

(John) the First Disciples

by Brian Brodersen

The sermon highlights the call of ordinary people to follow Jesus and to be used by God to accomplish great things.

Duration: 53:15

Topics: "Discipleship", "Salvation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the significance of John the Baptist's proclamation, 'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.' He highlights the power of the Word of God and how it can lead people to give their lives to Jesus Christ. The preacher also shares a story about Charles Spurgeon, a renowned preacher, and his impact in leading thousands of people to Christ. He emphasizes the importance of being a disciple of Jesus and encourages listeners to return to a place of following Him steadfastly. The sermon concludes with an invitation for those who do not know the Lord to open their hearts to Him and experience the grand adventure of knowing and serving God.

Transcript

John chapter one, we're picking up in verse 35 this evening. Verse 35 says, again, the next day, John the Baptist stood with two of his disciples. We pick up the story three days into the historical narrative that began with the encounter between John the Baptist and the delegation of leaders from Jerusalem.

And so that's the next day. This is the third day after that event. And looking at Jesus, John the Baptist, looking at Jesus as he walked, he said, behold, the Lamb of God.

The two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned and seeing them following, said to them, what do you seek? They said to him, Rabbi, which is translated teacher, where are you staying? He said to them, come and see. They came and saw where he was staying and remained with him that day.

Now it was about the 10th hour or four o'clock in the afternoon. So here for the second time, the previous day, John had pointed to Jesus and said, behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And now on the next day, he once again refers to him as the Lamb of God.

And in doing so, these men that were following John up until this point, they realized that they were to now follow the Lord. They were to follow Jesus. You know, it's interesting this pronouncement of the Baptist,

behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

You know, back in the late 1800s, Charles Spurgeon, who was a great preacher in the Victorian era, preached at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London and was really the instrument that God used to literally lead thousands of people in his generation to Christ. When he was 22 years old, he was called upon to speak at a particular event at a place known as the Crystal Palace that had a seating capacity of about 20,000 people. He's just a young guy, 22 years old, but he's called to speak there at the Crystal Palace.

And so, of course, in those days, it was before the invention of the microphone and all the technology that we have today. So he went to test the acoustics in the room before the event. And he stood in the midst of the Crystal Palace and he shouted out, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

And he did that over and over again. He was doing a sound check, really. Now, today, if they say, can you do a sound check? We say, oh, testing, testing, one, two, three tests.

We do something brilliant like that. Spurgeon, he took advantage of the opportunity. And he just began to proclaim this, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

In another part of this building, there was a man who was laboring and that's all he heard. He didn't know where it came from. He didn't know what was going on.

For all he knew, there was a voice from heaven shouting, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. This fella gave his life to Jesus Christ as a result of that. You know, the word itself, the power in the word of God.

And, you know, it could be that John, you know, sort of nudged these guys and said, hey, go on over to him. But it doesn't say that he did that. It could simply be that as John made this proclamation once again, that at that moment, the spirit of God moved upon these men and they knew.

They knew intuitively by that prompting of the spirit that they were to now follow Jesus. And here when we read and they followed Jesus, interestingly to me, this word followed, it has the idea because of the tense in the Greek, it has the idea or the implication that they permanently followed him from that moment onward. That to me is important to know.

Because today there are too many that follow only for a while. And then drift off into other things. And we see it so often.

People who have followed the Lord for a period of time, but they've drifted off. I have a theory. And the theory is this, that there are innumerable people all around Southern California who at one time were following the Lord, but presently are not doing so.

They've drifted off. That's a sad and tragic thing. Some people I would imagine almost would think that that's just part of the experience because it happens so frequently.

But that doesn't have to be the case. It doesn't have to be the case at all. Like these men, they began to follow Jesus at this particular moment and they never turned back.

And none of us should ever turn back. None of us have to turn back. We too can begin to follow the Lord and make that commitment and follow on with him permanently.

Now, these two men that began to follow Jesus at this point one of them was Andrew. Andrew was the brother of Simon Peter. Now, most commentators believe that John, the apostle was the other disciple.

And I agree with them. Characteristic of John in this gospel, he never does really reveal himself, but there is this other person that is alluded to at times. This other disciple, the one who leaned upon the breast of Jesus, the one who was there along with Peter going to the tomb.

He never comes right out and says that it was he himself. But of course, it's obvious in the other places that that is who is being referred to. He's referring to himself.

And I think that that's the case here as well. Because the whole description here, four o'clock in the afternoon, following along behind Jesus, and suddenly it turns around, what are you looking for? What are you seeking? And they say, well, where do you live? You just get the sense that the writer was there, that the writer was the one who was experiencing those things. So I do believe that John was one of the two men, but we know without any doubt that Andrew was the other.

So Andrew was the brother of Simon Peter. And it says in verse 41, he first found his own brother Simon and said to him, we have found the Messiah, which John says is translated the Christ. So having followed John the Baptist, they understood from the preaching of John the Baptist that he was the herald of the Messiah.

So they obviously concluded when John said, behold, the Lamb of God, they drew the right conclusion. This man is the Messiah. So Andrew comes to his brother Simon and he says, we have found the Messiah.

Now amongst the people, the common people, there was a great messianic expectation. But you know, ironically, recent research has shown that there wasn't a great messianic expectation among the leaders, or at least they didn't speak much about it or write much about it. In the literature dating back to that era, it is conspicuously absent of messianic references or an anticipation.

And it was probably due to the fact that the leaders were very comfortable in their positions of leadership. And quite frankly, probably weren't all that anxious for the Messiah to come because that might unsettle their position. And we know that that was true to some degree, especially of the priesthood, because John tells us later in this gospel, at one point Caiaphas stood up and said, this is ridiculous.

The whole world's going after him. If we don't do something about this, everybody's gonna believe in him and the Romans are going to come and take away our position. They were worried about their position.

But the common people, of course, these men were the common people. They were full of messianic expectation. They were suffering the brunt of that oppressive leadership, both from the Romans and from the Jewish aristocracy.

And so Andrew comes right out and he says, we found the Messiah. And he brought his brother Simon to Jesus. Many come to the Lord through the influence of a relative or a friend.

Never underestimate your influence on your relatives or your friends. God, I'm sure, has in many cases used you and there's no reason why we should doubt that he wants to use you. He wants to continue to use us.

Most people are brought to Christ through a friend or through a relative, through some personal relationship. Even people that come to the Lord in like a crusade environment, they generally come to the crusade because a friend or a relative invites them and brings them along. So it's that one-on-one ministry that God uses so often.

And so here he takes his brother, Simon, he brings him to Jesus, and now when Jesus looked at him, he said, you are Simon, the son of Jonah? You shall be called Kephas is the way to pronounce it, which is translated a stone. Now, this is the Aramaic word for stone. Peter is from the Greek word Petros for stone.

So Simon Peter is the same as saying Simon and then adding the Kephas to it. So Jesus just takes one look at Simon and he says, your name is Simon, you're the son of Jonah, I'm changing your name, changing your name to a stone. Now it's interesting because a stone speaks of stability.

It speaks of a firmness. You know, when you think of something that's founded on a rock, it's immovable, it's secure. When you look at this guy, Simon, who Jesus calls the stone, you find that in those early days, he was anything but stable.

He was anything but immovable. The most favorite word that commentators use regarding Peter is impetuous. He was unpredictable.

He was all over the place. To put it in the modern young people vernacular, he was bipolar. You know, one minute he was up here, the next minute he was down there, one minute he was doing this, then he was doing that, and he was anything but stable.

He was always getting himself in trouble and he was sometimes even getting the Lord in trouble. He's the one who said, Lord, although all of these forsake you, I will never forsake you. But then he turns around and he denies that he even knows Jesus.

He's the one who tries to save Jesus from being arrested and pulls out his sword and severs the ear of the servant of the high priest. And we see in him, in the gospels, we see a lot of instability. But as you follow the story on into the book of Acts, you find that he's the one who stands up on the day of Pentecost and he's the one who begins to preach the gospel.

And the multitudes begin to come into the church and you find that he takes on a major role in leading that church in Jerusalem. And he becomes really the apostle to the Jews. Jesus sees beyond what we are to what we will become through his power and his grace.

See, Jesus knew what Simon was like, but he also knew what he could turn him into and what he would turn him into. He would take him from being this unstable person emotionally and he would make him a rock and he would become a foundational person, a pillar in the early church. I'm so thankful that God is able to do that.

Man, I think back at my life before I was saved and I don't look back on it with any thought whatsoever that I would have done anything extraordinary or been any kind of a special person in any way. I just would have been as ordinary as possible and probably failed over and over again in probably most things I attempted to do. But I just, I look at the faithfulness of God and I think of the stability that he brought into my life.

Before I was a Christian, I was notorious for just sort of being here, there and everywhere, you know, jumping from one thing to another. And it was just part of what was going on inside of me. There was just that intense sense of emptiness and frustration.

And so it was basically a quest to try to find something to satisfy, something to fulfill. And so I would move swiftly from one thing to another, one project to another, one hobby to another, one relationship to another. And that was what marked my life.

Back in those days, I guarantee I never could have imagined being married to one person permanently. I mean, I think my dating maybe lasted a year at the longest or something, but I've been married to my wife almost 26 years. That, to me, is a miracle.

Not because she's not worthy of being married to for 26 years, but just because of who I was and what my personality was like. But it's just a testimony of what God's able to do in our lives. And Peter's a great example.

Jesus takes him and he says, I'm gonna change your name. And of course, in biblical times, names were more significant than they are today. They actually meant something.

So Jesus actually meant, by this name change, that I am going to make you into what I'm naming you. I'm gonna make you into a stone. Now, the following day, Jesus wanted to go to Galilee.

And he found Philip and said to him, follow me. Now, Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Now, how it is that Jesus found Philip or whether or not he had had previous communication with him, we don't really know.

This is our introduction to Philip. Jesus wanted to go to Galilee. He found Philip.

Did he accidentally find him? Did he go looking for him? It doesn't tell us. But Jesus simply says to him, follow me. Now, here's something that you need to realize that you probably don't know yet.

When you read Matthew, Mark, or Luke, they're known as the synoptic gospels. Shared that with you before. The word synoptic means from a similar point of view.

So they call them the synoptics because they seem to be written from a similar point of view. And they seem to cover a lot of the same material, although there are some serious differences that are sometimes overlooked. But in the synoptics, you probably remember reading that Jesus, on one occasion, he's walking along the Sea of Galilee.

And he sees Simon and Andrew brothers. And he sees James and John brothers. And he says to them, come follow me and I'll make you fishers of men.

You remember reading that? Now, when you read that, of course, what you're initially led to think is that these guys are just, they're working away as fishermen, cleaning their nets and all. And this perfect stranger named Jesus walks by and says, hey, come and follow me. And they just say, all right, here we come.

And you read it and you think, wow, that's a bit peculiar. That's a bit odd. But you see, the reality is this.

The synoptics, there's an entire year of association and relation to Jesus that the synoptics do not record. And that's what we're reading about right here. And what we're reading about in the synoptics is not the call to discipleship.

These guys were already the disciples of Jesus. He's calling them at that point to apostleship. And that's where the synoptics pick up the story.

And their concentration is primarily on the ministry in Galilee. But in the first few chapters of John's gospel, we have an entire year of ministry recorded for us, much of it taking place in Jerusalem that the other gospel writers never told us about. So that's a little bit of the background.

Jesus is calling these guys right now to become his disciples. And they're going to spend a good year with him. And then he will call them to that position of apostleship.

But this man, Philip, you know, who is he? And for that matter, who are any of these guys? Well, you know what? They're just ordinary people, loved and called by God to be his followers. God chooses and uses ordinary people. That is the beautiful thing that you learn in the pages of the scripture.

Unfortunately, throughout much of the history of the church, there's been this idea that there is a, a hierarchy. There's the clergy, as they're referred to, and then there's the laity. And the clergy are the people that God uses, and the laity are the people that watch the clergy get used by God.

But this isn't the biblical picture at all. And I love to look at this and see how Jesus is going about here. And he's calling just ordinary people.

Like us. He's calling them to come and be his disciples. And guess what? He hasn't stopped doing that.

He's still doing it today. He's doing it all over the world today. Just like he went and found Philip and said, follow me.

He's doing that all over the world today. He's just reaching out. He's touching people's lives.

He's saying, come and follow me. And as we begin to follow him, he takes us on a grand adventure. This wonderful thing of knowing God and serving him.

And amazingly, ending up doing things that you would never dream of doing. I think of that team that Phil was just sharing about that went to the Philippines. I would imagine that out of that group of people that went, had they never come to know the Lord, how many of them would have ever gone to the Philippines? Probably none.

We take trips to Africa. We take trips to China. We take trips to Europe.

We go all around ministering the gospel, reaching out, serving the Lord. It's a great adventure. That's what the Lord's calling us to.

He's calling us to be part of this great work that he's doing. And who's he calling? He's calling just ordinary people. God has a plan for you, whoever you are.

That is such a wonderful thing. I got an email from a friend and he was quoting Charles Spurgeon, who I referred to earlier. And the gist of the email had to do with some statements Spurgeon made about how

God uses common people.

And he talked about, well, one of the examples he gave was the example of John Bunyan. John Bunyan was a man who was a, well, he was like a handyman in his community is pretty much what he was. And yet he felt called by God to minister God's word.

He began to share God's word. That resulted in him being cast into prison. He was in prison for 13 years.

But while he was in prison, he felt inclined to write. He'd never written before. He hadn't had much of an education to speak of.

And he wrote several books, one of them being the book, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which is the second best-selling book of all time. And he was talking about how God just, again, this point, he just takes ordinary people. And then Spurgeon went on to talk about the great reformation and all the great things that had happened historically in the country up into his time.

And he mentioned a few of the leading figures, but he went on to say that the majority of the work was accomplished by people who nobody even knows their name. Nobody remembers who they were. They didn't go down in history as a great author or a great orator or anything, but they were the ones who really did the work.

And that's still true today. God is using ordinary people all over the place. And he's taking note of it, whether we are or not.

So he finds Philip. He says to him, follow me. Now, Philip was from Bethsaida.

He was from the same place as Andrew and Peter. But Philip now, he found Nathanael. So Andrew, he meets Jesus.

He says, I gotta tell my brother. Philip meets the Lord. He's got a friend, Nathanael.

I've gotta go find my friend, Nathanael. So he goes to Nathanael and he said to him, we have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote. Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

And Nathanael said to him, can any good, can anything good come out of Nazareth? Philip said to him, come and see. Now, Nathanael, for whatever reason, he didn't have a real high opinion of Nazareth. Some people say that Nazareth was a notoriously wicked place.

Some people just say that it was just incredibly insignificant. But we don't know the actual facts. But for some reason, Nathanael was thoroughly unimpressed, to say the least, when he found out that Jesus was from Nazareth.

Can anything good come out of Nazareth? But notice what Philip says to him. He says, come and see. And you know, sometimes that's really the best, the best way to approach it with a person.

And just invite them to come and check it out themselves. You know, sometimes you're trying to share with somebody and you feel like you're not breaking through and they're not getting it. And, you know, they think you've flipped out.

You're just a religious freak now. You know, what do you do over at that church? They serve you Kool-Aid or, you know, I've got all kinds of ideas. Just say, hey, come over and check it out.

Come and see. And the Lord quite often uses that. Now, Nathanael, this gospel of John is the only, it's the only gospel where Nathanael is mentioned by name.

And some people have deduced from that, that Nathanael was a disciple, but he was never really an apostle. But it seems to me that Jesus is gathering now this, initially this group of men who are going to be his apostles. Andrew was an apostle, of course.

Simon Peter was an apostle. Philip was an apostle. I think Nathanael was too.

But he's not mentioned by name in the synoptics, but there is a person in the synoptics who I think was Nathanael. In the synoptics, his name is Bartholomew. Bartholomew means the son of Talmai.

It's an Aramaic word. The son of Talmai. Now, oftentimes, as we've already seen, people in this culture had more than one name.

And I do believe that Nathanael is the Bartholomew of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. So now listen to this next part here in the story though. This is so fascinating to me.

So Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, behold, an Israelite indeed in whom is no deceit. An Israelite indeed. There's no deceit.

There's no guile in him. Nathanael said to him, how do you know me? How do you know that about me? Jesus was describing this guy as he was genuine. He was pure.

He was guileless. He was a straight shooter. He was the what you see is what you get kind of a guy.

And Jesus pegs him, right? The moment he sees him. And Nathanael's puzzled. He says, how do you know me? I don't know you.

And then Jesus answered and said to him, before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you. Now listen to this response. Nathanael answered and said to him, rabbi, you are the son of God.

You are the king of Israel. What a bizarre response. But maybe not.

It seems bizarre. But if you think about it, it might not be that bizarre at all. Remember what Philip said.

We found the one who Moses and the prophets spoke about. We found the Messiah. Nathanael comes, Jesus said, an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile.

How do you know me? How do you know who I am? Jesus says, I saw you under the fig tree. And Nathanael breaks forth in this, this proclamation that Jesus is the Christ. I suggest to you that it's not bizarre if under the fig tree, there was an extraordinary spiritual experience that Nathanael had.

Something that he and he alone knew about. And I think that's what happened. And I think that's really the only way to explain the response of Nathanael.

I don't think it was simply that Jesus just had foreknowledge that he was under a fig tree. I mean, that could be impressive, but I don't think it's impressive enough to conclude, yes, indeed, you are the

Messiah. You are the King of Israel.

I think, and I think as we read on, you'll see why I think that. I think that something extraordinary happened with Nathanael under the fig tree. There was an extraordinary spiritual experience that occurred.

He had an encounter with God that Jesus just mentioned that he knew about. And that, of course, would cause Nathanael to know that he was indeed speaking with the Messiah. Jesus answered and said to him, because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these.

And he said to him, most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. See, I think this is the answer. This is speculation to some degree, but I think it fits with what we just read.

Nathanael was meditating under a fig tree and he had an experience with God. And part of his meditation was upon that incident back in the life of Jacob, where there was a ladder that went up to heaven and the angels were ascending and descending upon that ladder, going from earth to heaven and back. And the Lord alludes to that and in doing so, what he's talking about is that he is the fulfillment of the very thing that Nathanael was pondering while he was under the fig tree.

Imagine that, he would have known the story and he would have known the stories and there he was, he was just thinking about Jacob as he fled from his brother Esau and as he was headed toward his uncle's home and as he was tired and that evening, as he was there resting with a rock for a pillow, he has a dream about this ladder and the angels. And he wakes up and he says, I didn't know it, but I'm in the very house of God. He names the place Bethel.

And Nathanael's thinking about all that, he's meditating on it, he's wondering about it. What does this mean? What's the significance of that ladder he might have been pondering? Jesus says, hereafter you'll see heaven open and the angels will be notice ascending and descending, not upon a ladder, but upon the son of man. Could it be that God had spoken to Nathanael about the ladder in preparation for his meeting with Jesus, the one whom the ladder foreshadowed? I think so, I think that's what's going on.

Now Jesus, as he speaks to Nathanael and draws him right in, and this is a prophetic moment, you might call it a word of knowledge, a prophecy, this is a prophetic instant that's occurring. God still does these things today. He does these things today, it's called prophecy.

Paul said, when an unbeliever enters an assembly where the prophetic word is being spoken, that the unbeliever is convicted and convinced, the secrets of their heart are revealed and falling on their faces, they confess that God is among you. That happens today. Somebody comes into a meeting, you invite them, come and see, come and check it out.

And they come into the meeting and they find that the guy in the pulpit is talking about them. And then they think, I can't believe my friend did this to me. Man, I can't wait to get out of here so I can chew him out.

How dare they tell that guy that I was coming? How dare they expose the secrets of my life to that person? Do you know how many times people have told me that that's happened to them? Do you know how many times people have come up upset because, you know, I know my wife told you about me. Yeah, you were talking about me this morning. I just say, I'm sorry, who's your wife? No, I don't know her.

No, I've never heard of you, but God knows you obviously. He knows all about you and that's what you've been experiencing here. You know, as I was looking at this and thinking about it today, I heard in the other room, I heard Cheryl calling her dad and saying, dad, have you ever heard Poncho Juarez's testimony? And Chuck evidently hadn't heard it.

And so she said, let me read it to you. So I, you know, I'm kind of thinking and working on my message, but I'm listening to her as well. And I hear her read the story.

And I thought, that's exactly what I'm thinking about right now. That's exactly the point that I want to make. And the story with Poncho was Millie, who was his girlfriend at the time, who's now his wife.

She told him, I want to take you to a concert. And he loved concerts. He loved to just get stoned and just go to a concert.

So they got him in the car and they drove him over here to Calvary Chapel. And he felt like he was ripped off. What, what do you mean a concert? This is a church.

What are we doing here? And he was, had smoked some dope on the way over. And, you know, so he describes the scene. He comes in here and he sits down in the sixth row.

It's 1975. And this guy, Chuck Smith, comes out and starts talking about Daniel. And he said, it was like he was the only guy in the room.

And Chuck was basically talking to him and about him. And he said, he said, I know the whole time he kept one eye on me. And then with the other eye, he'd kind of look at the rest of the congregation.

And that day he came forward and he received Christ. But that's what we're talking about here. That's the prophetic word.

But here's the, here's the thing that I'm saying. It didn't just happen back in the first century when Jesus called Nathaniel. It's still happening today.

And the same Lord who called Nathaniel and knew all about him, knew everything that he had been thinking and meditating on, that's the same Lord who called Poncho. And that's the same Lord who does that over and over in people's lives. That's the same God who's spoken to you many times as you've come in and you've sat down and you've begun to listen.

And suddenly you've had that same sort of feeling that you're the only one in the room. This is all about you. It's all directed right toward you.

That is the work of the spirit of God. And oh, how we thank God that he is working like that in these days. But you see, that's why it's important to have this kind of opportunity and this kind of experience.

You know, there are some people that have the mentality that I don't need to go to church. And that mentality is growing more and more in our generation. And there's a lot of people around nowadays who have just decided, hey, I don't need church.

Church is a hassle. Church is about politics and money and all these things that I don't need. I'm just gonna have my own little relationship with God right here and forget that, all the hypocrisy over there and all that.

That's not the way it works. God has designed that the body come together. And as much as we need to read God's word and personally be edified by it and be taught by the spirit ourselves individually, God has also given apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastors and teachers.

And God's people cannot come to perfection or to maturity apart from that component. That's why Hebrew says, do not forsake the assembling of ourselves together as is the manner of some. No, we're supposed to come together because it's in that context so often that that prophetic word comes forth.

But this is also another reason why we ought to say to our friends, come and see. Come and check it out. See what's going on over there.

And just get them over here. Get them over here to a study. Because of course, people have so many misconceptions about church and they have so often the wrong ideas.

And what I've found most of the time is that when a person finally comes and they experience it, they think, wow, that's not what I thought it was gonna be. That's not what I expected. That was a good experience.

And then of course, in some cases, it goes far beyond that. Same thing that happened to Poncho happens to them. God speaks right to them, calls them right up to receive Christ at that moment.

So these things have not stopped happening, thank God. They're still going on. Jesus is still gathering disciples to himself this very hour.

He's still calling people to come and follow him. He's still choosing people in order that he might use them. As we close, I wanna go back to the fact that these men were the disciples of Jesus.

The word disciple comes from the Greek word methatis, meaning a learner or a follower. The word implies devotion, commitment, and submission to a master. Now, anyone claiming to be a Christian needs to realize that implied in the word Christian is the idea of discipleship.

Because it was in regard to the disciples at Antioch that the title Christian was first applied. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. You see, they were disciples.

They became known as Christians. Somehow we've got it all backward today. There's the idea that you can be a Christian, but you don't have to worry about discipleship.

No, implied in the very word Christian is the idea of discipleship. There are five marks of a disciple. Number one is that a disciple is a person who has put Jesus Christ first in their life.

Jesus himself said in Luke chapter 14, he said, if any man come to me and hate not his father and mother, sisters and brothers, wife and children, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Now, you know that to hate there doesn't mean to hate in the bad sense. It's just in contrast to their attitude toward Christ.

They are to be willing to set aside anything, even the dearest and closest human relationship if it were to interfere with their following Christ. So a disciple is a person who has put Jesus first. Secondly, a disciple is a person who abides in the word of God.

Jesus will say that. John will record it later in this gospel. Chapter eight, verse 31.

You are truly my disciples if you continue in my word. If you continue in my word, you are really my disciples. You are my disciples indeed.

So a disciple is someone who continues in the word of God. A disciple is someone who submitted to the word of God. For the disciple, the word of God is the final authority.

Nothing outside of the word of God speaks with the same kind of authority. God's word is the final authority and a disciple is someone who abides in his word. Thirdly, a disciple is one who loves the brethren.

Jesus said, by this, everyone will know you're my disciples if you have love one for another. So a disciple is someone who has the love of God in their lives and flowing from their lives. Fourthly, a disciple is someone who has a likeness to Christ.

That's why they called them Christians. Christian means like Christ, a likeness to Christ. Jesus said that a disciple would bear fruit and the fruit that he's talking about there is that fruit of the spirit, that likeness to Christ himself.

And then fifthly and finally, a disciple is one who makes disciples of others. Jesus spoke to the disciples and sent them out and said, go into every nation making disciples of all nations. So Jesus calls us to be disciples.

He calls us to be not merely believers in an intellectual sense, not to merely consent to his historical claims, but to be followers of him, to follow him closely. Christianity is about discipleship. It's all about following Jesus.

It's not really about anything else. That's what it's about. It's about following Christ.

And you know, we've come to a place really in our culture where the term Christian no longer has the meaning that it originally had. Because you can talk to so many people today, they will tell you that they are a Christian. And of course they don't have the slightest idea what that really means.

And it's perhaps time that we start identifying ourselves a little bit differently, maybe to say simply I'm a follower of Jesus Christ. That's what it's really all about anyway. And that's the whole idea behind the term initially.

And so just as Jesus was calling disciples to himself, then he's calling us to be his disciples today. Are you his disciple? Are you following the Lord? If you've drifted from that for some reason, get back. Get back to that place where you should be, where you might have been previously, where you ought to have never moved from.

Like these men, follow Jesus and do it permanently, do it consistently, do it steadfastly. No need to drift, no reason to drift, there's certainly no time to be drifting. If you don't know the Lord, you can't say that you know Christ has come into your life and forgiven your sins.

Open your heart to him tonight, ask him to come in. He will come into your life. And like that story I told earlier about this guy named Pancho, some of you know him, some of you might not know him, but you know who he is.

You can hear him on K-Wave at 9 a.m. Monday through Friday. But maybe you're here and you don't know Christ yet, but he's calling to you tonight and he wants you to come and he wants you to have a relationship with him. He's choosing you and he wants to use you, he's got a plan for you.

So God help us to follow closely in the footsteps of Jesus. Lord, we thank you for your call to follow Christ. And Lord, there's no greater thing that a man could ever do than to know you and to follow you, to live for you.

Lord, that wonderful plan and purpose that you have for our lives. Lord, I pray that there wouldn't be a single soul here or not a person that would be missing out on that wonderful plan that you have for them. But Lord, they would make that commitment, take that step to follow you from this day forward.

Help us to do that, Lord, to follow you closely in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen.

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