

Today we look at another first in the life and ministry of Jesus, the calling of the first Disciples. Do you think Jesus asked for volunteers ? Did it go something like this?

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear him, he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake. Noting that one of the boat owners was a homely, shriveled man, Jesus then looked at the owner of the other boat. This man was Simon, He was a strapping and fine-looking young man. So Jesus got into the boat belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking, another boat containing Simon's fishing partners, James and John, came near, and Jesus said to the men in both boats, "I need someone to put out into the deep water and catch some fish." Simon immediately put up his hand, waved it eagerly and said, "I'll do it! Please, pick me!" Whereupon Jesus selected Simon and told him to let down his nets and commence fishing for the Lord.

Or does this account seem a little fishy too you? It does to me. It is just the opposite of what the Gospel of Luke tells us that happened.

Jesus wasn't looking for the brightest and the best. The brightest young men of that time would have been taken under the tutelage of a rabbi and spent years as one his disciples. Peter, James, John and Andrew were fishermen by trade. When Peter and John were brought before the Jewish High Council after Jesus' resurrection, the religious elite realized that they were common, uneducated men. (Acts 4:13) On the surface, Jesus' Disciples seemed like unlikely candidates, a tax collector, fishermen, skeptics, and a political zealot.

Jesus wasn't looking for the strong and good looking. We may be tempted to select people to do a job for us based on their appearance of physical attributes. Not Jesus. Not God. Remember when the Prophet Samuel was sent to anoint the second king of Israel at the house of Jesse. Samuel thought the oldest son was the one, but he wasn't. God told Samuel, *"Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."* (1 Samuel 16:7 NLT)

Jesus wasn't looking for volunteers. The men Jesus called to be His Disciples were already in the midst of doing something else to make a living. When one man volunteered to follow, Jesus said, *"Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."* (Luke 9:58 NLT) Jesus told His Disciples, *"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you."* (John 15:16 NLT)

Simon Peter had already had an encounter with Jesus. One day after leaving the synagogue, the Jewish House of Worship, Jesus went home with Simon and cured Simon's mother-in-law of a high fever. Later that night Jesus healed a whole variety of sick people. (Luke 5:38-40) So it was no big surprise for Simon to meet Jesus on the shore of the lake or to have Jesus jump into his boat. It was a surprise for Jesus to tell him to go back out and try to catch something this time.

When Jesus hopped into Peter's boat, He was looking for commitment. Despite his better judgment, Peter went back onto the lake and tried again. This time the nets were so full of fish that they started to break and had to call for help to haul all of the fish to the shore. After they landed, Jesus told Peter that he would soon begin fishing for men. Peter, James, John and Andrew left their boats and their incredible catch behind to follow Jesus. They spent the next three years of their lives following Jesus. They would spend the rest of their lives after Jesus' death and resurrection telling people about Jesus.

Jesus still calls people today to follow Him and qualifies the unqualified. Jesus is not impressed with our natural abilities, our appearance or talents. He isn't caught up in the cars we drive, the houses we live in or the brand of clothing that we wear. He doesn't wait until we've completed our education or made it retirement to call us. His call comes on his time schedule, not ours. He may not ask us to do the things we like or feel qualified to do. Saul was out to destroy the church before Jesus called him to be the Apostle to the Gentiles. But He does call us to do the things that He will equip and support us to do. God will never set us up for failure.

So why do you think God chose us? He loves us and wants us to be part of His family. God calls us for the same reason Jesus called His Disciples. The Disciples were changed by being with Jesus. Our lives are changed by being with Jesus too. God calls us with our rebellious hearts, with our secret struggles, with our doubts and lack of faith and with all of our faults. God chooses us so that the people who know us can look at us and see God's endless mercy and His incredible power.

We have all been called to be Jesus' disciples. We've been given something we don't deserve but desperately need; an encounter with Christ. Jesus invites us to drop our plans and follow Him.

- When Jesus calls you to love an annoying neighbor or coworker, see it as an opportunity for God's grace to shine through you and help you to learn how to love the unlovable.
- When Jesus calls you in a time of illness, see it as a chance for God's power to shine in your weakness. People may be watching you to see how your faith helps you through the tough times of life.
- When Jesus calls you to say "No!" to something that is wrong that may cost you if you don't do it, see it as your time to trust God to work all things out for your good because He loves you.
- When Jesus calls you to help someone in need, see it as the opportunity to serve Jesus while serving that person.

God didn't have to choose us, but He did. God doesn't have to use us, but He does. God doesn't just bless us, but others through us. When we answer God's call, He is glorified.