

## **Discipled By Matthew! A Great Disciple?**

We switched from Comcast back to AT&T U-Verse for our cable, internet and phone service recently and with that comes the hassle of syncing everything up and making sure the remotes all work. I started to try to wrap my mind around all the changes and quickly went from the more detailed instruction book to the quick set up guide with the pictures and graphics. Then, the technician sat me down and went over everything. He set up my remote, got me registered on the new account and walked me through the entire process. Some things are so complicated that it helps to have a guide for the journey.

Being formed in Christ is like this. Life in and through Jesus is so different than our past estranged life from God that we need someone to help us sync up with Christ. To live life as Jesus meant for us to live it – it takes an instruction book (Bible). But beyond instruction, we need real tech support to help us with the new installation (life in the Spirit), to explain the various components of our walk with God (spiritual disciplines) and what to do about problem solving (trouble shooting). Disciples are spiritual tech support – people who come along side of us to help explain the Christian life through the lens of their own life journey. They know how to encourage, unpack and help solve the mysteries of our new life in Christ because they've been on the journey for a while. Being discipled by another devoted follower of Jesus is like having our own personal tech support on the journey from death to new life in Christ.

### **Journey Together:**

- 1). Who was the first real Christ follower that made a lasting impression on you?
- 2). What impressed you most about them?
- 3). What things did you see and learn from them that you have incorporated in your life?

### **Road Map: Matthew 9:9-13.**

- 4). What are some things Jesus taught Matthew about discipleship in this first encounter with him? What surprises you most about Jesus calling of Matthew?
- 5). In Matthew 10:2-4, Matthew is listed as one of the original twelve disciples. What is unique about Matthew among the other eleven disciples listed here? What was important about Matthew's occupation and why does he seem to keep bringing it up?
- 6). What kind of issues and questions did Matthew struggle with in his call to follow Jesus? What made his call so different from the rest of the twelve?
- 7). What can we learn from Matthew about discipleship with Jesus? How do you feel about being discipled by Matthew? How can you relate to Matthew as a follower of Jesus?
- 8). What are some of the great things that Matthew accomplished in Jesus name? How can Matthew help us accomplish great things in Jesus name?
- 9). What further questions do you have from this weeks reading?
- 10). How can this group pray for you right now?

### **My Journey:**

- 1). How has God been using journey in your life this week to do *Great Things* for Him?
- 2). How has the life of Matthew been a significant witness and influence in your walk with God this week?
- 3). How can this group pray for you today?

## **Backstory:**

The truth is, all of Jesus followers were unlikely Rabbinic candidates. The Rabbi discipleship process included three levels: Beth Sefer (elementary school - ages four five to adolescence). This first stage culminated in Bar Mitzvah at age twelve where a student demonstrated his knowledge of Torah. The next level was Beth Midrash where only the students of promise would go on to study oral Torah and to reflect on and interpret the finer application of Biblical truth. The final level was to choose a Rabbi and to live with and follow for several years learning to become like their Rabbi.

But if a student had not been selected for further training in Torah, it was clear that they were not cut out to be a Rabbi and must return to their father to learn the family business. Clearly none of Jesus followers had made the grade since He found them learning the fishing trade of their father's, or as in the case of Matthew, collecting taxes for Rome.

But these guys didn't choose Jesus. He chose them (John 15:16). Even more unheard of, Jesus close followers also included several women (Luke 8:1-3). Women could never serve as Rabbi's according to Jewish tradition, but they were following and learning from Jesus and in this sense – also His disciples.

However, the most surprising and unthinkable disciple of Jesus and right up there with women disciples was Matthew. There are no possible scenarios where Matthew could ever be considered for Rabbinic training. Matthew was a traitor to his people. Matthew collected taxes from the Jews and delivered the taxes to Rome. In this way, Matthew was helping support the occupancy of foreign power. It was a complete rejection of God's call to Israel as His chosen people.

Not only did this make Matthew detestable to his fellow Jews, he also collected a tax on top of Rome's designated amount as his own cost for doing Rome's dirty work. The tax collectors or

Publicans were so hated by their fellow Jews that every Jewish male was thankful to God for three things: not being born a woman, not being born a Gentile or becoming a hated Publican. In fact, the Zealots, one of Judaism's most militant sects, were committed to the overthrow of Rome and bringing in the Messiah through militant acts. Each Zealot took a vow to kill one tax collector to undermine Roman rule. It has also been suggested that most, if not all of Jesus other disciples, were card carrying Zealots. It has been mentioned that Jesus may have had to sleep between Matthew and the rest of the disciples at first just to protect Matthew and keep him alive!

The goal of this week's study and small group discussion is to point out how unlikely a disciple Matthew was and how important discipleship with Jesus must have been for him. No other Jewish teacher would have offered Matthew this privilege. Matthew must have reflected deeply on what discipleship with Jesus was all about. It should be clear that if he could be a disciple of Jesus, then discipleship was possible for anyone ready to leave all and follow.

It has also been suggested that Matthew's gospel may have been written with the specific purpose of teaching discipleship according to Jesus. It was uniquely organized around the five speeches of Jesus: Sermon on the Mount (Chapters 5-7), Sending Out of the Twelve (Chapter 10), Parables of the Kingdom (Chapter 13), Woes on the Scribes and Pharisees (Chapter 23) and the Olivet Discourse (Chapter 24 – 26). Discipleship under Jesus is framed according to these five major speeches. As we pay close attention to this framework these five speeches help define the core competencies of Christian discipleship.

Many, many books have written about Christian Discipleship emphasizing the essence of what it means to follow Jesus. Matthew, one of Jesus personal followers may have written the very first. If such is the case, our challenge is to listen closely to his message and to learn from Matthew the core competencies of following Jesus today.