

## **FISHERS OF MEN**

The goal of Jesus was to get people into the kingdom. And to help Him with this goal, He enlisted “*kingdom helpers*” to assist Him as seen in Matthew 4:18-22.

### **Matthew 4:18 (NKJV)**

**18 And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.**

The Sea of Galilee goes by various other names, including “Lake of Gennesaret”, “Kinnereth”, and “The Sea of Tiberias”. The Sea of Galilee provides fresh water for much of the land of Israel. It is 682 feet below sea level. The lake is about 13 miles long and 7 miles wide. It is known for sudden, violent squalls that can come up quickly, making the lake very dangerous to be out on when that happens. But normally it is a very beautiful lake – a perfect fisherman’s lake.

We know from John’s gospel that Peter and Andrew had been introduced to Jesus as the Messiah about a year earlier (cf. Jn. 1:35-42). Evidently, at that time they still continued on with their fishing occupation. The point is they already knew about Jesus and Who He was. Their response at this time was not a spur of the moment thing. They had undoubtedly already given this some serious thought.

Now in the context of His Galilean ministry, which became the center of His operations, and the HEIGHT of His ministry in terms of expansive ministry, in that context Jesus called His first disciples to be full time followers of His.

### **Matthew 4:19 (NKJV)**

**19 Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”**

This was not a call to salvation, but rather a call to specialized service; and really a call to specialized preparation for specialized service. **“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”** Christ is a Master at taking the ordinary things of life and metaphorically transitioning to a spiritual application.

These men caught fish for a living. They were fisherman. But now Christ wants to make them to be catchers of men. Christ wanted them to learn how to catch people for the kingdom. It would involve a learning process. It

would involve leaving their old profession behind and becoming full-time followers of Christ day in and day out.

To follow Christ for these men meant entering into a “**mentoring relationship**” with Christ. This would involve not only oral instruction but also watching how Jesus did it – watching both His methods and attitudes – how He responded to people and circumstances. This truly was a “**Way of the Master**” training program.

People need to be discipled. They need to be taught. They don’t just automatically become “**fishers of men**”. We need to be taught, and then once taught, we need to teach others. That’s the way it works. The “**Way of the Master**” amounts to an invested discipleship commitment in which we build into the lives of other people. There are no shortcuts – just hard work!

Yes, formal teaching is important, but what was involved here was a “**way of life**” learning as they spent life with Jesus day in and day out. When you see someone living it out, there is no more powerful form of being taught than this.

Christ was all about winning people to the kingdom, and now He wanted to provide specialized training to these men so they too could enter into this kingdom work of catching men (cf. Mk. 1:16-20; Lk. 5:1-11).

#### **Matthew 4:20 (NKJV)**

**20 They immediately left their nets and followed Him.**

At this point in their lives, understanding the background of their previous contact with Jesus, they understood Jesus' command to follow Him as a full-time, lifestyle commitment, and they responded IMMEDIATELY. They were all in! Immediately, they left their nets and followed Him.

#### **Matthew 4:21–22 (NKJV)**

**21 Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them,**

**22 and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.**

A little further down the way, Jesus saw two other brothers by the name of James and John. In Mark 3:17, we see that Jesus gave them the nickname “**Sons of Thunder**”. Wow! Thunder is LOUD! Thunder is strong! And yet God could change them, mold them, make them, and use them. He can use “**Sons of Thunder**,” of which I think I might be one.

And note the Lord called both sets of brothers while they were busy at work. The Lord tends to use those already hard at work. John Phillips says, ***“God always calls busy people. The Lord’s work is no place for lazy individuals.”*** They say if you want something to get done, don’t ask the person who isn’t doing anything, rather ask the person who is already too busy. God wants His people to be hard workers - yes, balanced, but busy!

They were with their father Zebedee. It would appear that Zebedee was a man of some means, as we see he had hired servants in Mk. 1:20. John knew Annas the high priest, so it seems they were a well-respected family (cf. Jn. 18:15). Zebedee was married to Salome. She once asked Jesus to grant her sons to sit on His right and His left hand in the kingdom (cf. Mt. 20:20-21). She was watching out for those boys. They may have gotten that spark of thunder from her.

A comparison of Mk. 15:40 and Jn. 19:25 may indicate that Salome was the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. If so, this would mean that James and John were cousins of Jesus. Salome was one of the women who went to the tomb early on Resurrection Sunday (cf. Mk. 16:1).

James and John were also fishermen. Luke 5:10 says they were partners with Peter (and therefore possibly with Andrew as well). This means they, too, would have known the identity of Jesus and that this decision to follow Him was not merely a spontaneous (out of the blue) commitment without any forethought.

Peter, James, and John became prominent among the apostles. Peter was the recognized leader of the entire group. James became the first martyr of the twelve (Acts 12:2). And John became the apostle of LOVE who outlived all the others and was given the book of Revelation in his old age.

Just as Peter and Andrew immediately followed Jesus, so also James and John. And the text makes the point of immediacy, saying, ***“immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.”*** *“See you later, Dad. Oh, would you mind picking up the nets we’re leaving behind?”* As I say, Zebedee had servants, so I think it was not a situation of father abuse. When the Lord calls, He and His mission are the TOP priority!