

Disciples Walk in the Master's Steps

Mark 1:9-20

The **PURPOSE** of this lesson from Mark 1 is:

1. to learn from Jesus' example of what it means to both be His disciple and to help make disciples of others; and
2. to determine how to help at least one other person grow as a disciple who in turn will one day help others become disciples.

PRAYER

Jesus, our divine Teacher and Model, speak to our hearts and open our minds to what it means to be follower of you.

Introduction to the Story

We know little of Jesus' childhood, though we can assume He grew up learning the Bible, like many children of His time and culture. What we do know for certain is that when Jesus turned thirty, He began a ministry that would change the world forever. Many say the reason Christ lived a human life on earth was to help us believe in Him (John 3:16). But is being a Christian simply believing in Jesus and acknowledging that He is the Son of God? Clearly not, for the Devil does that and he is not a Christian (James 2:19).

So let's stop and ask: why do we call ourselves "Christians?" The word Christian only shows up once in the New Testament (Acts 11:26) and was a name given to believers by those outside the church. Jesus never used this term. Rather, He used the well-known word disciple (or "learner, follower") to identify those who would believe and be loyal to Him. The word disciple and its derivatives are found in the gospels some 286 times.

To be a Christian is to be a disciple, which means a passionate commitment to being with and becoming like Jesus in every area of our lives—and to help others do the same.

1 *The word Christian literally means "little Christ," which carries the idea of imitation, and is not far from the goal of a Jesus disciple.*

The beginning of Mark’s gospel (1:9-20) illustrates four brief, core stories; in them, in Jesus’ example, we will see what it means to be both a disciple and a disciple-maker for Jesus.

The four stories in today’s lesson emphasize four areas of discipleship. First, Jesus’ baptism (Mark 1:9-11) shows us that disciples know their identity and purpose. Second, His wilderness experience (Mark 1:12-13) reminds us that we grow through times of struggle and testing. Third, Jesus’ first sermon (Mark 1:14-15) makes it clear that if Jesus is King, then our lives and our stories center around His kingdom. The fourth story in Mark 1 brings to light a truly essential element of discipleship: giving ourselves away to others and making “fishers of men” (Mark 1:17, KJV)—in other words, mentoring disciples who will also train new disciples themselves.

Sharing Question

A disciple in Jesus’ day was someone who followed another- not like social media “follow,” but follow in wanting to imitate and be like someone else. In light of this definition, whom do you and your generation follow or want to imitate? Why? Explain.

If being a Christian is synonymous with being a disciple or follower of Jesus Christ, then our churches should be filled with people growing to be like Jesus and actively making disciples of others. List 5-7 traits or habits you would expect to see, but often don’t see, in the lives of people following Jesus today.

DID YOU KNOW...

In 2 Timothy 2:2 the apostle Paul admonishes Timothy, his disciple, to pass on what was given to him to other faithful disciples who will teach others. Imagine what the church and the world would be like if Jesus followers did this.

This verse has inspired some to suggest that discipleship implies each of us needs someone in our lives like:

- Paul, a mentor who is discipling us;
- Barnabas, a like-minded friend who is walking with us; and
- Timothy, a person we are helping to follow Jesus who then makes disciples of their own.

Which of these three relationships do you have in your life? If not, ask God to help you identify and pursue them.

Experiencing the Story

EVIL

The Enemy wants to distort our understanding of what it means to believe in God, to be a Christian. He wants to keep us from the powerful yet simple commitment of being a disciple of Jesus.

1. Read Matthew 4:1-11 which outlines the Devil's three temptations of Jesus during His wilderness experience. All of them distort the truth Jesus heard from heaven at His baptism. Rewrite these three temptations in your own words.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

2. Jesus, obviously, did not give in to the Devil, so the Enemy naturally turned toward the young adult disciples Jesus called. If you were set on changing these young men's minds about following Jesus, what lie would you tell them?

JESUS THE HERO

Christ had lived for eternity past in full and intimate relationship with the Father and the Spirit, yet when Jesus came to earth, He became fully human. Before Jesus became the ultimate example of discipling of others, He grew up just like us, fully exposed to the difficulties and temptations of this world, yet without ever giving in to sin (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus then, as the intimate Son of His Father, was also our ultimate example of being a "follower."

Write one thought or feeling Jesus might have had in each of these first four events of His ministry life:

1. *Jesus' Baptism* (vv. 9-11), in which Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit, heard the voice of God call Him Son, and received His Father's commission to be Messiah.

2. *Jesus' Testing in the Wilderness* (vv. 12-13), in which the Holy Spirit compelled Jesus into a season of being tempted by Satan and tested by God.

3. *Jesus' First Preaching (vv. 14-15)*, in which Jesus proclaimed the good news of God for the first time, saying essentially: "The kingdom and the Messiah for which you have long awaited are here. It is Me. Put your trust fully in Me, the good news of God!"

4. *Jesus' Calling of the First Disciples (vv. 16-20)*, in which Jesus went to the shore and invited unclean fishermen, who were weak but full of potential, to be His disciples and change-makers.

THE CROWD

The crowds who heard Jesus' claim that God's kingdom was now present in Him (Mark 1:15) were made up of common people under Roman oppression; they all longed for the coming of the Messiah, their mighty Savior. These same people would likely have heard the preaching and call to baptism of John the Baptist, a messenger from God to prepare the way for Jesus. (Mark 1:3-8).

1. The people primarily expected the Messiah to rescue them from Roman rule and oppression, to be a conqueror like king David. Imagine yourself now as one of the crowd. What thoughts or feelings might you have experienced when you heard, "the kingdom of God has come near" (Mark 1:15). And remember, Jesus as yet had done no miracle to prove He was the awaited Messiah.

2. What might the crowds likely have said or done after hearing Jesus' first sermon in vv. 14-15?

PETER, JAMES, JOHN, AND ANDREW

By leaving their nets and their families, the fishermen ignored many cultural expectations. But they were also invited to be this new teacher's disciple, something unclean fishermen were never asked to do.

1. Mark omits the details of the longer conversation that we can likely assume these four experienced with Jesus before He called them to "come and see," come and join His mission. We should also assume they all had heard Jesus preaching at least once. Imagine you were one of the fishermen. What might you have heard or experienced that would lead you to drop your nets, leave home and do something so radical?

2. Peter and Andrew were brothers, and they left behind their nets and boat, but also their parents and family, to follow Jesus. What similar or parallel things might people today have to leave behind in order to follow Jesus?

Living the Story

The following questions are designed for discussion as well as personal reflection. They move us from who God is to our personal story and then to our place in the larger story of the world.

1. **JESUS.** What do the baptism and wilderness experiences, His response to the Father and the Spirit's leading, reveal about Jesus' character (Mark 1:9-13)?

... His baptism:

... His time in the wilderness:

... Review Jesus' declarations and commands in His first preaching (vv. 14-15) and then His words of invitation to the first and unlikely disciples (vv. 16-20). What can we learn from these two scenes about Jesus' plan and heart for His future disciples?

2. **OUR STORY.** What are one or two actions of Jesus in the four short stories of Mark 1:9-20 that you have already experienced, or now want to experience? Explain both how and why.

3. **OTHERS.** Think about somebody(s) that you would like to know more about Jesus and how to imitate, follow and become more like Him. In light of our passage today, where would you start? How does our Mark 1 story inform what you would do, what you would say?

4. **REFLECT.** How has your experience of this Mark 1 story helped you better understand what it means to both be His disciple and to help make disciples of others?

Respond

In Prayer

Thank Jesus for being our faithful and divine Master. Listen for and hold on to one area of Jesus' life in today's lesson that you long to imitate. Repent. Declare your belief that Jesus can make this change happen in you.

In Action

Pray about meeting and talking with one person to explore the possibility of him or her walking with you as either a mentor or mentee.

Looking Ahead

Recall Jesus' opening sermon in Mark: "The time has come, the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" In Luke, Jesus' opening words shared in His hometown synagogue are quite different, as we shall see in the next lesson. They complement and expand the words in Mark and reveal to us the full breadth of Jesus' purposes on earth.