



August 12, 2012
Mark 1:14-20
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The Call to be a Disciple

You know, we are beginning today a series of messages that I've given before. I mean, they'll never exactly come out the same, and we can't do wrong reading verses we've read before, but it's at the heart of why we exist as a church --- and that is to glorify God by making disciples who will impact every area of the world for Christ. This is why we exist. It's why we've always existed. It's why every church is on the planet and why you're Christian today. It's for that purpose. We believe disciples are best made in a process when they worship, grow, and serve in the context of Christian community. There is a method to making disciples. We've been commissioned to do that. Every church needs to have a process to see disciples made.

So, Lord willing, over the next few weeks, we're gonna be sharing with all of you about our purpose for being on the planet and how we can grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, becoming stronger Christians, more vibrant disciples, and even having a better understanding of what that means because you and I know that we are living in a world that is not becoming more and more Christian. In fact, there is more and more hostility towards Christianity. As people move away from Christ, those who stand for Christ will be met with opposition. But, if the world is ever to know God, if the world is ever to change, then they have to see Christ in us.

I can tell you amongst my colleagues and other pastors around the country and around the world, there is clearly a movement being laid upon our hearts that as a church we need to be strong and ready, which is why we just finished all of that time in 1 and 2 Thessalonians staying strong and living ready for the Lord's return. The world is and will be a different place when God's people stand up and touch the nations with the glory of Jesus. Many of you are a part of that. Our church is in the thick of it. We don't exist just for our own benefit. We don't exist here as a church just to reach out to Antioch and Brentwood and Discovery Bay and Oakley and Byron and Bethel Island and all the surrounding areas. We are here to touch the nations for Christ. So, over the next few weeks we're hoping to be re-envisioned and re-energized in our purpose.

It couldn't begin in a better place in my opinion than right here in Mark Chapter 1 with the calling of the first disciples. This is not complicated. It's not difficult. In fact, what we're seeing today is the call of God upon all of our lives to be a disciple of Jesus.

When Mark tells the story, he had learned this primarily from Peter whom Mark had spent a lot of time with. Mark wasn't with Jesus by the lake that day when he called these disciples, but Peter, obviously impacted by this experience, related this to Mark over and over again so that later when Mark saw Jesus and the resurrected Christ and was compelled by God to write this gospel, Mark carefully recorded for us the events that had so shaped and marked Peter's life. It helps us to understand why Peter could be so faithful. Even though he had his times of denial, he remained strong to the end became one the most powerful preachers of the early church.

It begins right here in Mark Chapter 1 in verse 14. They are by the Sea of Galilee. Jesus has been with them for a time that day, teaching the multitudes. He's already pushed

Peter out into the boat and told him to let down the nets. They have let them down and caught a great catch. As we'll see in a little in Luke Chapter 5, Peter saw that experience as demonstrating that Jesus was the Messiah, and he confesses his sin to Jesus and falls down before him in worship. Amazing. And then it says in verse 14:

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ **“The time has come,”** he said. **“The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”**

¹⁶ As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ **“Come, follow me,”** Jesus said, **“and I will make you fishers of men.”** ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him.

¹⁹ When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰ Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

Let's pray for a moment.

Lord, if we're a Christian today, there's a call like that that's been placed upon each of our lives. No different. No different than what Simon and Andrew received that day, no different than what John and James received that day. No different than the call that has been going out to men and women and boys and girls to follow Jesus. I want to thank you, God, for allowing me and my family to be a part of a church that is living to fulfill your purpose and engaged in a process that allows us each and every week to see men and women, boys and girls worshiping, growing, and serving in a context of Christian community that allows them to become reproducing followers of Jesus. So, Lord, as we begin this today give us ears to hear and eyes to see, and give us a heart to believe, and we will thank you for all that you will show us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

We have all received some pretty memorable calls in our life, calls that we will not soon forget, and calls when we have responded that have changed the course of our life. I remember one such call came for me on March 28, 1973. I was in the Student Center of Central Connecticut State College. I was working there in the morning as I was going to school. I was in the coat room. My job was to answer phones and watch backpacks and do other things for the students in the Student Center when the phone rang. I picked it up, and on the other end was a friend of mine from back home. His name is Wesley. I'll never forget his words. He said, “Larry, I've got bad news for you. You're dad's had a heart attack. I'm sorry, Larry, but he's gone.”

You don't forget calls like that, and they set your feet on a course that will bring your life in a different direction. Ten years later, it was in April of 1983. I was sitting in our duplex apartment in Oregon. Karla and I have been married just for two and a half years or so. I got a call from Harold Carlson, the pastor of Fair Oaks Baptist at the time, over in Concord, California. They had been thinking and praying about starting a church in Antioch, and I still remember Harold's words that morning. “Larry, we're starting a new church in Antioch, and we think you and Karla are the right couple to lead it. Would you come and check it out?” You don't forget calls like that, and it set our life on a totally different course that God had in place for us.

You know, we've all had calls like that, unforgettable, life-changing calls. Some of them we are very happy to receive. Others we wish we didn't have to take. But I have to tell you, the most life-changing call I've ever received came in the fall of 1977. It didn't come by a phone spoken to my ear, but it came by the word of God that was spoken to my heart. It was brought to me by an unlikely messenger who happened to be a football player in the National Football League. The message was very simple. The message was from Jesus, and I'd never heard anything like it before. **“Larry, you're a sinner and I still love you. I paid a great price for you. You just haven't known that. Well, now you know, and I'm calling you to follow me.”**

I didn't even know what all of that meant, but I remember going back that night getting down next to my leaky waterbed. There was a tack stuck in the side. I was afraid to pull it out because it would leak worse, but it was rusting and it was starting to leak. I still remember kneeling down next to my leaky waterbed, and I said, “Lord, I don't know what all this means and I don't know where it's gonna lead, but I heard you and I'm ready to follow you.” You don't forget calls like that, and my life has been forever different.

God is still calling people to be his disciples just as he did with Simon and Andrew and with John and James and so many others. You know, when Peter got up and preached his powerful Pentecost sermon in Jerusalem, what they call the birth of the church where the Holy Spirit came to indwell people for the first time, Peter got up and he pleaded with the people to hear the gospel, to believe the good news of salvation, to receive Christ into their lives, and to heed God's call. Do you remember? After he had spelled out all the details of what it happened and how they had rejected Christ and why he went to the cross, Peter told them in Acts Chapter 2 verse 36:

“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

Good question. What do you do when you realize your sins have crucified God's son? What do you do? That's a good question.

³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

“It's for you and for all whom the Lord our God will call.” Peter realized he didn't deserve this, but Jesus met him on a fishing expedition one day and called him to follow him. You don't forget a call like that, and it forever changed Peter's life. He's saying, “God is still calling people. If you believe and repent and follow this Jesus, he'll change your life too.”

This word “call” means “called to oneself.” It's very personal. It literally means “God is bidding you to come to him.” Here in Mark's gospel, we have the account of Jesus calling his first disciples.

Disciples are followers. They are learners; they are students. They study a person's life, and they become like them. Marketing agencies count on this. There is a lot of famous people who have disciples. Little Gabby Douglas, who is the gold medal winner in the all-around for women's gymnastics in the recent Olympics, already I've read but not totally verified, that she's already received something like \$16 million in endorsements. She had won the medal that night and later on they show a guy from Kellogg's who has been sponsoring the Olympics standing there with a cornflakes box, and she's already on it. So why would Kellogg's or anybody else be interested in paying this girl all that kinda money to get her picture, her testimony, her image on anything? Because they now know Gabby Douglas has thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of people who are her fans. There are her disciples. And they're hoping they're gonna eat what she eats, wear what she wears, drive what she drives. And they're gonna use that as far as they can because they know without using the word that Gabby Douglas has disciples and they wanna see those disciples reproducing her in what they wear and buy and spend.

Jesus calls us to follow him as a disciple. The idea behind a Christian disciple is reproduction. Disciples are reproducing followers of Jesus. Are you aware today there is no concept in the Bible anywhere of a person who is content to be a follower of Jesus who believes the gospel and is saved from their sin? There's no concept of that person now not wanting to follow Jesus and see the life of Christ reproduced in them so that that life can be reproduced in someone else. That is the norm that Christ expects. There's no sense of contentment in "I'm a believer." "I'm a reproducer." That's the idea behind being a disciple. God is calling people to be not just a believer but to be a disciple. This call is not for a select few, it's for everyone. Not to pursue this course of growth and commitment may only indicate that in the end we may not really be disciples at all, maybe not even believers, because the call of God for every believer is to become a disciple of Jesus.

What does that call consist of? People, this is so simple. It's the same thing today as it's always been. The call to be a disciple is the call to follow Jesus, and the call to be a disciple is the call to live a new life. The call to be a disciple is the call to follow Jesus. This is the way Mark put it in verse 16:

¹⁶ As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ **"Come, follow me,"** Jesus said, **"and I will make you fishers of men."** ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him.

¹⁹ When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰ Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

You know, sometimes we don't get messages because they're just way too complicated. They may be right, but they're just not clear. I came across this reprint of an e-mail that was sent by an executive to their marketing department to the sales department of their company. I'm gonna read it for you. It's hard to read, but this is what the e-mail said:

Subject: Marketing forecast sales and income figures show an easing up of the rate at which business is easing off.

This can be taken as ample proof of the government's contention that there is a slowing up of the slowdown. Now, to clarify that, it should be noted that a slowing of the slowdown is not as good as an upturn in the downturn. On the other hand, it's a good deal better than either a speed up of the slowdown or a deepening of the downturn. Also, it suggests that the climate is about right for an adjustment of the readjustment to rate structures.

Now, turning specifically to rates, we find a very definite decrease in the rate of increase. This clearly shows there should be a letting up of the letdown. Of course, if the slowdown should speed up, the decrease in the rate of increase rates would turn to an increase in the rate of decrease. And, finally, the inflation of the recession would turn the recession into a depression while the deflation in the rate of inflation would give the impression of a recession of the depression.

Now, I've gone over that a few times, and if you're really carefully analyzing every word I think it's right. I think what he's saying is right on. Did anybody in the marketing department get that thing? Probably not, and we wonder why things don't go like we want because there's no communication.

Sometimes there's a lot of words, but there's no understanding so there's little response. Aren't you glad, really? Aren't you glad that when Jesus called the disciples, he made his message this simple:

“Come, follow me.”

What's interesting about that, those words are in the imperative mood in the Greek language. You know what that means? This is not an invitation. This is a command. It's not an invitation; it's a command. It's a command incumbent upon every believer. **“You claim to be mine? Come, follow me.”**

The heart of the call to discipleship is the command to follow Jesus. It begins with a call to become a Christian, to repentance, and believing the good news. Verse 15:

“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”

He had been preaching that all day long. The word “repent” is the word “to turn” “to change your mind.” But it's not just a turning from sin. It certainly involves that, but this repentance is bigger than that. When he said, **“Repent and believe the good news”** what he's saying is, **“I want you to completely turn your life around. I want you to go in a totally different direction. I want you to turn around and do a 180. You were living for yourself, now you're gonna live for me. You were following your own desires, now you're gonna follow mine. You were living for you, now you're living for me. You were living for your own purpose, now you're living for my purpose.”**

“Repent and believe the good news!”

“Believe the gospel.” People, if we really believe that we are sinners who are lost, that we're going to hell forever because of our sins, and that Jesus intervened, the only one who could, died on a cross paying for our sin, was buried in a tomb, rose again, and lives today offering us new life, then why would we want hang onto the old anyway?

If all of our own doing, and our own perspective and our own life, and our own desires, and our own choices were leading us to hell, and Jesus intervened and now he saved us, why would we not want to follow this Jesus wherever he would go? Because no matter how hard it is or how much uncertainty, we know it's all in his hands. And in the end we're with him forever. Why would we not want to do that?

I find it very interesting that it was the awareness of sin that began to turn Peter around after the call. In fact, if you read in Luke Chapter 5 you have the same account of these same events with a lot more details. Jesus is there. He's preaching. The crowds are getting big. He gets in the boat. He pushes out. He tells Peter, "**Put down your nets.**"

We fished all night, we didn't catch anything but if you tell us we'll put the net down.

So he does. He catches all these fish, such a large number of fish, Luke 5 verse 6, that their nets began to break.

⁷ So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

⁸ When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" ⁹ For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, ¹⁰ and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

You see what Peter's saying? "Lord, you can't know who I am or you wouldn't be calling me. You can't know who I am or you wouldn't be doing miracles like this through us. So, Lord, you need to get away from me. I'm not worthy. I'm not welcome. You can't know who I am or you wouldn't be calling me."

Then Jesus said to Simon, "**Don't be afraid; from now on you'll catch men.**"

¹¹ So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Wouldn't you? You meet someone who's the Messiah himself. He knows everything about you. You confess your sin, and he says, "**I still want you so follow me.**" They left their nets and followed him. Wouldn't you?

You don't forget a call like that and it forever changes you. That's why we must never forget that the heart of being a Christian is to be a disciple. The heart of being a disciple is to follow Jesus. It's what it means.

People, Christianity is not just a religion or a lifestyle. It's not a benefit and outcome thing. It's a call to follow a person, the ultimate person, Jesus Christ the God man who is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. You see, that's where many people miss the call because all they hear is this. They hear things like, "Come to Jesus; you'll be happy." You hear the invitation? "Come follow happiness." It's not "Come follow Jesus," or, "Come to Jesus; you'll be healed." Maybe, maybe not in the way you think. But you hear the call? The call was to be healed. The call was not to follow Jesus.

"Come to Jesus; he'll fix your marriage." "Come to Jesus; he'll solve your finances." "Come to Jesus; he'll give you a job." "Come to Jesus; he'll strengthen your life." All these things become the goal. They are not an invitation to follow Jesus. So it's, "Come

and have health and wealth and marital bliss or an easier life, and Jesus will do that for you.”

You know, I've shared many times happiness, or marriage, or a better life and all these things is the goal, Jesus is the means. I shared many times Jesus is not the means to anything. Jesus is the ultimate end to which every other means must lead. Many people have been duped into thinking they're a Christian because they're following the means and not Jesus. I'm still chasing after this, but not Jesus.

I may profess to be Christian. You may profess to be a Christian, but the question is, Would Jesus say that you or I are a follower of him? That's the question. **“Come follow me,”** he said.

And not only the call to follow Jesus, but the call to be a disciple is a call to live a new life, a new identity. Verse 16 Mark 1:

¹⁶ As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ **“Come, follow me,”** Jesus said, **“and I will make you fishers of men.”** ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him.

¹⁹ When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰ Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

A number of years ago, I shared the story of my 20th high school reunion. Karla went with me. It was a chance for her to meet a lot of our friends back in New England. Things change over 20 years. People are a little different in many ways. So what the committee did was pretty clever. They took our high school picture out of the yearbook, made a copy of it. They made a name badge on it, and they pinned it on everyone's lapel so they could recognize people 20 years later.

I remember this one guy came up to me. He had his hand over his name tag. This guy standing in front of me was tall and very muscular, very muscular. He had long hair down to his shoulders. He had an earring dangling down from his ear. He had a shirt that was unbuttoned down to his navel. He was deeply tanned. This guy had muscles in places I don't even have places. He had a medallion hanging down in the middle of his neck with the thing right above his naval. He's got black leather pants on and a black shirt, covered with jewelry. He's standing there with his hand over his tag and he says, “Larry, remember me?”

Now, we had 102 kids in our graduating class in high school. I was a class officer and knew everybody very well. But I'm thinking to myself, “I have never seen this person in my life. I know I haven't.” So I'm thinking, “This has gotta be a spoof. It's gotta be the husband of one of my classmates.” But that wasn't right because the girl standing next to him looked and was dressed just like him (indicating the same neckline down to the naval) and I'm thinking to myself, “I know I don't know this girl.”

He whips his hand away and he goes, “I'm Jackie.”

I said, “Jackie? Jackie Happ?” I had gone to school with this kid since we were in elementary school. We were best friends, hung out all the time, played in the band. When I last saw Jackie he was pudgy, black horned-rimmed glasses, very close

cropped hair, one the most conservative guys I've ever seen. He was a music nerdy kinda guy. People make fun of him. This guy standing in front of me I had never seen before was a total transformation. I didn't even recognize him.

When I was reading this and studying the transformation that happened in these fishermen, to what they were from here to what they became in the book of Acts, I thought to myself, "That's it. That's what it means to be a disciple." You take on such a new identity that if people saw you and knew you before, they'd see you now and not even know who you were because you'd been so radically change by the power of Jesus.

Jesus calls us to be people we weren't before. When they see us, honestly, they are to see him more and more in our attitude, the words we pick, our priorities. They are to see him in us.

Jesus told these disciples, **"Come follow me. I'll make you fishers of men."** You hear what he's telling them? **"I know your whole identity is wrapped up in fishing for fish. It's what you've done for generations, and it's what your kids are gonna do after you. But I'm calling you to something radically different. You were fishermen. You were fishermen who fish for fish, but not anymore. Now, you're gonna be fishermen who fish for men. I'm gonna make you into very different people."**

You know, in that same way, God calls us to a new identity. One of my favorite verses in the Scripture – people always asking, "What's your favorite verse?" It's hard to have – usually the one I'm reading, but 2 Corinthians 5:17 has been a great comfort to me, because like Peter, I say this to my shame, it deeply hurts me to think of the way I used to live. 2 Corinthians 5:17:

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: The old has passed away, and the new has come!

You know, when Satan comes and beats me up about my past, you know what I tell him? "Yeah, I was that, but I'm not anymore. This is who I am now." You know how good that feels to know that the old is gone and the new has come?

Lord willing, over the next few weeks, we're gonna be looking at how you really become a disciple. Because what we're gonna learn is that when Jesus comes to live in you, you become a worshiper of God. We used to live and put self and everything else ahead of God as most valuable in our lives. But when you become a Christian, now Jesus is the most valuable in your life so you reorder your priorities accordingly. Remember, the disciples left everything. Everything they knew. Everything they had. They walked away because Jesus called them follow him.

We're gonna learn about the fact that disciples become connected in Christian community. We become part of a new family, God's family. We make up a new body. It's called the church. And whether we like it or not we are now his presence in the world. Jesus is at the right hand of God. He's coming back again, but now we are his presence in the world. He lives in us and desires to show himself to the world through us. We either do that well or we don't. So we realize that we have gifts, and we have abilities, and the body needs these. We need the body to grow strong.

One of the first things that Jesus did with Peter and Andrew was to call them together with James and John. He said, **“You guys come with me.”** They began forming a unit that ended up being 12, and he would invest himself in these 12. Now he is investing it in you and me. We need to be connected to a body.

People treat church like they're shopping at a local supermarket or their favorite restaurant. Here today gone tomorrow. I'll try this one this week and another one next week. I didn't like what they served me this time, so I'm gonna go jump ship and go somewhere else. I tell people all the time, “You find a church that's preaching the gospel, has the right mission, is focused on Christ and making disciples, plug into that place. Find one as close to your house as you can so you and your kids can be vitally engaged in that and make worshiping and being connected to that body one of your highest priorities, because God wants to use you to grow and to help others grow and to impact a world.

We're gonna learn how we become people who are equipped to serve. We are all taught to want servants, but Jesus called us to be slaves of all. There's a great freedom and joy in this, and God gives us spiritual gifts, divine abilities that he wants to use to strengthen his body. Jesus said, **“I'm gonna make you fishers of men.”** They didn't know how to do that. God had to give them the ability and show them how to use it. That's what we need to learn. We become people who are involved in kingdom advancement. We stop building just our own kingdoms which don't last, and we join Jesus in building a kingdom which lasts forever. We give. We pray. We serve.

It's interesting to read on in the gospel of Mark, the very next day after he calls to follow him, they're out ministering into people's lives, and they're beginning to learn how the power of the gospel transforms when they serve. Amazing.

Then in Mark 1 in verse 35:

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark,

They haven't even left the area yet. They're still in Capernaum, Peter's fishing village.

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.³⁶ Simon and his companions went to look for him,³⁷ and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!”

³⁸ Jesus replied, **“Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.”**³⁹ So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

“Come follow me and I'll teach you to be fishers of men.” What did the disciples find Jesus doing? Praying and proclaiming. Two of the great kingdom disciplines that we would never do on our own. It's one of the signs of our new identity. We now become a praying people who lives to proclaim this good news so all can hear. It's the very thing he's called all of us to do.

You remember in Matthew 28 after the resurrection? It tells us in verse 18:

Then Jesus came to them (to the disciples) and said, **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”**¹⁹ **Therefore go and make disciples of**

all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

“Go and reproduce. Teach them everything I’ve taught you. Make disciples.”

And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

We’ve been called to a new identity.

CS Lewis in his book, *Mere Christianity*, once wrote:

Christ says, “Give me all. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work. I want you. I've not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half measures are any good. I don't want to cut off a branch here and a branch there, I want to have the whole tree out. I don't want to drill the tooth or crown it or stop it, I have to cut it out. Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think are innocent as well as the ones you think are wicked, the whole outfit. I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you myself. My own will shall become yours.”

“You used to be fisherman,” Jesus said, **“And you fished for fish. You come follow me. I'm gonna make you into the men I called you and always thought you could be. I'm gonna make you fishers of men. People are gonna see me in you.”** You see, that's why as a church, from the very beginning we had a purpose. Our purpose is to glorify God by making disciples who will impact every area of the world for Christ. We are to glorify God. We are to know God and to make him known by making reproducing followers who will go out as salt and light in the world impacting every area, and they do it because they love Jesus more than anyone or anything. That's our purpose. If you're here for a short time or long, that's the purpose you're called to.

It doesn't happen. He has to teach us to be fishers of men. He has to teach us to be disciples, and so we have a process. You know, when I worked in Texas for Tandy, the RadioShack people, I was Assistant Production Manager helping to produce speakers for cars. I didn't know anything about cars much less speakers, but my job was to take what the guys had designed in Engineering and Development and to oversee a process that would actually produce something. Because, you see, if you don't have a process to produce something, all it is is just becomes an idea that stays on paper in R&D.

There are churches and Christians whose lives are filled with R&D concepts who never put them into process and never produce anything. They gotta get into production. We believe disciples are best made when they worship, grow, and serve in the context of Christian community. Over the next few weeks, we're gonna talk a lot more about what it means to be a worshiper living in production, what it means to grow, why we have Discovery Classes and small groups called Growth Groups, and so many other opportunities for you to grow and get stronger in your faith.

By the way, there's no neutral as a Christian. Are you aware of that? You're either moving forward or you're falling back, but there is no neutral. And we're called to serve in the church, in the community, or in the world we're called to serve. If we're not serving we're disobedient. If we're not serving we're not growing. If we're not growing,

we're not growing. They're all tied together. If we're not doing it in the context of a local church, we've abandoned Jesus because he said, "**The church is my body.**" So you see how it all ties together?

Now, a lot of people don't like this. They come to church to feel good, and I hope you feel good about knowing the truth, but I want you know you've come to a place that is serious about this. Over the next few weeks together, if you come, you'll be learning all of this - learning and relearning together. There's no one that needs to relearn it more than me. We're gonna be learning and relearning together what it means to be a disciple. It's a call to follow Jesus. It's a call to be a whole new person. That's the call that's been given to all of us.

Father, thank you for this reminder. As we begin this, I pray, God, that you will use it to fire us up, to put into our minds and hearts the truth that will change us. We will say "Yes" to this call in a whole new way that will set our lives, our minds, our heart, and our feet in a new direction that will make us forever different glorifying you impacting the world. And we'll thank you. In your precious name, Amen.