

Adult Teaching Resources

January 26, 2020



Season after Christmas (January 5)

Now Appearing

John 1:1-9, 10-18 – “The Word that Reveals”

Epiphany (January 12-February 23)

Matthew 3:13-17 – “A Son Who Pleases”

John 1:29-42 – “A Lamb Who Leads”

Matthew 4:12-23 – “A Preacher Who Calls”

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A Preacher Who Calls

Matthew 4:12-23

FIT Teaching Guide

by David Woody

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Bible Background

“And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” Matthew 4:19

“In the beginning...” Those three words are at the beginning of scripture. They are also the words we can speak to describe our discipleship of Jesus. We all have a beginning story of when we first started following Jesus.

Today, we’ll explore the story from Matthew when Jesus began calling his disciples.

Opening

After everyone arrives, move to the board and ask each person to share these three facts with the group. As each person shares, record their answers on the board.

1. How old were you when you decided to follow Jesus?
2. In what church (if applicable) and city did you make that decision?
3. Who nudged you (or help you understand what you were doing) to follow?

Spend some time listening to each story, and then ask this question:

What was it that ultimately pushed you to follow Jesus?

Listen to everyone’s story and then move to the Bible.

Reading the Bible

What did Jesus do when he learned John was arrested? (he withdrew to Galilee)

Where did Jesus make his home? (in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali) Why did he do that? (so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled)

What were the words of the prophecy? (vv15-17)

Who did Jesus see as he was walking by the Sea of Galilee? (Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother)

What did he say to them? (Follow me, and I will make you fish for people) How did they respond? (Immediately they left their nets and followed him)

Reading the Bible *continued*

Who else did Jesus see while he was there? (James son of Zebedee and his brother John)
What were they doing? (in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets)

What did they do when Jesus called them? (Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.)

What did Jesus do as he went throughout Galilee? (taught in their synagogues and proclaimed the good news[d] of the kingdom and cured every disease and every sickness among the people)

Making Connections

Our Lesson Writer says, “Matthew gives no specific reason for John’s arrest at this point, and he does not suggest that Jesus returned to Galilee and settled in Capernaum out of fear that he might also be arrested. Rather, he sees it as a fulfillment of prophecy, which is common in Matthew: this is the fifth of ten times that Matthew says Jesus did something as a fulfillment of prophecy.” When have you experienced what you would consider to be the fulfillment of prophecy?

What does it mean to you to that “light will dawn on those who live in darkness?” What, in your opinion, is the light? What is the darkness?

Our Lesson Writer says, “The call to “repent” (from the verb *metanoia*) is not an appeal to feel sorry for one’s sins alone, but to turn away from a self-centered lifestyle and turn toward God. It reflects the meaning of the Hebrew word *shub*, commonly translated as “repent,” that literally means “to turn around.” What does repent mean to you?

What is the “kingdom of heaven?” How are you living under God’s rule? How are you building the “kingdom of heaven” right now?

Who has been the most effective example of preaching, teaching, and disciple-making in your life experience? What did he or she do that stood out for you? What affect did he or she have on others?

When have you had an unexpected “God-moment?” What were you doing at the time? How did God show up for you? What did God say to you or want you to do?

When Jesus showed up in your life, was your response:

- a. immediate?
- b. maybe later?
- c. let’s see how things go and then I’ll make a decision?

Explain your response.

Making Connections *continued*

Who in your life have you had an immediate reaction to—they asked and you jumped in? What did they “have” that touched you in such a special way?

Jesus challenged the fishermen to drop their nets and fish for people. What can you translate from your profession/calling to do for Jesus?

So What?

With everyone in the large group, move to the board, and ask these questions from our Lesson Writer:

“Why should any person give his or her first allegiance to God when the patterns and comforts of ordinary life are so familiar? What would attract us to a lifestyle of living and loving as Jesus taught us to do?”

As folks answer, record their ideas on the board for all to see.

What are the benefits for giving our total allegiance to God?

What are the challenges for giving our total allegiance to God?

What are the consequences for giving our total allegiance to God?

Is following God and giving God our total allegiance, worth the energy and effort? Why do you say that?

The Challenge

This week, say a daily prayer, thanking God for the relationship you have with Jesus and for the strength and courage to make Jesus your first priority in life.

Prayer

Loving God, thank you for our beginning story. Thank you for calling each one of us to a life of allegiance and discipleship. Helps us to remain faithful to you, no matter what. Amen.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

The text—The Revised Common Lectionary reading stops at v. 23, but the pericope continues through v. 25, so we will consider all of Matt. 4:12-25.

Why was John arrested?—Nothing is said about why John had been arrested. Later, we read that John was in prison (11:2). Not until 14:3-4 do we learn that John had been imprisoned for criticizing Herod Antipas for having married his brother Herod Phillip’s wife, Herodias. This may or may not have been the same arrest: the Jewish authorities could have arrested him earlier for claiming publicly that Jesus was the son of God. We have too little to go on, other than that John continued to have some disciples who remained with him. The interesting thing to note is that Matthew portrays Jesus and John “hearing” about the other and responding, but not personally interacting.

Arrested, in a word—The word translated as “arrested” in v. 12 normally means something like “delivered up,” “handed over,” or “turned in.” Later Matthew would use it in connection with Jesus being delivered to the authorities and to the cross (17:22; 20:18; 26:2). The participle form was used of Judas as the one who betrayed, or turned him in (26:25, 46, 48; 27:3).

Capernaum—All four gospels locate Jesus in Capernaum at some point, but only Matthew says that he intentionally moved there, leaving his home in Nazareth, at the very beginning of his ministry. In Luke, Jesus is rejected in the synagogue at Nazareth before “he went down to Capernaum, a city in Galilee,” in order to teach (Luke 4:31), apparently adopting it as a home base because Simon and Andrew had a home there.

Beyond the Jordan?—Strangely, both Isaiah 9:1 and Matthew’s quotation in v. 15 describe the land of Zebulun and Naphtali as being “beyond” or “across” the Jordan, but they were both on the near side of the Jordan River. Elsewhere, “beyond the Jordan” (modern “Transjordan”) routinely refers to the eastern side of the Jordan. Capernaum is located about three miles west of the Jordan, but it was close to the Transjordan area, where Jesus also ministered.

Editor Matthew—Matthew’s gospel draws heavily from the earlier gospel of Mark, which describes the beginning of Jesus’ preaching ministry this way: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near, repent and believe the good news.”

Matthew’s version is much shorter: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near” (v. 17). Perhaps it is because he has included a specific prophecy that Matthew deletes “the time is fulfilled,” though it is less clear why he did not include Jesus’ call to “believe the good news.” Perhaps he thought the good news was self-evident in the nearness of the kingdom.

Digging Deeper *continued*

Who's on first?—Matthew 4:1-22 and Mark 1:16-20 tell essentially the same story: Jesus first saw Peter and Andrew casting their nets on the Sea of Galilee, called them, and they followed. He then repeated the process with James and John.

Luke's account (5:1-11) differs in that Jesus, pursued by a crowd, hops into Simon's boat and asks him to shove it out into the water. After preaching from the floating pulpit, he tells them where to cast their net and the catch a great haul of fish, leading Peter to kneel in adoration. James and John, described as Simon's partners, are also amazed, and they join Simon Peter in following Jesus. Though we may presume Andrew was present, he is not mentioned until 6:14.

John's version (1:35-42) says that Andrew and another unnamed person had become disciples of John the Baptist, who was preaching in Judea. Jesus met them there and invited them to stay with him. Andrew sought out his brother Simon and brought him to Jesus, who renamed him Cephas (Aramaic for Peter). The next day, Jesus found Philip, who introduced him to Nathanael (1:43-51). James and John do not enter the story until later.

The Sea of Galilee—As you visualize the Sea of Galilee, recall that it is relatively oval shaped, about 14 miles long and 3-7 miles wide. As Mark tells it, Jesus would probably have met Simon and Andrew on the north shore, near their home village of Capernaum, which was located right on the shore.

If you're thinking of sandy beaches, think again: the shore is consistently rocky, with very little sand.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

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Why did Jesus begin his ministry in Galilee?

If Jesus wanted to make an immediate impact, one would think he'd choose to begin preaching in Jerusalem, or that he would take advantage of the crowds John had attracted to a wilderness area near the Jordan River, much closer to Jerusalem than Galilee. Why start in an out-of-the-way place like Galilee?

In the time of Jesus, Galilee was a governmental district located north and west of the Sea of Galilee, stretching south to the Jezreel Valley, north to Lake Huleh, and west to the border with Phoenicia. Historically, its population was mainly non-Jewish, so much so that it was called "Galilee of the nations" (Isa. 9:1 [NRSV], or "Galilee of the Gentiles" [NIV]).

Today, the term is used more to describe a geographic region. "Upper Galilee" refers generally to the area north of the Sea of Galilee, while "Lower Galilee" refers to the area west of the Sea of Galilee and south to the Jezreel Valley.

When the Jewish Hasmonean king Aristobulus conquered the area around 104 BCE, he forced its Gentile occupants to convert to Judaism or leave the area. By the first century CE, however, Galilee included healthy groups of both Jews and Gentiles, with individual towns being predominantly Jewish or Roman. Jesus' home village of Nazareth was in Galilee, as was Capernaum, which Mark identifies as the home of Peter and Andrew.

Jews from Galilee apparently spoke with distinctive accents (Matt. 26:23), and a number of them belonged to a movement of anti-Roman activists known as the Zealots (one of Jesus' disciples was known as "Simon the Zealot").

So, why would Jesus begin his work in Galilee? While no one can claim to know the mind of Christ, several factors may have entered his thinking. First of all, Galilee was familiar to Jesus; it was where he grew up, where his family and friends lived.

Second, the anti-Roman activism in Galilee may suggest a general unrest with the status quo that could have made the population in Galilee ripe for a message that was radically new. And, although Jesus made a point of saying he had come first to the Jews, he knew that many Gentiles would hear his message, too.

The Hardest Question *continued*

Third, Galilee was located at a distance from Jerusalem, where the Jewish authorities would certainly be opposed to Jesus' message. By beginning his work in the backwater towns of Galilee, Jesus had a better chance of building a strong following before the authorities sought to silence or discredit him. Though John's gospel says he made brief visits to Jerusalem, the other gospels have him remain outside of Jerusalem until Palm Sunday. Jesus knew that spending any length of time there would lead to his death. Thus, the gospels pay special attention to the time when Jesus "set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51), because it would mean the end of his earthly ministry.