus waited until the 4 disciples had been out all night on the lake. Right at the crucial moment when they were frustrated from no success, quarrelsome from no sleep, hungry from not eating, just plain tired out and chilled to the bone. Then Jesus asks the insulting question, "How many fish have you caught?...Have you tried throwing your nets on the other side of the boat! It should be enough to start a riot, but something within Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John makes them respond... No, not respond, react
 - a. Perhaps it is the exclamation point, the sense of "now" or impulsive irrationality.
 - b. Perhaps the Spirit of God and now they catch their fish.
5. There's the story of the man who always went out and caught more fish than anyone else. He also caught the biggest and best fish. Every day he came back with a full limit. The game warden became suspicious. So he disguised himself and he asked if he could go out fishing with him the next time. Sure; be here at 6 AM tomorrow bef the sun comes up. It's the best time to catch the fish. So the warden met the fisherman at his boat early the next AM. The man rowed out to a hidden inlet and proceded to take out some sticks of dynamite. He lit two sticks; one he handed to the game warden, the other he threw out into the lake. The warden sat there in total surprise. The fisherman said, "Well, are you going to sit there, or are you going to fish?"
 - a. If they don't cut bait right now, the fishermen will starve. If the church doesn't cut bait, we will starve.

D. ***Fourthly, when I become a follower of Christ, it is a decisive event in my life; there is a sense of FINALITY about it.***

1. Figuratively speaking, these 4 fledgling disciples, "burned their boats behind them" like Sherman invading the deep south in the War Between the States, who burned everything beh him, "rendering it impossible to do anything but move ahead. The Galilean fishermen left no way of retreat open. It was not like they were saying, we will try this for a while...if it doesn't work, we'll come back to our boats.
2. One of our recent presidents said that in every crisis of life, the ability to stick with the decision is one of the toughest things we face.
3. To decide to follow Jesus is like getting married--the vow has to be for life, for eternity.
 - a. So you pray every day for the courage to endure.
 - b. Peggy and I were both divorced. In our written marriage vows we both promised that

divorce is not an option; our marriage is for all time.

4. It is not as if you and I can never go back to our boats ever again--or look back. These 4 did go back to their boats, more than once; they went back after Easter.

5. But fishing never was the same again, never held the satisfaction or joy that it once did. For when he calls, we can never go back completely to the old ways and to the home to where we once lived. We are changed and our world changes also.