



THE RIGHT TIME

DISCIPLESHIP | MARK 1:14-20

This text has three main points of connection to our lives. First, Jesus finds disciples in the midst of an ordinary day. Second, Jesus calls very ordinary people to be his disciples. Fishermen were not exactly the “top of the class” rabbinical students, but Jesus isn’t looking for those who think they have it all together. He is looking for those who are willing to turn their lives around to follow, and dare to believe in the One they are following. Third, there is power in this call. In Jesus, God’s reign has broken into this world, and the King has authority over our lives. The invitation to follow is a sheer gift that comes without warning, and it is the Spirit’s job to turn hearts, not ours. Have you ever felt too “ordinary” to be used by God? Why? How willing are you to drop what you’re doing to follow Jesus? Is there anything you can’t bear to drop? Think about things in your life that you inadvertently put first. Ask God for a renewed conviction that discipleship is your calling.

PEOPLE | MATTHEW 20:29-34

It would be easy for Jesus to simply tend to the crowd, the mass of individuals following him. So many need healing! But Jesus hears the cries of two blind men sitting by the road. He sees them not only for who they are, but for what they might become. He sees them as people. We tend to see people in one of three ways. First, they’re scenery. They fill the background of our lives, and we don’t really see them at all. Who have you passed by as scenery today? Yesterday? In the last week? Second, they’re objects, a means to an end. The cashier is merely a means to the end of our shopping. A waitress is merely a means of getting our meal. Have you treated anyone like an object recently? Do you know their names? Could you learn their names? Third, we see people as people. We do know their names, we know their stories, and our stories are intertwined. If we’re going to be obedient to Jesus’ command, we need to stop seeing people as scenery and objects and begin to see them as people. Where do you need help with this? Ask God to open your eyes and start seeing people as people.

AFFINITY | 1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-13

When God opens our eyes to see people in a new way, there are four lenses we can look through. The first lens is affinity, defined as a natural connection through similarity. What do you love to do? If you had an entirely free Saturday with nothing going on, nothing on your “honey do” list, what would you do? Would you garden? Read a book? Play golf? Go running? Whatever it is, consider that there are other people who would make the same choice. Harnessing that affinity can help you easily connect with new people. How can God use the very things that make your heart beat faster to reach out and touch the hearts of others with faith? Ask God to help you identify those people with whom you have affinity.

PROXIMITY | MATTHEW 17:1-8

Jesus, Peter, James, Moses and Elijah all in the same place at the same time? When they come into proximity with one another, extraordinary things happen. The second lens for building genuine relationships is proximity. Who are you around on a regular basis? We all have neighbors, but a recent poll reports that less than half of us even know our neighbor’s names. Do you know your neighbors’

names? If not, what can you do to change that? Is there anything you do at the same time each day, like work out in a gym, or stop in at a coffee shop? If so, you probably see the same people each time you go. Do you know their names? If you're a student, do you know the names of those who sit around you in class? Pick a few locations around town and get to know the people there. Through your conversations, you might learn a bit about each other's story. And one day God will open the door to conversation about deeper things. Ask God to open your eyes to the places and people in your life where you share proximity.

PAIN | 1 CORINTHIANS 12:26

The third lens is pain. We all experience pain in some way, and there are others all around us who are experiencing the same kind of pain. Alcoholics Anonymous is a shining example of how shared pain can heal and redeem. Think of a painful experience in your life. Have you ever considered how God might redeem and use this pain to connect you with someone who is going through a similar experience? When someone is going through a difficult time, there's no one they want to talk with more than someone who has been there, and lived to tell the tale. How can you invite God to use your pain to connect with someone? Maybe you have lost a loved one recently. Join a grief group and really get to know and love the people there. Maybe you are without a job. Join a job connections group and invest yourself in the people there. Ask God to open your eyes to the places and people in your life where you share pain.

SERVICE | MATTHEW 10:40-42

The fourth lens is service. Sometimes connecting with another person is as simple as a cup of cold water. Simple, self-less service is a remarkable connector in this remarkably self-centered culture. Whether you are serving someone in their need or inviting someone to serve alongside you, God builds bridges when we serve. This is one of the reasons we engage with food shelves, soup kitchens, clothing closets, furniture ministries and other mission-related activities. We have a passion for reaching out to those in need. We also want to create opportunities to invite others into service, because serving does something in our soul. When was the last time you participated in a service project? When was the last time you invited someone to serve alongside you? What was that experience like? Ask God to open your eyes to new ways you can both serve and invite.

REACH | MATTHEW 28:16-20

We are called to discipleship that reaches past the perceived barriers in our lives. We are neither scenery nor an object in this world. We are people in God's story. God knows each of us by name. How does it feel to be known, and to be loved, like that? Do you believe it? God knows your story and has written himself into the script. God has come in Jesus Christ to give you life. God holds your heart in the palm of his hand. God sees you and you are the apple of his eye. Who will you reflect that love to? Let God open your eyes to the people all around you.