

WEEK 1: FOLLOWERS WILL ANSWER THE CALL

Day 1: New Name—John 1:35-42

Day 2: Chosen

Day 3: Answering the Call—Luke 5:1-11

Day 4: Choosing to Follow

Day 5: The Journey—Luke 9:1-6

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” And at once they left their nets and followed him.” (Mark 1:17-18)

In the first century it was common for rabbis to have followers or disciples. The disciples of a rabbi followed them everywhere so that they could learn from them. Disciples learned from their rabbis not only from what they said, but from what they did. After meeting Peter, Jesus called him to be one of His followers. Peter left everything—his career, his home, and his family—to walk with Jesus and learn from Him. Peter had no way of knowing how answering Jesus’ call would change his life.

Being a follower of Jesus Christ means that we will answer the call to follow Him. When we answer Jesus’ call we do not know where it will lead, but we can know that answering Jesus’ call will change our lives.

When talking about being called by Jesus, Charles Swindoll says, “Your calling will certainly affect others, yet it is yours alone to answer. Along with being unique, it is

also costly and rewarding. It will likely lead you to places that frighten you now but will feel as natural as home when the time is right.”¹

Week 1, Day 1: New Name

John 1:35-42

A NAME

When I was pregnant with my first child, Chris, I began to understand the importance of giving someone a name. I realized, maybe for the first time in my life, the blessing or burden that a name could carry. My husband and I discussed a lot of names and like many first-time parents, we consulted a book of names. Naming our child was not something that we took lightly. Eventually we agreed on the name *Christopher* for a baby boy. I still like the name we chose, but a survey shows that more than fifty percent of parents regret the name they give their child. Almost half of those parents in the survey felt that their child's name does not fit their personality.² Dr. David Holmes, a psychologist at Manchester Metropolitan University says, "Names are like product brands in having a powerful effect on attitudes and should therefore be chosen with care."³

Jesus knew the importance of a name. When Jesus first met Simon, He changed his name to *Peter*, which means "Rock." Peter received a new name from Jesus and that name had a powerful effect on Peter's life.

When have you understood the power of a name?

JOHN THE BAPTIST

Read John 1:35-39.

John the Baptist was sent to this earth to point others to Jesus. John was a teacher who had disciples of his own, but John knew that his purpose was not to gain glory for himself. His purpose was to lead others to the One who was greater than he—the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

What does John 1:6-8 say about John the Baptist?

John was a faithful, humble servant sent to prepare hearts for Jesus. John knew his purpose in God's kingdom was to point others to the light, Jesus Christ.

When John pointed to Jesus and called him the "Lamb of God," Andrew, a disciple of John, followed Jesus because he wanted to know more about this man. After spending the day with Jesus, Andrew was convinced that this man was different from anyone he had ever met. He was the Messiah. Even John, in all of his greatness, was not like Jesus.

INTRODUCED TO JESUS

Read John 1:40-41.

What was the first thing Andrew did after he left Jesus?

Isn't it human nature to want to tell someone else when something exciting happens? Andrew had some news that every Jew had been waiting for - he had met the Messiah. Andrew was not going to keep this news to himself; he insisted that his brother Simon meet Jesus.

Why do you think Andrew insisted on Simon immediately meeting Jesus? _____

Verse 41 says, "The *first thing* Andrew did was to find his brother Simon." Not later, not when he got around to it, but *first thing*. Andrew knew the urgency in sharing the news about Jesus. He realized that this was the most important person he had ever met.

When have you made it a priority to share Jesus Christ with someone else? _____

Sometimes Christians tend to think that we can wait days, or even years, to talk to others about Jesus. John the Baptist and Andrew were both willing to lead others to Jesus because they knew how important it was for others to meet Jesus.

Most Christians are introduced to Jesus by someone who cares for them. It may be parents, a friend, or a spouse. Aren't you thankful for whoever introduced you to Jesus?

Having a John or Andrew in our life is very important, and becoming a John or Andrew to others is vital to their salvation. We are all called to lead others to Christ.

Who do you need to share the story of Jesus with? _____

NAME CHANGE

Read John 1:42.

Throughout the Bible we read about people who had their names changed by God. God changed the names of Abram, Sarai⁴, and Jacob⁵ after they encountered God.

What was the first thing Jesus said to Simon?

Jesus changed Simon's name after their first encounter. What an interesting introduction. What must Simon have thought? Did he wonder who this man was? Did he feel like this man who Andrew said was the Messiah somehow knew him?

How do you think Peter felt when Jesus changed his name?

Peter must have wondered why Jesus chose the name “Rock.” From what we will learn about Peter, he was impulsive and easily swayed. He was opinionated and outspoken. There were probably not many people in Peter’s life who would have described him as “Rock.”

What words would you use to describe someone who is called “Rock”? _____

There are many people in the Bible with meaningful names. Samuel’s name means “asked of God.” Elijah’s name means “God is the Lord.” In her book *Walking in the Dust of the Rabbi Jesus*, Lois Tverberg explains the importance of names in that time. “In the ancient Near East, a person’s name was intimately linked to his or her identity and reputation. When God reoriented a person’s life, he also changed his name.”⁶

Jesus chose Simon’s new name not to describe the man he was, but to describe the man he would become. Peter was not a rock when he met Jesus, but he would become one. Jesus does the same with us. He chooses us not for who we are, but for the person we can become.

What words would you use to describe yourself? _____

If Jesus came to your house today what would you hope He would call you, knowing you would be changed to be like that? _____

Maybe you used words like *patient, loving, servant, kind, or giving*. Thinking about the person you are now and the person you hope to become can sometimes be a daunting thought. We may look at who we would like to be and see how far we are from that. The great news is that Jesus has the power to change us just like He changed Simon. He can change an unloving heart into a loving heart. Selfishness, through the power of Jesus, can become self-denial.

FOLLOWING DAILY

As followers of Christ, we have been given a new name, *Christian*. The name we carry tells people that we choose to follow Jesus Christ. Like Peter, our transformation begins with a name change. When we carry the name “Christian” we tell others that we are Christ followers and we are striving to live like He lived.

If you are a Christian, what does that name mean to you? _____

Week 1, Day 2 - Chosen

I thought I would be in the fishing business all my life. I love fishing. I love the water. I even love the smell of fish. But everything changed the day I met Jesus.

My brother Andrew and I grew up fishing with our father. Andrew did not love fishing like I did. He would have preferred to study the Torah under a rabbi, but our father insisted he work in the family business. When Andrew heard about John, the man they called "The Baptizer," he wanted to go and hear him. Even though I was left a man short on the boat, I encouraged him to go.

One day as I was cleaning the nets from a night of fishing, Andrew came running up to the boat. He told me that he had met the Messiah. I was skeptical at first because we often heard about people claiming to be the Messiah. Andrew insisted that this man was different and I had to meet him. I was looking forward to going home after a long night of fishing, but Andrew was so insistent that I went with him.

When we arrived at the place where Jesus was teaching, we stopped and listened to him teach. His teachings were different than anything I had ever heard. He was not like other rabbis.

After Jesus finished teaching, Andrew took me to meet him. The first thing Jesus did after we met was to change my name. Just like God changed Abram's name to Abraham. Jesus changed my name to Peter, or Rock. I was not sure what to think of that meeting. I wondered if Jesus really knew me, would he still call me "Rock."

Have you ever wondered, if Jesus really knew me . . . would He choose me to work in this ministry? ” Or, would He choose me do this for Him? Or, would He choose me to (fill in the blank)?”

The fact is that He does know us. He knows our hearts, our minds, our motives, and our every thought and He still chooses us. He chose Peter, not for who Peter was, but for who Peter would become. He chooses us for who we can become through Him.

Do you find it difficult to believe that God would choose you?

If yes, why? _____

Some may find it difficult to believe that God would choose them because of mistakes they have made, or maybe they don't feel qualified or worthy. God chooses followers, not because of achievements or qualifications, but because of His great love and mercy.

Week 1, Day 3: Answering the Call

Luke 5:1-11

A CHOICE

One of the greatest inventions of our day, in my opinion, is caller I.D. When my phone rings I can see who is calling and make the decision about whether or not to answer the call. If I don't recognize the phone number or name, most of the time I will not answer the phone. When it is obvious that the caller is a telemarketer or someone conducting a survey, I will not answer the call. With the invention of caller I.D I have the power to decide when to answer the phone and who to talk to.

Peter also had a decision to make the day Jesus called him to be a follower. **Each of us has a choice to make about whether we will answer the call that Jesus makes on our lives.** Will we, like Peter, answer? Or will we refuse the call?

FISHING

Read Luke 5:1-3.

As we learned in a previous lesson, Peter and Andrew met Jesus prior to his teaching ministry on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and the time when he got into Peter's boat. Peter probably thought a lot about his first meeting with Jesus. Andrew had called Jesus the Messiah and Jesus changed Peter's name. It was a defining moment and Peter must have thought about it as he went about his daily life.

The next time the Bible describes Peter and Andrew meeting Jesus, He was teaching on the shore near where Peter and Andrew were fishing. After a night of fishing, Peter and Andrew were washing their nets. The fishermen were finishing their workday when Jesus began teaching. Naturally, they would have been listening to what Jesus was saying as they worked.

BECAUSE YOU SAY SO

Read Luke 5:4-5.

What two things did Jesus tell Peter to do in Luke 5:4?

Fishing on Lake Gennesaret, also called the Sea of Galilee, was done at night, in shallow water, with large nets.⁷ Once the fishermen returned to shore they had to clean and repair their nets. So when Jesus told Peter to go to deep water it was not advice that a skilled fisherman would give. Only at night would a fisherman have gone to deep water and let out his net. Yet, this advice came from the Creator of all things, including fish.

What do you think Peter may have been thinking when Jesus told him to go to the deep water and let down the nets?

Peter was probably tired and frustrated after a long, monotonous night of not catching anything. Peter knew Jesus was not a fisherman—He had been trained to be a carpenter. Peter would have laughed if an ordinary carpenter had told him how to fish, but he knew Jesus was not an ordinary carpenter. Peter may have thought that Jesus' instructions were ridiculous, but he obeyed Jesus even when doing so did not make sense to him.

What does Peter's response to Jesus' instructions tell you about him and about what Peter thought about Jesus?

Have you ever had a time when you thought Jesus' words were ridiculous? How about, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you?" Or what about, "If someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well?"

What teachings do you find difficult to understand?

Some of Jesus' instructions may seem ridiculous and outrageous to us because we, like Peter, do not know what Jesus has in mind. Maybe as a result of following Jesus'

command to pray for an enemy, that person will someday come to know Christ. Maybe by giving someone more they have asked for, we will become more like the one who has given us our very lives. Sometimes we do not fully understand the things we are told to do, but like Peter, we must respect the One who gives the commands.

CONFESSION

Read Luke 5:6-8.

Peter obeyed Jesus and let down his net, but he probably did not have much hope for catching anything. Miraculously, Peter caught so many fish that he needed help lifting the full net into the boat. If Peter was tired before, his adrenaline must have been racing when he saw all of the fish in his net.

What was Peter's response to catching so many fish?

Peter knew Jesus was not an ordinary man when Andrew introduced Him as the Messiah. When he heard Jesus teach, he knew Jesus was different, but this experience brought a different response from Peter. Peter responded like a man who was in the presence of God. If Peter had any doubts about whether or not Jesus was the Messiah this miracle eliminated all doubts.

What does Peter's confession tell you about him?

Peter's confession was twofold. First, he confessed Jesus as Lord, and then he confessed his own sinful state. When we understand who Jesus is, then we have to acknowledge who we are. Like Peter, we have to say: "You are Lord, and I am a sinner."

Have you confessed Jesus as Lord of your life?

How does that confession change the way you look at yourself?

LEAVING EVERYTHING

Read Luke 5:9-11.

According to Luke 5:9, what were Peter, Andrew, James and John's responses to the miraculous catch of fish? _____

This miracle got the attention of these fishermen. It put their whole lives in perspective and they were willing to become followers of Jesus. No longer was fishing the most important thing in their lives.

What does Luke 5:11 say that they left to follow Jesus?

Jesus calls His followers to leave behind everything that impedes our walk with Him. Peter could not continue to be a fisherman and fulfill the purpose Jesus had for him.

For followers, there has to be a change when we answer the call to follow Jesus. We may or may not be called to leave our jobs. We may have to leave behind relationships if they keep us from following completely. We will be called to leave our sin and anything that keeps us from following wholeheartedly.

What do you need to leave, or what have you left behind, to follow Jesus?

QUALITIES OF A FOLLOWER

In Peter we see qualities that allowed Peter to answer Jesus' call. He was obedient even when the command to put down his nets into deep water did not make sense. He was willing to confess Jesus as Lord and himself as a sinner. Peter willingly left everything to follow Jesus.

As followers of Jesus, we must obey, confess Jesus as Lord and ourselves as sinners, and leave behind our old lives to take on the new life Jesus calls us to.

Peter was also willing to follow Jesus. He did not give Jesus excuses as to why he could not follow. *“Jesus, I cannot leave this job. How will I make money? How will I feed my family? Jesus, if I follow you who will pay the bills?”* Peter was willing to take a leap of faith and follow Jesus without knowing where it would lead.

Which of these qualities—obeying, confessing, leaving something behind, or following—do you find to be the hardest?

Peter’s decision to follow Jesus changed his life completely. In the years to come Peter would be ridiculed by others, tested by God, put in prison, persecuted, and ultimately martyred. He also learned the joy of being a follower of Jesus. The decision to follow will have a cost, but being a follower of Jesus also brings great rewards.

FOLLOWING DAILY

Answering Jesus’ call may mean some big changes in our lives. There may be habits and relationships that have to change because we are followers. Our goals and dreams may be left behind when Jesus calls us to a new life in Him. Peter was willing to leave everything behind, learn from Jesus, and go wherever He led.

What does answering Jesus' call mean for you?

Peter felt unworthy to be in the presence of Jesus, but when Jesus gave him the opportunity to follow, Peter answered Jesus' call.

Week 1, Day 4: Choosing to Follow

The life of a fisherman can sometimes be frustrating. Some days you catch a lot of fish and everything is good and other times you fish all night and don't catch a thing. Worry and stress are part of a fisherman's life. On nights we catch a lot I worry about getting the fish ready to be sold. On nights that we don't catch anything I worry about paying bills and feeding my family.

I experienced one of those frustrating nights of not catching anything when we saw Jesus teaching on the shore. As we were washing and repairing our nets I could not help but listen to his teaching. I had thought a lot about Jesus since Andrew introduced him to me and he called me the "Rock." Could this man be the Messiah we have waited for?

After Jesus finished teaching, the crowds began to leave. I could feel Jesus watching us and then he told me to get in the boat, go to the deep water, and let out the net. No one who knew anything about fishing would suggest we go to the deep water in daylight. Jesus not a fisherman, but I did what he said because there was something different about this man. I wasn't sure what to think, but we got in our boats and did as he said.

You cannot believe how many fish we caught. There were so many that our nets were breaking and we had to get help from James and John to get all of the fish in the boats.

I was in awe because of what I just experienced. It was indeed a miracle and I did not need anything else to convince me that Jesus was the Messiah. I fell at his feet and confessed him as Lord, but I also knew that I was not worthy to be in his presence.

When he told us to follow him it was a very easy decision. We left our boats, the fish, our business, and our families to follow Jesus. When you are in the presence of God it is easy to see that obeying him is the only thing that matters.

Jesus called Peter to leave his profession and follow Him. He may call us to leave something behind, or He may call us to go to something. He always calls us to leave our sin, to obey Him, and to be in relationship with Him.

What have you been called to do for Him?

When Jesus calls we always have a choice. Peter had a choice as to whether or not he was going to leave everything and follow Jesus. Choosing to follow may not always be an easy path, but it is always the best path.

Week 1, Day 5: The Mission

Luke 9:1-6

PREPARED

One spring I had the opportunity to speak at a conference in Seattle. When my two sisters and mother heard that I was going to Seattle they decided it would be a great girls' weekend, and it was. It was a wonderful trip that included beautiful weather in Seattle. Our trip got off to a little bit of a rocky start when we went to put our bags in our rental car. We had so many bags you would have thought we were staying for a month instead of four days! Once the trunk was full we had to put several bags in the back seat on the laps of my mother and sister. If we had been in a wreck they would have been fine because the suitcases would have been like airbags and protected them. We made sure that we were prepared for whatever came our way in Seattle. Rain, sunshine, warm or cold weather, we were ready. We had made sure that we had everything we needed and much more.

When Jesus sent his twelve apostles on their first trip without Him, He wanted them to be prepared, so He gave them everything they needed. But the apostles learned that what Jesus wanted them to take with them was different from what most people would have carried on a journey.

SENT

Read Luke 9:1-6.

Parents know that part of the growing process for their children is learning to do things on their own. When children learn to fix their own breakfast it is a big deal. As they grow and begin to do their homework by themselves it is a time of rejoicing in many households. When Jesus wanted His followers to learn to do some things on their own He sent them out without Him. **Part of the growing process for the apostles was to learn to follow even when Jesus was not with them.**

In Luke 9:2 what two things did Jesus send the apostles to do?

1. _____
2. _____

Up to this point, the apostles had watched Jesus preach the kingdom of God and heal the sick. Now it was their turn.

Why do you think Jesus sent the apostles out without Him? _____

When you were young and living at home did you ever go away for a time? I remember some of the times when I went away for a while. During those times away I learned to manage without Mom and Dad by my side. I became a little more independent, but I was always glad to come home.

This experience away from Jesus strengthened the apostles' faith and allowed them to experience God's provision. They learned that with God's power they were able to do His work, even though Jesus was not with them.

We can stay in our comfortable church and study the Word in our comfortable home, but there comes a time when God will call us to leave our comfort zone.

Where has God sent you?

Just like the apostles, God sends us to be His messengers to the world. Because we all have different spiritual gifts, the way we are to accomplish the task will be different. Some have been given the gift of serving, others have the gift of teaching. Some will be care givers, and others will be missionaries in a foreign country.

There will come a time when we must step out in faith and be God's messengers to the world. When that time comes, we must rely on God to give us all we need for whatever He has called us to do.

Before these twelve men left Jesus, He gave them everything they needed to accomplish the task—power, instructions, and a friend.

What power did Jesus give these men? (Luke 9:1) _____

The apostles were given the ability to change people's physical lives, and point them to the One who would change their spiritual lives. We have this same power, the power of the Holy Spirit, living within us. The power of the Holy Spirit will enable us to do whatever God has called us to do.

How have you seen the Spirit working in your life?

TRUSTING

What did Jesus instruct the apostles not to take with them?

Without a staff, they had nothing to protect themselves. Without a bag, they had no way of carrying personal items. Without food, they had nothing to eat. Without money, they had no way of purchasing food or necessities. Without an extra tunic, they had no change of clothes.

How would you feel if you were sent on a journey and told not to take anything?

Why do you think Jesus told his disciples to take nothing for their journey?

Jesus wanted the apostles to learn to depend on God to meet all of their needs.

God would provide their protection, food, and clothes. Their training included learning to depend on God for everything they needed. Learning to be a follower means learning to trust God to meet all of our needs. We are not to trust in clothes, food, or money, but in God, the One who meets all of our needs.

When do you find trusting God to be difficult?

UNWELCOME

Even though the twelve had the power to heal the sick and drive out demons, there would still be some people who would not accept the message of Jesus. Jesus told the apostles what to do when they encountered these people.

What did Jesus tell His followers to do if they encountered people who did not welcome them?

Shaking the dust from one's feet was a symbolic act practiced by the Pharisees when they left an "unclean" Gentile area.

Have you ever encountered someone whose heart was so hard the person was unwilling to accept Jesus?

There are people today who will refuse to accept the message of Jesus Christ. When we encounter these people, Jesus gives us the freedom to leave those people.

John MacArthur says, "Turning away from hard-hearted rejecters was not only an issue of judgment, but also a question of priority. There is only so much time and opportunity available to evangelize, and that time is too precious to waste on those who have hardened themselves against the truth."⁸

A FRIEND

Read Mark 6:7.

This verse tells us that Jesus sent out the apostles in groups of two. When you are going somewhere for the first time it is always easier to go with a friend, isn't it? When I am with a Christian friend I am more courageous and my faith is stronger. People need one another to encourage and help one another.

Write about a time when you experienced encouragement and support from a friend.

When serving or beginning a new ministry, ask a Christian friend to go with you. When Satan attacks and discouragement sets in you will be better able to withstand him and overcome discouragement if a strong friend is with you.

FOLLOWING DAILY

Jesus gave the apostles everything they needed for their journey: a message, power, instructions, and a friend. Jesus gives us the same things for our journey: the Holy Spirit, His Word, and fellow Christians.

Answering Jesus' call means we will rely on Him to meet all of our needs.

¹ Charles R. Swindoll, *Jesus: The Greatest Life of All* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 271.

² Jessica Samakow, "Baby Name Regret," http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/23/baby-name-regret_n_1296266.html.

³ James Moore, "What's in a Name," <http://www.parentdish.co.uk/baby-names/choosing-a-name-for-your-baby/>, 7 September 2011.

⁴ Genesis 17:5, 15.

⁵ Genesis 32:28.

⁶ Lois Tverberg, *Walking in the Dust of Rabbi Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 84.

⁷ David Bevin, “*The Miraculous Catch: Reflections on the Research of Mendel Nun*”, Jerusalem Perspective, March 1992.

⁸ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Luke 6-10*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2011), 246.