

Small Group Session 1.3

Committing to Discipleship



When Jesus invited the original disciples to follow Him, they did not enter into negotiation with Jesus about the terms of their apprenticeship, how much it would cost or how much of themselves they would have to give. They simply got up and followed Him. Like any apprenticeship, becoming a disciple ultimately requires us to **decide** to make a commitment. We think about this today.



Let God Speak First

Chose one person in your triad to be the reader, so the others can close their eyes, listen, and use their imagination as the reader reads the following slowly.

You are sitting on some rocks by the sea. A gentle sea breeze brings the salty smell of the sea mixed with the aroma of fish. Nearby a group of rough looking fishermen are mending their nets by their upturned boats. Their voices and laughter fill the air. A local rabbi called Jesus walks down the shore and approaches the fishermen. You remember that you've heard lots of rumours about this man Jesus, stories of miracles and new teaching.

He stops to speak to the fishermen. You strain to hear his words. You are astonished to hear him invite the fishermen to follow him. This is unheard of—a rabbi would never dream of inviting a bunch of uneducated fishermen to be his disciples. The fishermen, equally astonished, leave their nets and join him as he walks along the beach towards you. Jesus sends the fishermen on ahead while he sits on a rock near to you. For a while you both stare out to sea, sharing the moment together quietly. Then Jesus

turns and looks straight at you and asks “will you follow me?”

Take a moment to think about how this makes you feel. What would you say to him? Make a note of these thoughts in your journal. Discuss them with the others in your small group.

Report Back

In the last small group session you worked on bringing God's presence into two tasks that you perform regularly. You also chose something in your life that you could give thanks for every time to use it.

Discuss with the others in your triad how you got on with this exercises. Are you starting to experience God's presence as you do these things? Don't forget to support and encourage each other.

Deciding to Commit

Read Matthew 4:18-22

Why do you think that Peter, Andrew, James and John were willing to immediately leave their jobs to follow Jesus?

Is there a sense in which becoming a disciple of Jesus involves leaving something behind? Discuss.

We will explore more of what is left behind in following Jesus as we progress through later stages of Mathetes.

It is worth noting two other things about this passage in Matthew. First Jesus issues a simple invitation — “follow me”. He asks them to be with Him, to share everyday life with Him. This is at the

heart of all discipleship. This is why the holy habit of inviting Jesus into the ordinary everyday moments of our life is so important.

The second thing to note is that there is a natural outcome of following Jesus—“... and I will make you fishers of men”. Jesus is using a clever metaphor which these fishermen would immediately understand. As Jesus' disciples, He will turn them into people who will naturally and easily make other disciples of Jesus.

Discuss how you feel about both of these aspects of Jesus' call to you..

Discuss whether you are ready to commit to being a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

If you are ready to commit, then make a note of this in your journal. Pray for each other and offer to lay hands on those who have made the commitment.



Before you go ...

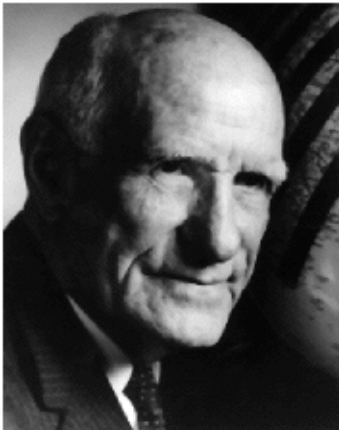
Don't forget to read through The Daily Disciple together. The next meeting will be with the whole group. Check that you know the date, time and venue.

The Daily Disciple

Holy Habits



So far in our holy habits we have been looking for ways of bringing God into the everyday moments of our lives by selecting certain tasks we do regularly and doing them in His presence and doing them for Him, and by giving Him thanks for something we use regularly. In this last session on "Practicing the presence of God" we are going to look at developing the habit of having an ongoing, moment by moment conversation with God. We take our inspiration this week from Frank Laubach (1884—1970) who experimented with ways of developing this habit over the last 40 years of his life.



In his book "Letters by a Modern Mystic" Laubach identified six principles for developing the habit of continual conversation with God (p 517):

1. Submission to the will of God means cooperation with God in the moment-to-moment activities that make up our daily existence.
2. This cooperation is achieved through continuous inner conversation with God.
3. That conversation in turn is, from our side, a matter of keeping God constantly before the mind.
4. One learns to keep God constantly in mind by experimentation, by trying various experiential devices, until

the habit of constant God-thought is established.

5. Then God permeates the self and transforms its world and its relations to others into God's field of constant action, in which all of the promises of Christ's gospel are realized in abundance of life.
6. It is possible for all people under all conditions to establish this habit if they make constant effort and experiment within their peculiar circumstances to discover how it can be done.

An obvious question when trying to develop this habit is whether it is actually possible to remain in continuous contact with God? Won't other thoughts and activities crowd out our attempts at continual conversation? Here are Laubach's thoughts on this (p 518):

We can keep two things in mind at once. Indeed we cannot keep one thing in mind more than half a second. Mind is a flowing something. It oscillates. Concentration is merely the continuous return to the same problem from a million angles. We do not think of one thing. We always think of the relationship of at least two things, and more often of three or more things simultaneously. So my problem is this: Can I bring God back in my mind-flow every few seconds so that God shall always be in my mind as an after-image, shall always be one of the elements in every concept and percept?

I choose to make the rest of my life an experiment in answering this question.

Like Laubach, we should take an experimental approach to developing our holy habits. Here are some things to try. Experiment with them during the next couple of weeks, trying out at least one for a couple of consecutive days.

- A. Spend a few minutes in every waking hour conversing in your mind with God about what you are doing at that moment. You don't need to use "holy" language, or be concerned about what words to say. Just imagine that you are sharing what you are doing with a close

friend. You may need to set up a reminder to prompt you regularly (you could set your watch to pip on the hour, or put an hourly alarm on the computer).

- B. Speak to God first thing in the morning and last thing at night. Before you get out of bed, greet God and talk to Him about your plans for the day and ask Him to reveal His plans for the day to you. Before you drop off to sleep at the end of the day, talk to God about what happened during the day.
- C. Put a reminder object (e.g. a brightly coloured PostIt note) somewhere where you look regularly. It could be on the fridge or on the edge of your computer monitor. Every time you notice your reminder object, spend the few minutes talking to God about what you are doing at that moment. It is well known that after a short while you will no longer "see" your reminder object anymore and it will blend into the background. So put it somewhere different at the start of each day.
- D. Every time you use your diary either at work or at home, spend a few moments talking to God about the people and events that you are looking at or entering in to the diary.

Make brief notes at the end of each day in your journal on how you got on with these experiments. Remember that you are an apprentice, a 'mathetes', who is learning how to do these things. Don't beat yourself up if you fail in any of the experiments. Just observe what is going on and note in your journal why you think you failed.

Week 1	Week 2
Mark 7:24-37	Mark 9:33-50
Mark 8:1-21	Mark 10:1-16
Mark 8:22-9:1	Mark 10:17-31
Mark 9:2-13	Mark 10:32-52
Mark 9:14-32	Mark 11:1-19