

A Call to Follow

(Mark 1:16-18)

As a church, we're committed to being purpose-filled Jesus followers. Mark's Gospel is a terrific place to explore how we can follow Jesus as disciples. Mark emphasised Jesus' humanity; He eats, sleeps, weeps, gets angry, overwhelmed with compassion, is vulnerable... and does this with His often bewildered and confused disciples. The challenge was to follow Christ's life, teachings and relationship with the Holy Spirit.

The call to discipleship is the greatest invitation after salvation and redemption with the Father. Mark's opening chapter lays the foundation and focus for the rest of his Gospel. This suggests that Mark is highlighting to his readers that his discipleship journey brought him closer to Jesus. Mark's journey is in fact a remarkable one. Also known as John Mark, he is first mentioned in the book of Acts (Acts 12:12) as the son of Mary, in whose house the early church gathered. Mark had never personally met, heard or followed Jesus, but he did meet, listen to and follow people who had. It is believed that Mark wrote his Gospel on the account of the Apostle Peter (according to early church father Papias). John Mark is also mentioned as assisting Paul and Barnabas' mission journey (e.g. in Acts 12:25, 13:5). In later letters, we read that Mark is again with Paul (Philemon 1:24) towards the end of Paul's life. Paul writes a request to Timothy from prison; "Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry." - 2 Timothy 4:11 (ESV). The impact Jesus and God's people had on Mark, resulted in him dedicating his life for His mission.

The invitation to discipleship mirrors God's invitation to Israel throughout its history: to be the people of God. The word 'disciple' in Ancient Greek ('mathētēs' - μαθητής) literally means 'learner', 'student', 'apprentice' and 'follower'.

READ TOGETHER:

Mark 1:16-18 (MSG): "Passing along the beach of Lake Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew net-fishing. Fishing was their regular work. Jesus said to them, "Come with me. I'll make a new kind of fisherman out of you. I'll show you how to catch men and women instead of perch and bass." They didn't ask questions. They dropped their nets and followed."

Imagine what it was like for the first disciples to be personally invited by Jesus to follow Him and partner directly with God in the redemption of the world.

EXPLORE TOGETHER:

Have four group members read out each of the following points and Bible verse - then discuss and share:

1. Come and see (John 1:39) - Jesus invited the first disciples to follow and do life with Him. Following Jesus is following the Divine... watching, walking with, and mirroring. Inviting them to join an exciting, unknown journey - the disciples didn't just hear the words He was saying, He invited them to actively come along with him to **see**.

Discuss: Share about a time when Jesus has 'called' you.

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2. Come and be (1 Peter 2:9) - Discipleship is a call to finding our God-given identity. Calling the disciples to follow Him, Jesus needed them to understand they were embarking on a journey of transformation. When they put down their nets, He was calling them into an unknown journey - in their faith, and in sharing the gospel with others.

Discuss: Who do you look up to and why?

3. Come and do (Luke 9:1-2) - Jesus sent out the disciples to practically apply what He showed (lifestyle and miracles) and taught them (parables and principles).

Discuss: Discuss a time you've experienced the Holy Spirit move in your life.

4. Now, go (Matthew 28:18-20) - After a period of seeing, being and doing, Jesus sent the disciples out to apply all He had shown and taught them, in preparation for eventually sending them out after He returned to Heaven.

Discuss: What stops you from 'going' and sharing your faith with others? Can you recall a time when you shared your faith with others and the impact it had?

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Disciples are **ever-learning**.
- Disciples are **ever-changing**.
- Disciples have **divine authority**.
- Disciples **disciple others**.

PRAY TOGETHER:

Lord, we thank You for this incredible invitation! We want to follow You - knowing that You will lead us well into living life to the full; and helping lead others to this life as well. Thank you for Your grace, thank You for this gracious invitation. Give us the strength to continuously 'put down our nets' and 'have eyes to see and hear' all You are doing, and what You're inviting us to be a part of. Together, we say 'yes' and 'Amen'.