

4. Call Two - Come and Grow

In our last topic, we introduced “Four Calls and a Commission” and discussed the first of those four calls - Come and See. We saw that Christ invited various men to just spend time with Him, so they could see His life in many different situations. The “Come and See” period lasted for about a year before Christ gave His second call to some of those men.

In Luke 5:8-11, we read, “When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!’ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.’ So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.” This same event is also recorded in both Matthew and Mark. Matthew 4:19 says, “Then He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’” In this verse, we see Christ invited the disciples to “Come and Grow”. Christ promised to make something of these men if they would commit themselves to follow Him.

During the year prior to this second call, Christ invited many people to get to know Him and spend time with Him. They were just asked to spend time with Christ so they would have the opportunity to observe Him. However, with this second call, Christ added a new dimension to their relationship. Christ said He would help them become “fishers of men.” Notice that Christ did not say He was going to enroll them in a leadership training class. Instead, He just invited them to follow Him. At the same time, Christ promised that He would make them “fishers of men” as they followed Him. A Christian must learn to follow before he will be an effective godly leader.

Christ was continually fishing for men and He was going to show these men how to fish for men also. At this point, Christ was ready to begin helping them learn to participate rather than just observe. This second period would last an additional nine months, in addition to the year they had already been observing Christ. One of the key things we notice, about the way Christ helped these men to become fishers of men, was that He promised to show them how to reach people and didn't just tell them how to reach people. Effective evangelism instruction is always on-the-job training.

The first lesson the disciples had to learn about effective evangelism was the importance of prayer. In Mark 1:35, we read, “Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.” Then, in the following verses, we see that Peter and the others followed Christ to where He was praying. Mark 1:36-37 says, “And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him. When they found Him, they said to Him, ‘Everyone is looking for You.’” The disciples saw Christ praying and began to understand the importance of spending much time with the Father in prayer.

In the same way, we help people become equipped to become fishers of men (reach people for Christ) by letting them see and hear us pray for those who do not yet know Christ. Paul also gives us an example of the importance of prayer in evangelism by his prayer request in Ephesians 6:18-20, where we read, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful

to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints - and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

The second lesson the disciples had to learn about effective evangelism was the importance of expanding their vision. Christ said, in Mark 1:38-39, “Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.” Vision is something that is caught, not taught. Usually, people will only gain a vision for the “next towns” when they see the concern of another Christian for the “next towns”.

A third thing the disciples needed to learn, to be effective in evangelism, was what to say. Mark 1:39 says, “And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons.” At the time of Christ, there were two hundred and three towns and villages in Galilee that had a synagogue. As Christ went from town-to-town and village-to-village sharing His message in the synagogues, the disciples heard the same things repeated to many different groups. As a result, as they heard Christ teach and explain various things from the Old Testament, they were also learning what to say.

A fourth thing the disciples needed to learn, to be effective in evangelism, was the importance of focusing on forgiveness. When a paralyzed man was brought to Christ by four friends, Mark 2:5 tells us what happened. “When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven you.’” A godly leader can focus on many things, but unless he knows the importance of focusing on the forgiveness of sins, he will be limited in his effectiveness. The impact on all of the people, when the emphasis was on forgiveness, is seen in Mark 2:12. That verse says, “Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, ‘We never saw anything like this!’”

A fifth thing the disciples needed to learn, to be effective in evangelism, was to accept people regardless of their lifestyles. In Mark 2:15-17, we read, “Now it happened, as He was dining in Levi’s house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, ‘How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?’ When Jesus heard it, He said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’” Christ sat down with tax collectors and sinners. As a result, the disciples learned to sit down with tax collectors and sinners. (That may have been a new experience for the disciples.)

During the first year after Christ met the disciples, they were invited to observe the character of Christ and begin to become more like Him. During this nine-month period, the disciples were being shown how to relate to the Father and how to relate to other people. As you may have noticed, Christ demonstrated a very important progression to the disciples during this period. The disciples learned:

1. The importance of prayer and communion with the Father
2. The importance of vision for people (rather than things)

3. The importance of knowing what to say to people
4. The importance of focusing on repentance and forgiveness
5. The importance of accepting people as they are, regardless of their lifestyle.

One other very important thing that happens as people spend time together is that they learn to relate to one another. This is important if we are going to help others learn to function as a team. Christ has not given any Christian all of the spiritual gifts. Instead, the plan of Christ is for Christians to learn to function together as a body in which every part has an important function. In 1 Corinthians 12, we learn that the body has many parts, but they are to learn to function as one body. In fact, that passage even points out the fact that the weaker parts are very necessary. That means we need to help even the weakest Christian learn to function effectively.

This thought is summarized in Ephesians 4:16. That verse tells us, “From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” We see that the goal of Christ is not just to develop leadership, but rather to develop every single person in the body of Christ, so that each person is able to work effectively. That is why it is so important to help each person learn to follow Christ and become a “fisher of men” as we help each Christian develop. By the way, I trust that you have noticed that Christ was now half-way through His public ministry and He had not even chosen the twelve yet. That will come with the third call.

As we have seen, Christ placed His focus for leadership on some very different things than the focus of worldly leadership. Christ knew that to develop healthy reproducing Christians, He had to develop people with godly character and godly priorities. May the Lord richly bless you as you also help others become healthy reproducing Christians by developing godly character and godly priorities in their lives.