

The Call to Discipleship
Matthew 11:28-30

I've been working with the College group for a little while now and this summer we went through a topical series. The topic really excites me because it is or should be the heartbeat of the church.

If you were asked what is the most important part of church, what would you say? I think some of us might say accountability, for sure, or for the Word to be preached, or worship that really takes us into the heavenly heights, or tithing—the most important part of church is tithing, or fellowship, or AWANA for my kids, or evangelism or encouragement. The thing is, there are many important parts of church life in the body of Christ, but what is the most important out of all? What is the reason why we do all of this?

When we walk by the coffee and donuts out there, when we hear about the Evangelism Explosion or Biblical Counseling or Adult S.S. classes, when you are encouraged to attend a care group or Growth Group or another fitting ministry, when you hear messages on personal finances, when you see the same people over and over again on the same days, what is it that underlies all that you see, hear and are involved in? I believe God's Word shows that for His followers or disciples in the church, back then and today, the central purpose is making disciples.

And I believe that if we fail to recognize and practice evangelism and discipleship, then we are totally missing God's whole purpose for the Christian walk in our lives. We can quickly become those who just come to church and then just go back to our lives like usual in a mechanical and, at times, forced way; wandering without purpose or direction or impact in life. That is the danger—living pointless lives that make no point to care for the lives of others.

Like David Watson in *Called and Committed* says, “The vast majority of Western Christians—church-members, pew-fillers, hymn-singers, sermon-tasters, Bible-readers, even born-again-believers or Spirit-filled-charismatics, are not true disciples of Jesus. If we were willing to become disciples, the church in the West would be transformed, and the impact on society would be staggering.”

When is the last time you would say that the church had a clearly “staggering” impact on society?

As I began studying the topic of discipleship, it became apparent to me that Christ’s whole life was about disciple making. And the first part of discipleship is the gospel call, or evangelism. That is what we will focus on for this morning—the Call of Discipleship.

Please open your Bibles to the **Matthew**, chapter **11**. In our examination of Christ’s ministry, we will spend time focusing on four features of the gospel call in verses **28-30**.

1. The Invitation of the Call

The words “**Come to me**” represent the summons of God to the sinner through Jesus. Look back in **Matthew 4:19, 21; 9:9**. Christ’s call (or invitation) is as simple as follow Me.

Christ is the One who is doing the initiating on His Father’s behalf.

Also, in **1 Corinthians 1:9**, Paul says, “**God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.**” God has invited you (called you) into fellowship with His Son! We did not invite ourselves.

Invitations are interesting aren’t they? For example, I’ve been invited to some pretty crazy Trick R Trunk parties in my day, but lately I haven’t been invited to the White House for a meal with the President. I wonder why that is. I’m pretty sure it’s his fault, because I would love to sit and chat with him. But I think it also has to do with how well he knows me. My problem is that he doesn’t even know me. So, I guess there is no real reason why he would invite me to chat over a sandwich for lunch. Usually the people who get to meet him are people who have done something pretty extraordinary for our country or something. It has been a little while since I have done something extraordinary.

My point is this: since God called me into fellowship with His Son, not just for a bite to eat at Subway, I must have done something pretty extraordinary to get His attention and be that honored, right? Well, to tell you the truth, I

don't know what I ever did to deserve that. All I keep thinking about are the many, many things that earned me a fast pass to eternal punishment and separation from His Son.

The truth is, this invitation should be our absolute highest privilege. It's pure grace that Christ would call one to come to Him. You've seen all those commercials of people getting a notice that they've won some huge amount of money. Why do they respond so enthusiastically? It is because they know they don't deserve it and now it is all theirs. We don't deserve fellowship with the almighty God of the universe, but by faith a relationship with God through Christ is all ours!

Peter and Andrew, James and John were not fishing for a Savior with Whom they would immediately drop everything and follow for the rest of their lives. It was Christ who called them.

Think about the time in your life when this call to "come to Christ" became so absolutely real. Since then, has your life been radically changed, and progressively changed each day? If not, then you have to evaluate why.

2. The Irresistibility of the Call

Now, you may be thinking, "It can't be resisted?" Sure it can! Well, you have to ask why Christ is offering rest to the weary and heavy laden. Why do they need rest?

Chapter 23 verse 4, speaking of the Pharisees, says, "**They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.**" Religion in Christ's day was being distorted into the many, many extra laws, to protect the Mosaic Law, set by the Pharisees. It became this very rigid and impossible load to lift as if one was being suffocated by all the regulations. And all the while, the ones who were enforcing the law weren't true lovers and worshippers of God! If that is religion, then I can't bear it!

Romans 10:4 tells us that, "**Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.**" This is why His call is such a relief. He is here to "fulfill the law" (5:17) and if we choose to believe that He is the only one who can, then we are justified.

So, to those who are at the end of their rope in trying to merit their salvation, apart from any knowledge of Christ by keeping the law, this call is irresistible. It is the refreshing dive into the pool at the end of a long run in the desert heat. It's the last-day-of-school feeling when you walk out of your last class. It's the open field to a slave just set free.

It is what every one of us has been guilty of before coming to Christ. We resist Him in our nature, we promote self-esteem and glorify ourselves by working up our own "goodness", and what do we do? We eventually break. We get to the end of the road of our own striving and working for salvation, and Christ calls out to us in our weak and broken weariness and says, **"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."**

And soon some day, when we go home to be with the Lord we will surely rest with our King in heaven.

But, think of all those who have yet to hear, or to respond in faith, to Christ's call. There is a guy I know whom I was sharing the gospel with and he was all over the place in his thoughts and opinions. He was in to science, he brought up different philosophies he'd heard of, he understood about 10 percent of every religion out there, he told me how hard it is to believe something so simple to understand and said, "I just have a hard time with that."

The man, who is spiritually exhausted from trying to please God on his own, needs to rest in Christ's work on the cross. There is no other way, no other truth, no other life, no other rest, than in Christ. The call to come to Christ is irresistible to those who are desperate and completely done trying to work for their salvation.

Who in your life have you noticed is pretty exhausted, anxious about everything, or has been burnt by someone, or has nothing left emotionally, physically, financially, etc? They may be just around the corner to coming to Christ and entering His rest.

3. The Inseparability of the Call

The word “yoke” gives such a great picture of what He is offering. The yoke was put on animals for pulling heavy loads. It culturally carried the sense of submission. The animal would be pulling the heavy load or pulling the plow through the field, but the farmer would have to lead, guide and direct it on its way.

The way I am familiar with this concept is putting the choke chain on Oscar my dog when we go for runs. He submits to me and recognizes that he is only able to go down the street because I gave him permission and he is by my side. I think I’ll start calling it his “yoke chain” instead of “choke chain”.

Complete submission to Christ is a forsaking of all and following forever. As the saying goes, “If Jesus isn’t Lord of all, then He isn’t Lord at all.” To many “believers” in the church today love the idea of Jesus being their Savior, because that’s like a “get out of hell free card” in Monopoly...I think its jail though. So Jesus becomes this fire insurance but is kept in our back pocket until something really goes wrong. That is not complete submission to Christ. Complete submission to Christ is recognizing Jesus as Lord.

As John MacArthur puts it, “To come is to believe to the point of submitting to His Lordship. Whatever you say I will do, Lord. Wherever you lead I will follow, Lord. Whatever the cost I am willing to pay, Lord. I recognize that I am not worthy to make my own decisions or be my own guide or teacher in life anymore. For the life of me, I must submit to you and place myself under Your yoke. I was bought with such a great and costly price, so You shall not only be my Savior but most assuredly my Lord.”

Look at what was left behind to follow Christ:

- Left their prosperous fishing business at the drop of a net
- Left collecting taxes which brought power and money
- Left knowing that they would have no place to call home or lay their head
- Left family
- Left comfortable living for persecution, preaching the good news
- Left being a rich young ruler
- Left behind a life of self-service for complete service to others

So, is it easy to forsake everything and follow Christ? No, but **Matthew 28:20** says, “**And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.**”

From other passages in Scripture we see that He will never leave nor forsake us.

One of the most encouraging truths for me to hear when following Christ becomes tough is Christ hasn't left you. If you've come to Christ, entered God's rest, and are free from God's wrath for your sin, then you are held by the Creator. There is nothing that shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (**Romans 8:39**). Do you need to be reminded that Christ hasn't left you today?

4. The Instruction of the Call

The words "learn from me" adequately define a disciple; it's a learner. In Scripture we see the name "disciple" used hundreds of times more than "Christians" and "believers". There is a reason. Christ trained the 12 to know how to follow Him and that they may be prepared to "make disciples" of all nations. **Matthew 28:20** says, **"teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."**

John 17:17 has been one of the most powerful verses in my life thus far. Jesus prays to His Father, **"Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth."**

We've all had very strict and brainy teachers in school or coaches before. What miserable seasons and years those are right? But to have a teacher or coach who is gentle and humble, you are dying to learn from them. Christ is the epitome, essence, and embodiment of humility. **Mark 10:45** teaches us, **"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."** Ever had a teacher that actually died for you?

Would you consider yourself a teachable person in relation to Christ's commands? Have you been faithful to teach other disciples the truth that moves people along in their sanctification?

I want to close with **Luke 15:4-7**. If just one person came to Christ...

Christ's call in your life must be so real to you, so appreciated by you, and so effective in you that for the rest of your life you are on a mission to share the truth of the gospel call with others.