

**The Jesus Way** / JESUS CHRIST DISCIPLEMAKER  
**Be with Me: The Way of Service**  
Mark 3:13-19

Dr. Hugh Morehead, a philosophy professor at Northeastern Illinois University once wrote to 250 of the best known philosophers, scientists, writers and intellectuals of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. He asked them one question, “What is the purpose of life?” He then published their answers in a book. It was rather depressing because not one of those 250 philosophers knew the meaning and purpose of life. Many of them just offered best guesses. Some of them said, “I’m clueless.” In fact, a number of these intellectuals wrote to Dr. Morehead and said, “If you figure out what the purpose of life is, please tell me.” Carl Jung, the famous psychiatrist wrote back to Dr. Morehead and said, “I don’t know the meaning and purpose of life but it looks as if something were meant by it.” That’s helpful, Carl. Isaac Asimov, the famous science fiction writer, wrote, “As far as I can see there is no purpose to life.” That’s a tragic statement, because life without a purpose is pointless. And it is no wonder that, since so many live life with no purpose at all, the suicide rate is skyrocketing. Suicide among teenagers is now the second leading cause of death. Why? Because life without purpose is pointless.<sup>i</sup>

Just before returning to his Father in heaven, Jesus left his disciples a clear statement of purpose. It is broad enough to stir the most creative imagination. It is challenging enough to motivate the greatest visionary. It is humanly impossible enough to keep us in absolute dependence upon God for its fulfillment. Jesus said, “With my authority behind you and my presence with you, *go and make disciples of all the nations*” (Matthew 28:19-20).

What did these disciples hear when Jesus said “make disciples?” I bet it wasn’t “Go through an eight-week fill-in-the-blanks bible study.” I bet it wasn’t either limited to “Teach a year long series on the life of Christ.” Nor was it “Explore the five most common interpretations of the Sermon on the Mount.” Nor was it “Complete a theology degree at the nearest seminary.”

Just what *did* these disciples hear when Jesus said “make disciples of all nations?” All of Jesus’ disciples had been exposed to the Jewish concept of “making disciples.” Every Rabbi worth his salt had his own disciples.<sup>ii</sup> But more importantly, all of these men had been through a three year process under the master disciple maker himself. They knew by this time that Jesus was simply telling them to do what he had already done and modeled for them over the previous three years.

And just what is that process that Jesus modeled for his disciples? The chart on the screen may help. It’s believed that the opening events of Jesus’ ministry began in the Autumn months of AD 29. It was at this time that John the Baptist introduced Jesus as the Lamb of God and baptizes him in the Jordan River. Following Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness, which lasted for 40 days, Jesus once again passes along the lower recesses of the Jordan River and calls his first disciples – John, Andrew, Peter, Philip and Nathanael, saying “Come and See.” This probably took place sometime in the winter, AD 29-30.

During this time, these wanna-be disciples were *exploring* the claims of Christ. Jesus had invited them to “come and see,” and being the spiritually *curious* followers that they were, they did just that. They spent time with Jesus, asking questions, hearing his words, and observing his life.

They saw him perform miracles. They saw him drive out demons. They were with him when he cleansed the temple in Jerusalem at Passover. During this time, which lasted for about 10 months, they were learning to say “yes” to Christ and “no” to themselves. If I had to pick a cotemporary image for this phase of following Jesus, I would choose the maternity ward. There you hear the cries of newborn babies throughout the day and night. The church should be like that – filled with the cries (and problems I might add) of those newly born into God’s family.

By the way, I had earlier said that this period lasted only four months. I was mistaken. Your pastors are not “inerrant” (i.e. without error) like the Bible! As I have taken a closer look at the chronology of Christ’s life, I realize now that this period was longer than that, running from the winter of AD 29/30 to the winter of AD 30/31 – about a year.

As you share Christ with others, give people time. Jesus did. Jesus didn’t *pressure* anyone to believe. And for those who are here today and have not yet come to place your faith in Christ, we sincerely desire to help you find answers to your questions. Continue to explore Jesus’ claims just like these disciples did.

During this “come and see” phase, some of these initial disciples had also gone back to their fishing. As we saw last week, Jesus is walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee and sees the brothers, Andrew and Peter, as well as James and John, and says: “Follow me.” This call probably took place in the winter, AD 30/31, at the very beginning of what is sometimes called Jesus’ “Great Galilean Ministry.” Jesus calls his disciples to now enter into a phase of being *established* in their faith. The disciples at this point were *convinced* that Jesus was who he claimed to be – or they were becoming convinced. Jesus modeled for them the importance of God’s Word, prayer, connectedness to other disciples as the basic building blocks of spiritual growth. But he also taught them through the great catch of fish that their ultimate calling was not growth for growths sake, but rather to reach others with the Good News. During this period of time, which lasted about 5 months, the disciples were learning to say “yes” to growing, and “no” to staying the same. If I were to pick a contemporary image for this phase of following Jesus, I would choose a greenhouse where plants grow and flourish.

It’s estimated that 70% of believers in our churches today are stuck right here. They want to grow, grow, grow, but may never move on to intentionally invest in the lives of others. Remember, that was the case with the Hebrew believers. The writer says, “In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word ... you need milk, not solid food!” (Hebrews 5:12).<sup>iii</sup>

Now, however, in Mark 3:13-19, we come to a crucial turning point in Jesus’ ministry with his disciples.<sup>iv</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. <sup>14</sup> He appointed twelve-designating them apostles-that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach <sup>15</sup> and to have authority to drive out demons. <sup>16</sup> These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); <sup>17</sup> James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder); <sup>18</sup> Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of

Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot<sup>19</sup> and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. Mark 3:13-19

“Come and see.” Explore my claims. “Follow me.” Become established in your faith. But now we have, “Be with me.” Be equipped to serve. The disciples had now moved from mere spiritual curiosity, to being convinced that Jesus is who he said he is, to now being committed to the point of entering into a period of training. Jesus’ primary purpose as the master disciple-maker was to help these men move from being established disciples to equipped workers in the spiritual harvest. Jesus was now challenging them, “Say ‘yes’ to serving others, say ‘no’ to other distractions. They did not realize at the time what it was going to cost. Nearly everyone of them would die for the cause.

### **“Jesus went up on a mountainside...” (Mark 3:13)**

The calling of these twelve men was no quick decision. According to Luke 6:12, Jesus had spent the entire night in prayer before making this decision. Our passage says that “Jesus went up on a *mountainside...*” In the Bible, mountains are always a place of important decisions or specific revelation. Soon after this, Jesus delivers the well-known “Sermon *on the Mount.*” Later, Jesus will be “transfigured” on a mountain. And finally, the Great Commission is given on a mountain. Here, *on a mountain* somewhere in Galilee, Jesus spends the night in prayer. And here *on a mountain* Jesus called these twelve apostles.

### **“Jesus...called to him those he wanted...” (Mark 3:13)**

Such a “call” may have come as a surprise to these twelve men, as was the previous call to “follow me.” As we’ve pointed out, the Rabbis of Jesus’ day also had their disciples, but they were all volunteers. Among the Jews, volunteer disciples chose their teachers, the teachers (rabbis) didn’t choose their disciples.<sup>v</sup> But Jesus did not wait, as the Rabbis did, for voluntary followers. He always authoritatively called them (Luke 5:1-11; cf. Matthew 5:18ff). In fact, there were a few in the Gospels who volunteered to follow Jesus, but Jesus gave them a rather cold reception.<sup>vi</sup> And so Jesus could later say to his disciples – and to you and me – “You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit” (John 15:16).

I need to be very clear. These twelve men, chosen by Jesus Christ, are not the “professional ministers” of the church. They *are* the church that includes you and me. As they were called, so you and I are called. No exceptions. You have been called, not only to be established in your faith, but to be equipped to serve...just as these men were. And this call – as it was for these men – is an authoritative call. Jesus Christ is calling you to be with him as he trains you for service. And you can say, “Yes, Lord” or you can go AWOL and claim some kind of exemption from service.

When it comes to responding to Jesus’ call to “Be with me” and prepare for service, we give all kinds of excuses. The most common have to do with our lack of qualification. Maybe that’s why each of these men are listed here, just to remind us Jesus places a higher premium on our availability than our aptitude.

### **“These are the twelve he appointed...” (Mark 3:16-19)**

What a rag-tag band of followers Jesus chose! First, there is Simon Peter. Jesus nick-named him the “rock.” Peter only took one foot out of his mouth to put the other one in! He was known for his impetuous statements. He was the one who so confidently boasted, “Even if all fall away, I never will.” Though the first to exercise faith, he was also the first to act a fool.

And then we have James and John, the “sons of thunder.” They were the ones who wanted to call down fire from heaven on the Samaritans. This assertive trait seemed to run in the family. Their mother, Salome, was the one who asked if her two sons couldn’t have the place of honor next to Jesus in his kingdom. James was the first of the twelve to die, martyred by Herod (Acts 12:1, 2).

In contrast to the “sons of Thunder” stands Andrew, better known simply as Simon Peter’s brother. He’s the quite, reserved type. Philip, on the other hand, is the analytical type. He’s been called the “resident expert and why certain things couldn’t be done.”<sup>vii</sup>

We don’t know much of anything about Bartholomew. Tradition tells us that he had royal blood in his veins. Matthew was a tax-collector. His name means “gift of God.” And he was a model of giving, for he probably gave up more earthly wealth to follow Jesus than any of the other disciples. Thomas has had a lot of bad “press,” being called “doubting Thomas.” But he was also a man of courage, calling his fellow disciples on one occasion to follow Jesus even unto death. Then there is another James in the group, James the son of Alphaeus. Tradition tells us that he preached in Asia and there died a martyr’s death.

Thaddaeus was also known as Judas the son of James. Simon the Zealot was the most politically oriented of the twelve. He was a Jewish patriot. If Matthew was a tax-collector, Simon the Zealot was a tax-hater. And then, of course, there is a traitor in the midst, Judas Iscariot.

Looking at these men is like looking in the mirror. In each of these men I see a little of myself. In each of these men I see a little of the church. And together these twelve men stand as a promise that God can use me and you and each one of us just like he used each of these twelve apostles.

### **“...that they might be with him...” (Mark 3:14)**

But just *how* did Jesus develop this rag-tag band of misfits to turn the world upside down? Again, our passage gives us insight. Notice, it says that “he called to *himself* those he wanted...that they might *be with him* and that he might send the out to preach...” (13-14).

Here too, Jesus the master disciple-maker, parted ways with the Rabbis of the day. Their approach was primarily academic and informational. Jesus’ approach was personal and developmental. Jesus didn’t call these men to a life of theoretical study with the idea of someday becoming “Rabbis” themselves. He was calling them rather to a dangerous mission, a lifestyle, and most of all to a person, *himself*.<sup>viii</sup>

However, this call to “be with him” was not a call to a monastic way of life. Jesus wasn’t calling them to simply spend all their time on a spiritual retreat, or in Bible study or even in prayer. It was rather a call to – yes, be with Jesus – but for the purpose of being equipped to serve Jesus. Jesus is here calling his disciples to a period of intensive training.

**“...that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons...”  
(Mark 3:14-15)**

Notice – he called these disciples that they might be with him and *that he might send them out to preach*. Jesus never employed the “fire-hydrant” approach in his teaching. He never just poured in information into his disciples’ minds hoping that they would remember the important points after graduation. No, he taught, modeled, and then had his students immediately apply what had been taught.

It is commonly believed that we retain about 10% of what we are taught orally. If we take notes and are helped by visual aids, that goes up to about 50%. If, on the other hand, we are involved in actually *doing* what we have been taught, the retention level jumps to about 90%. These disciples *had* content. They had heard Jesus preach; but they also saw Jesus live. Now, however, they needed to *do* as Jesus did. That was the only way that they could be equipped to serve.

I wonder what this says about our process of helping people become faithful Christ-followers? It is very easy to assume that telling results in teaching and training. But it is very possible to “tell” good biblical information and have very little actual teaching or training that takes place as a result.

Jesus was doing three things during these long months of the “Be with me” phase of discipleship: (1) he was deepening the convictions of his disciples; (2) he was giving them supervised training experiences with critique; and (3) he was teaching them key ministry skills.<sup>ix</sup>

When there is no on-the-job training, there is no true spiritual reproduction. If Jesus had not taught these men to do ministry themselves, then they would have forever been dependent upon Jesus to do the ministry. But Jesus wasn’t going to be around forever...at least not physically. They had to be trained!

We have a lot of what could be called “assumed discipleship” in the church today. What is that? We “assume” that if we teach a class, or preach a message, or go to church, or attend our small group, that true spiritual growth is taking place. But this is an assumption. There must be intentional training in a context of application for true growth to take place. The assumption that if we just teach and preach God’s Word and believer will grow and spiritually reproduce is patently false. It does not happen that way.

I’ve asked one of our ministry partners, Mihai Bascuti, to share with us how God has been at work in his own life as he’s been in our TBL class (*Training for Biblical Leadership*) – a type of “on-the-job training” for service.

TESTIMONY: Mihai Bascuti

When Pastor Stevens asked me to speak today, I felt a bit disappointed: disappointed in myself. I have been a Christian for about 22 years, and I have “gone back to fishing” so to speak for most of those years. I was disappointed in myself because somebody, in this case Pastor Stevens, only saw a change very

recently. (“On the job training,” as he calls it. I asked myself, was I out of a job until now? Slacking?) Why did it take me so long?

My house was built around 1928. When the first owner decided to build it, they used discarded lumber from the rail yards a couple of blocks away. They built one room. Apparently that was enough to satisfy their needs. Next, the bathroom was added. Seems like indoor facilities were becoming a must. Then another room was added. All this with discarded wood of different sizes.

Doors were added: one is 7 feet tall, a couple are 6 feet, one is 5 feet. The builders used whatever they could find. They weren’t pretty, but they were serving the purpose. The roof on the first room was straight, while the other room was sloped. Again, not pretty, but serving its purpose.

All this made for an odd-looking house. Nothing you would want to display on the Street of Dreams or even invite your friends to.

Since I became a Christian some 22 years ago, it seems like I added to my spiritual life a room here, another room there, a few doors of different sizes; all mismatched, but all serving the purpose. I learned from many teachers, different seminars, classes, Bible College. All of it was good, but it seemed a little bit mismatched. I wasn’t too proud to show my spiritual house or didn’t feel like using most of the rooms. They just looked unappealing.

Just recently, I discovered that I can do a remodel on my spiritual house, that I can spruce up my spiritual life and make use of all the rooms in it, an Extreme Makeover: Spiritual Edition so to speak. The TBL class (Training for Biblical Leadership) has given me the tools I needed to remodel my spiritual life. I’ve learned how to efficiently use everything that I learned in my 22 years as a disciple of Jesus. I finally realized that all the learning that I have done for the past 22 years can be put into practice simply by living my life...not the way I wanted to live it, going “back to fishing,” but the way Jesus wanted me to live it, to serve others.

It doesn’t mean that this class is the only way to learn to serve Christ and others, but it worked in my case. If you are like me, you have a desire to serve others, to help them, it just seemed I didn’t know how to accomplish that. This class did that for me; it showed me there is no dichotomy between my personal life and my spiritual life. I can live my life and serve others at the same time.

I now feel more at ease inviting others into my spiritual house. I now access the rooms of my spiritual house more often—the rooms of prayer, worship, fellowshiping with other believers, family life, serving, as well as telling others what Christ has done for me.

(Resume Message)

Are you in this phase of following Jesus Christ? Which of the following apply to you in your journey with Christ?

- I have been a believer for a while and am practicing the spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible study and meditation, stewardship of my resources, sharing my faith and using my spiritual gifts. I want to be better trained.
- I have a handle on the basic doctrines of the Bible, but want to go further in my understanding and application of God's Word.
- I have been active in a small group, but now want to invest in the lives of others through caring, mentoring, leading, teaching and sharing the gospel.
- I have a good idea of what my spiritual gifts are. I want to be better equipped to use my gifts to serve others.
- I have been able by God's grace and the help of others to address any major personal/emotional issues that hinder my service for God. I now want to help others.

If you checked any of these, you may well be hearing Jesus say, "Be with me...go deeper with me and go broader in serving others." Be with me...this is the way of service.

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<sup>i</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, 19-20.

<sup>ii</sup> There were five characteristics of disciple-making among the Jews in Jesus' day: (1) The disciple chose to join himself to his teacher; (2) The disciple would memorize his teacher's words; (3) The disciple would learn his teacher's way of ministry; (4) The disciple would imitate his teacher's way of life; and (5) the disciple would be expected to find his own disciples.

<sup>iii</sup> In contrast to the Hebrews, the Romans were an example of growth to the point of being able to teach one another: "I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge, and competent to instruct one another" (Romans 15:14).

<sup>iv</sup> The parallel account is found in Luke 6:12-16.

<sup>v</sup> It's true, as previously stated last week, that the Jewish disciples had to meet certain qualifications. But once met, they could attach themselves to the teacher of their choice. And sometimes the Rabbis would respond, "Provide yourself with a teacher, and get yourself a companion." *Mishnah, Aboth* 1:6 as cited by R.T. France, *I Came to Set the World on Fire: A Portrait of Jesus* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 50-51.

<sup>vi</sup> (Luke 9:57-62; Mk. 5:18-19).

<sup>vii</sup> Bill Hull, 151. Cf. John 5:6-7.

<sup>viii</sup> R. T. France, *I Came to Set the World on Fire: A Portrait of Jesus* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 51. Among the Rabbis, discipleship focused on the impartation of knowledge. There was dependency, but little or no intimacy (John 15:15). This explains why the disciples were so devastated by Jesus' death. They were attached to a person more than to a doctrine or system. In fact, when it comes to knowledge or doctrine, they were still trying to sort things out. They were confused.

<sup>ix</sup> Bill Hull, *Jesus-Christ, Disciplemaker* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 148.