



Pastor Kyle Mercer
The Call to Discipleship

April 27, 2025
Series: Disciple
Matthew 4:12-22

**BIG IDEA – BEING A DISCIPLE IS FOLLOWING JESUS AND
HELPING OTHERS FIND AND FOLLOW JESUS**

All right, Two Cities Church. We are pumped about our men's night. Maybe we're the last people on earth to believe this, but there is a difference between men and women. The culture may be confused, but we're not. It's such a big deal that it's the first thing you notice when you see a person. "Are they a man or are they a woman?" It's the first thing they ask when a lady is pregnant. "Are you having a boy or a girl?"

So, why are we doing a men's night? We're just talking about the men's night. We'll come back later and talk about the women's event. Why are we doing a men's night? Because men need men. Now, men need women. We know that. I've preached on that. That's Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. We know men need women, but men need men. They need brothers. They need fathers. They need sons.

So, here's what I'm asking you to do, men: make it a priority to be here on May 9. Robby Gallaty is coming in from Nashville, Tennessee, to bring a word to the men. And, ladies, here's your job. Don't worry; I'll come back and talk to the men about this later. Your job is to free up the men in your life to be at this event. I want you to say, "Honey, I want you to be gone for as long as possible." Yes, your boyfriend, your fiancé, your son, your husband. Free them up.

Men, listen. It's at 6:30, but at 5:00... Because you need some space. Do not come to this event alone. Do not do that thing where you come five minutes late and sneak in and try to be anonymous, and then you leave afterward and don't meet anyone. Don't do that. I want you to call somebody, because here's what we're going to do. The event starts at 6:30. At 5:00, we're going to be cooking burgers. The elders of this

church are going to cook burgers for every man who comes. In fact, I have a picture. Look at that. They were preparing, and I took this picture.

So listen. This is so biblical. Men are going to get together, and we are going to eat red meat. Yes! Thank you. If you are a man in here, and you are a vegetarian, you need to be at this event more than anybody. BYOV...bring your own veggies. We're not providing them. I want you... I'm serious. Text your brother (I don't care where he lives), and you say, "Come to this event. I'm buying dinner." Because it's free. It's included. You say, "Come to this event." It's going to be a special night.

Now, the other thing is I have to celebrate Easter. Across our campus and the Lexington Campus we had right around 6,000 people here last weekend. We count people because people count, but more than that, you invited, you invested, you shared, and you served. I want you to understand this. We had people who served two or more services, often in the kids' ministry, to make those services possible.

I mean, I met people who were here Thursday night serving, and then they were here Saturday night serving, and then they came and attended Sunday morning. So, I just want to say, "Thank you so much." In Lexington, you had almost 400 people at your launch. Isn't that incredible?

And Pastor Luke, our campus pastor down there, gave me this as a gift. If you're like, "What is that?" this is the coordinates for the Lexington Campus. So, if you can't find it, just put these into Google, and you will find it very easily. Guys, I'm excited. Let's get to work, but let's first pray.

Lord, we have so much to celebrate, but I want to first pray for the men in this room that they would stop making excuses. Some men in here are good at making excuses. They're not good at making plans and making progress. I pray that this event would be something special and significant for them, that we'd draw a line in the sand at this event and it would be a "before and after" moment. Lord, I pray you'd use it as a milestone, a marker, and a mountaintop experience.

Lord, we thank you for Easter and the people who prayed to receive Christ and the lives that are changed and the relationships that are started and the people even today who are here again. They're here or in Lexington, and they came one time, and they're coming back. Lord, I pray that you would help them understand their next step and if our church is the right church for them. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

Well, here we go. We're in a brand-new series, and we are going to ask and answer one question. I'm going to ask you, and I want you to answer one question. We make things really simple around here. You don't even have to take notes on this question. This is it. For the next six weeks, the next month and a half, every week you come

here I'm going to ask you this one question: *Are you really a disciple of Jesus?* That's the question I want you to ask. I want you to ask, "Am I a disciple of Jesus?"

Now listen. We didn't call this series *Christian*. We called this series *Disciple*. Because in Winston-Salem in 2025... Let's just say, in the Southeast, in Texas, in Southern California, the word *Christian* has been so watered down. Right? I guarantee, if you're like me, you have people in your life who think they're Christians, and you know they're not. They're coworkers. They're classmates. They're family members.

You don't know a lot, but one of the things you know for sure... You are absolutely sure they're not a Christian, but they think they are. Do you ever want to just grab them and shake them and scream at them? "You're not a Christian!" I guess not. Maybe that's just me. That wouldn't be the Christian thing to grab them and scream and yell at them and tell them they're not a Christian.

Here's the thing. The word *Christian* is a good word. It's a biblical word, but today it's a watered-down word. How many times do you think the word *Christian* shows up in your whole Bible? Three times. Only three times. It shows up in Acts, chapter 11. In Acts, chapter 11, is the first time it's ever used, and it says it was at Antioch that the believers were first called *Christians*, which means for the first 10 chapters of the early church, the word *Christian* isn't even used.

Then in Acts, chapter 26, when Paul is standing before King Agrippa, King Agrippa looks at Paul and says, "Paul, do you think you can this quickly persuade me to be a Christian?" Then in 1 Peter, Peter is writing to Christians who are suffering, and he goes, "If you suffer as a Christian, don't be ashamed," which means there's a unique type of suffering Christians go through.

But we didn't call this series *Christian*, although *Christian* is a biblical word. It's a historical word. Yes, I want you to think of yourself as a Christian, but I want you to think of yourself even more as a disciple. Guess how many times the word *disciple* is used in the New Testament: 261 times. The mission of the church is to make disciples. This whole initiative we're in, the Multiply Initiative, is all about multiplying disciples, leaders, groups, and churches with an emphasis on multiplying disciples.

Some of you will find this interesting. There's not one command in your Bible to plant churches, but we're putting together a whole fellowship to plant churches, and we want to plant as many churches as possible. Why are we planting churches? Because we believe planting churches is the best way to make disciples, and that's what the Bible says we should be all about.

So, this right here... You're like, "Why do we give 45 to 50 minutes to the teaching ministry right now?" Because what I'm doing here is called *corporate discipleship*.

This is why over the kids' ministry, if you walk in there, it says, "Meet Jesus and make friends," which means be made into a disciple of Jesus. We're always asking, "How do we make more disciples, and how do we make better disciples?"

If we found out that something we were doing wasn't making disciples, we'd get rid of it. If someone was like, "You know what? It's kind of strange, but we've got the stats. We've got the details. Community Groups don't make disciples..." If we found out Community Groups didn't make disciples, we would get rid of our Community Groups, because the goal is not to have Community Groups; the goal is to make disciples.

Okay. Here's what we need to do. We need to define *discipleship*. Think with me. If something is not defined and something is not displayed, you don't know how to do it. So, we are committing today... We are going to define discipleship and display discipleship, because if you can't say it and have never seen it, you can't do it.

Okay. Let me give you the definition of a disciple. If you have your own definition, then you keep it, but I'm going to give you *our* definition, because one of our elders who has been with us forever said to me, "Kyle, we've got a lot of great language in this church, a lot of great phraseologies." He said, "I think our best language in the entire church is our definition of what a disciple is."

So I'm going to give it to you. It's somebody who is following Jesus and helping others find and follow Jesus. Period. I love that because it's active. It's about obedience. What does it mean? Well, Jesus is headed somewhere. Are we following along with him? So, today, we are literally going to unpack what this looks like. Maybe the first application for you in being a better disciple or becoming a disciple for the first time is knowing that definition.

By the way, I fear some of you are so bored with your Christianity... Men especially tend to be like that. Their wife drags them to church. "I don't want to go to Community Group." Here's why: you're not really following Jesus and helping others find and follow Jesus. Listen. If you would follow Jesus... Just commit to this. "My life is going to be about following Jesus and helping others find and follow Jesus." If you do that, your life will be so exciting you won't be able to handle it.

Go to Matthew, chapter 4. We're going to follow Jesus as we watch him command the disciples to follow him. We'll pick up the story in chapter 4, verse 12. Grab your parachute. We're parachuting into the book of Matthew. What we're missing is the birth narrative of Jesus, which we covered at Christmas, and then we're missing chapter 3, which I'll pick up on in a second. It's all about John the Baptist.

But here's what I want you to pick up. We're just going to look at about 10 verses today. Verse 12: **"Now when he [Jesus] heard that John [the Baptist] had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee."** This is going to be the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Here's what I want you to understand: Jesus' public ministry does not begin until John is arrested.

Why are we told this? Here's the first principle for your life: when you have catalytic events happen in your life, it normally catapults you into new ministry. This can be a good event. This can be a bad event. If a big event happens in your life, it usually means a new ministry. You get married? New ministry. You get divorced? New ministry. You graduate high school? New ministry. Somebody dies in your family? New ministry. You start a new career path? New ministry.

So, the first thing we see is that Jesus enters this new ministry, which we'll pick up in a second, but we can't talk about that without talking about John the Baptist. I love John the Baptist. He's not John the Presbyterian. He's not John the Lutheran. He's certainly not John the Episcopalian. He's John the Baptist.

Now, here's why I love John the Baptist. Jesus said John the Baptist was the greatest man who ever lived. Let me tell you something interesting about John the Baptist. John the Baptist is so important he's mentioned at the very beginning of all four gospels. John the Baptist is so important he's the only other person in the New Testament to get a birth narrative. Two people in the New Testament get a birth narrative: Jesus and John the Baptist.

John the Baptist, though, is a really strange guy. This is why 8-year-old boys, when they're first learning to read the Bible... They love King David, Samson, and John the Baptist. Here's one thing we know about John the Baptist for sure: he was single, if you know anything about his story. First of all, he lives in the wilderness, it says. So he camps for a living. How many of you go, "No, thank you"? That would be me. "No, thank you." Right?

Secondly, he has a really strange dress code. He wears camel's hair and a leather belt. And if you know this story, he has a really strange diet. He was organic and gluten-free before it was cool. He lives off of locusts and honey. Listen. If you're trying to get ready for swimsuit season, the John the Baptist diet will help you lose an enormous amount of weight.

He really is single. He's a single kind of guy. He lives out in the wilderness, and the main things he does are preaching and baptizing. So, he's a voice crying out in the wilderness. Oh, this is what else is interesting. He's the only prophet who has one foot in the Old Testament and one foot in the New Testament. He exists in the overlapping of ages, and he preaches repentance and points to Jesus.

He's an intense guy. He speaks out against the religious leaders of his day. He has a baptizing ministry, which really confused the Jewish people, because he said everybody needed to be baptized, and they thought only the Gentiles who were transferring over to the Jewish faith needed to be baptized. He said, "No, everybody needs to be baptized."

Then, his message was he pointed to Christ and preached repentance. For example, we sing songs occasionally about Jesus as the Lamb of God. John the Baptist is the first person in the New Testament to say that. He says, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." John is saying the entire Old Testament... He's like, "Remember that story about the Passover and the lamb and the blood on the doors and all that?" He says, "That was ultimately about Jesus."

So, here's what happens. It says John is arrested. By the way, he'll end up getting his head cut off in jail because he'll confront a political leader of his day about his sinful lifestyle. That's how John's life ends. For now, we're going to put John away, and we're going to see as John is silenced, Jesus begins to speak.

Matthew 4:13: ***"And leaving Nazareth..."*** Which was a super-small town, probably 100 people. We can tell that by the size of the well that was there. ***"...he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali..."*** Now listen. You don't always have to do this, but sometimes you have to move for the sake of ministry.

Jesus leaves Nazareth for Capernaum. Nazareth was a small, rural, religious, Jewish town he lived in his whole life. He leaves Nazareth to go to Capernaum. Capernaum is a bigger city. It has more Gentile influence. It's more progressive for that day, and it's growing.

He basically goes there to have a base of ministry. In fact, if you read the gospel accounts, you'll notice Jesus starts at Capernaum, and then he'll go out, and then he comes back to Capernaum. Basically, in the Gospels, he takes the disciples on short-term mission trips and retreats and keeps coming back to Capernaum.

Watch what happens next. Look at verse 14. ***"...so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled..."*** Jesus moved so an Old Testament prophecy could be fulfilled. I don't have a lot of time to get into this, but here's what I want you to know: the entire Bible is about Jesus. The key to understanding the Scriptures is to realize the entire Old Testament is anticipating and announcing the coming of Jesus.

It says there was this prophecy 700 years ago about Jesus coming. In fact, I'll read you the prophecy. Verse 15: ***"The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles..."*** This was shocking and

surprising to religious Jews of the day. It says Jesus came into the world to reach all people, including the Gentiles.

Here's what I want you to know: God cares about those who don't care about him. I have to imagine in a room like this there are people in here who do not care about God. Maybe you don't care about God because you had goofy, religious, fundamental, overbearing parents. Who knows?

Maybe you don't care about God because it doesn't make sense to you. I don't know. Usually, something terrible happened in your life or to somebody you love, and it's hard to reconcile it all. I just want you to see that what we're told here at the very beginning is God cares about those who don't care about him yet, and God pursues those people. That's the story of Scripture.

So, he moves to this Gentile area, in part (Jewish and Gentile), to reach them. But look here. Now we're actually introduced to what the text says. Verse 16: ***"...the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned."*** Jesus comes to bring light into the darkness.

Now, verse 17 is key. Let's just read the first three words. ***"From that time..."*** Full stop. This is interesting. In the book of Matthew, there are key moments of transition that all start with the phrase "From this time." This is the first one of these. Jesus is now entering full-time public ministry for the first time. Let me say this. Jesus spent 30 years before this in absolute obscurity.

I mean, it's worth thinking about, probably for two weeks, that Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, swung a hammer with his stepdad for 30 years in obscurity. Almost everything you know about Jesus you just know from three years of his life. I tell you that because some of you today are living in obscurity, and you feel like, "Nobody sees me. Nobody knows how I'm praying and how I'm serving and how I'm working on it." Who knows what God might be preparing you for in the future?

Jesus enters full-time ministry, and here's the first thing we're told he does. Verse 17: ***"From that time Jesus began to preach..."*** Now, here's what I think most Christians, even if you've been in the church forever, and I think most non-Christians... Let me ask you this question. What do you think Jesus did every day?

A lot of people think of Jesus, and they think of him walking slowly with his disciples one place to another, and then he sees somebody with a need and heals them. Then he goes over *here*, and he's just hanging out, and he does a miracle. Well, listen. Go check this. Almost all of the miracles and almost all of the healings were to validate the teaching and preaching ministry of Jesus.

Then we think, "You know what he's doing? He's confronting the Pharisees." We think, "You know what Jesus is doing? He's talking to his disciples a lot, and he's having conversations on the boat." Yes, but guess what? Go check *this* out. See how many of the conversations Jesus ends up having with his disciples are questions they had about his sermons. "So, Jesus, you said there are four types of soil. What is the soil, and what is the seed?" Then he explains it to them.

So, here's what Jesus does. He preaches a sermon, and then the Community Group talks about the sermon. We should do that. We *do* do that. That's how our whole church is organized. There's the preaching of the Word, and then you gather to have conversation about it, which is exactly what happened with Jesus.

So, I want you to understand this. This is a big idea. Jesus understands himself primarily as a preacher of God's Word. This is Luke 4. So, this is not Matthew talking about Jesus. Now we're in Luke's gospel, and this is Jesus speaking. ***"...but [Jesus] said to them, 'I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.'"*** God had one Son and made him a preacher.

"And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea." Look at this. Mark 1. Jesus' busiest day is Mark 1. It's his busiest day of ministry from what we can tell. He wakes up early in the morning the next day, and he's praying by himself, and the disciples come to find him and go, "Hey, there's a lot more work to be done here. More people need healed," and all this kind of stuff. Here's how Jesus responds.

"And he said to them, 'Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.' And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons." Then check *this* out. Mark, chapter 6: ***"When [Jesus] went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them..."***

You might think it says, "He had compassion on them; therefore, he healed them" or "...therefore, he prayed for them" or "...therefore he fed them." It doesn't say that. Look. ***"...he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd."*** Well, that sounds like they need some real help. ***"And he began to teach them many things."***

I want you to understand that the most compassionate thing a person can do is teach somebody else the Bible. There's obviously a place for mercy. There's obviously a place for good works and good deeds and acts of kindness, but I just want you to understand that, basically, Jesus viewed his teaching ministry as an act of compassion toward people.

So, you'll see, starting with the life of Jesus Christ and going on into the life of the apostles, preaching is unbelievably important. People who say silly things about preaching have never really heard it. But he does more than preach. I want to show you *what* he preaches. We're still in verse 17.

"From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, ['Will you please ask me into your heart?']" That's not what it says. Look at what it says. ***"From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"*** The content of what Jesus preached was very similar to John the Baptist. They both preached repentance, but Jesus preached repentance and the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is hard to explain, but it's the reign and the rule of God, primarily in the hearts of men and women. When the kingdom comes, it's pushing against other kingdoms...the kingdom of darkness, the kingdom of this world, as it's called. What's interesting is we are told to both *preach* the kingdom and *pray* for the kingdom. In the most famous prayer... ***"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."***

We have a lady in our church who got a pretty aggressive form of cancer, and we gathered a group to pray for her this week. When we were praying for her, one of the other young ladies, who can really pray, started calling down heaven, calling down healing for this young lady in our church who has cancer.

As she was praying, she said, "God, I'm praying for your kingdom to come and your will to be done." She said, "In your kingdom in heaven there is no cancer, and I am asking for that kingdom to come in the body of my sister." Amen. We have to preach the kingdom. This is what life with God looks like under the lordship of Christ. Then we need to pray, "We can't make it manifest, God. You have to make it happen."

So, he preaches the kingdom, but here's where we need to spend the rest of our time: on how he has a preaching ministry and a personal discipling ministry. He has a public teaching ministry and a personal discipling ministry. I'll show you. Let's look here. We're in verse 18. ***"While walking by the Sea of Galilee..."***

The context is the Sea of Galilee, which was the only place these men he's going to call ever lived up to this point, and it was the only profession they'd had. When you hear "Sea of Galilee," by the way, some of you may think of a massive, almost ocean-like thing. The Sea of Galilee is actually quite small. It's smaller than Lake Norman.

In fact, Pastor Dave and I were there with a friend of ours, Paul, and we got this picture. That's the Sea of Galilee behind us, so you can kind of get an idea there. It's beautiful. Hopefully we'll go there someday and you guys will come with me. It's a beautiful area. It's a small-town feel, and they live their whole lives there.

These fishermen are there, and then it says, "**...he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.**" I want to stop and encourage you for a second. Jesus is going to call four different disciples to follow him, and the first four disciples to follow him are two sets of brothers.

Here's what I want to encourage you with: God loves to save families. I mean, yes, God saves people as individuals, and you can't come to Christ for someone else, but God loves to save entire families. Some of you are the first person to believe in your family, but you're not going to be the last person to believe. He does this on multiple occasions. We'll talk about this more next week as we look at the different disciples and who the Twelve are. It's really a powerful picture.

Well, they were fishermen. Here's the key thing. Verse 19: "**And he said to them, 'Follow me...'**" This is going to be the controlling text for the rest of our time. "**And [Jesus] said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.'**" Now, when we read this, sometimes it's easy to go, "Okay. Does anybody really do this anymore? Jesus goes around asking people to follow him. Does anybody really say, 'Follow me' anymore?" I'm like, "Every Instagram account. Every YouTube channel."

Sometimes you're just like, "Wow! This is so relevant." We live in a time, probably more than ever, where people are saying, "Follow me," and we're doing it. That's okay, because people do follow other people, but we need to ultimately follow Christ. Maybe a good exercise would be to go look at who you follow on Twitter. Go look at who you follow on Instagram or whatever else you're on. Just see the self-awareness that might bring.

For me, obviously, I'm going to follow a lot of people in our church who I'm staying connected to. I'm going to follow... I know it's kind of goofy, but I try to be into some of this health stuff, so I'm going to follow people who are... You know, "How cold do you keep your cold plunge? What's your workout routine? What do you eat?" You know, all that kind of stuff. "What do you do with intermittent fasting?" I'm interested in all that.

Obviously, I'm going to follow other pastors. And who do we tend to follow? You tend to follow people who you feel like are ahead of you. Think of the image of following someone. You're following somebody who's ahead of you in an area of life that you value. So, we're all going to follow people, but we need to ultimately follow Jesus.

Now, here's what I want you to understand. This is so key. Sometimes you have to ask, "What is it *not* saying?" or "What is the opposite of this?" Let me say this clearly. Jesus says, "Follow me." Here's what I want you to understand: Jesus does not follow

you. Some people's Christianity is about trying to get Jesus to follow them. Right? Come on. How many of our prayers are really trying to get Jesus to follow us?

Some version of, "Jesus, this is what I would like to do with my life, and I hope you follow" or "Jesus, come over here. I want you to meet this non-Christian boyfriend or girlfriend I have." Jesus is like, "I don't follow you there." "Jesus, come over here. I really want an easy life of safety, consumerism, materialism, and worldliness." Jesus is like, "I'm not going to follow you there."

The first thing Jesus calls us to (this is important) is a person. "Follow me." He doesn't call us to a practice, a program, a philosophy, or even principles. He calls us to a person. Now, here's what's interesting about the phrase "Follow me." They're the first words Jesus speaks to Peter in this passage, and they are some of the very last words Jesus speaks in John, chapter 21, where he says to Peter after he restores him, "Follow me."

Jesus begins his earthly ministry with the words "Follow me," and he begins his heavenly ministry to earth with the words "Follow me." The reason we can follow Jesus, very simply stated, is Jesus Christ is still alive. I didn't focus on this last week, but this is why the confession at Easter is not "He *was* risen." I don't know if you noticed that. It doesn't say, "He *was* risen!" It says, "He *is* risen." It's the present continuous tense and what that means for us.

So, the first thing is he says, "Follow me," but I want you to see the second thing. So, he calls us to a *person*. He says, "Follow me." The second thing he calls us to is a *process*. He says, "***Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.***" If you're going to be a follower of Jesus, you're going to have to follow him, and you're going to have to do it for a while. It's going to be a process.

Let me say it this way: you can't microwave spiritual maturity. There's just no... I wish there was. The only microwave is suffering. That does work, but that's kind of out of your control. Suffering will mature you very quickly. I'll never forget. Early on in our church, a young lady came. She was married to a medical student. She had one leg, and then she had half of a leg. She was missing the bottom half of her leg.

Her friend brought her to church, and I asked, "What's her story?" She said, "She lost her leg in a boating accident when she was 16 years old." I'll never forget this. Her friend looks at me and goes, "So that means she knows Jesus better than you and me." I was like, "You're exactly right." If you go through that type of suffering at 16 years old and are walking with God at 30 years old, you know Jesus better than I do.

There's a process. Let me ask you this: Who are you becoming, and do you like who you're becoming? Do you ever have that conversation with yourself? You're like, "I

don't like who I'm becoming at work. I'm like the goofy, overbearing boss. I'm like the silly, overly competitive guy or gal." Some of you wake up and are like, "I don't like who I am as a mom." "I don't like the husband or the dad I'm becoming."

The truth is we're all in process, and the truth is you will one day be what you are now becoming. Jesus says if you follow him, he will turn you into the godliest version of yourself. So, he says, "Be committed to the person and the process." By the way, that's a great way to think about discipleship.

When I was in college ministry, that's what we would always say. If we were going to disciple someone, we said, "Okay. I'm going to be committed to you and the process of discipling you, but I'm going to ask *you* to be committed to *me* and the process of discipling. If you'll be committed to the person and the process, we'll make it through this. It'll take a lot of time. We'll make it through it."

The final thing is the *purpose*. So, we want to be committed to the person, the process, and the purpose. The purpose is to make you fishers of men. Now, as a communicator, I love that Jesus spoke this way, because I think especially when talking to men about spiritual things, we need to speak it in a language they can understand. Men are practical theologians, and they need to be spoken to directly.

He doesn't use flowery language. He doesn't use religious language. He doesn't use spiritual language. He doesn't use overly theological language. He's like, "Hey, guys. You're fishermen. You understand that profession. I do something kind of like that except I catch people. Would you be interested?"

See, here's the question: Are you a fisher of men? My fear is that some of you are fisher-less fishermen, which sounds like the title of a Dr. Seuss book. Right? Some of you are fisher-less fishermen. Answer this question...*Are you a fisherman if you never catch any fish?*

Now, if I could put my pastor hat on for a second... Yes, if you're trying to fish. If somebody goes to the lake, or whatever, and they're trying to fish, but for some reason they're not catching anything...I don't know, it's a hard area...they could be a fisherman still, but if you never fish, you're not a fisherman. My fear is that there are some of you in here, and you're not doing the very thing that defines the Christian life, which is not just following Jesus but helping others find and follow Jesus.

Now, we need to look at the response of the disciples in verse 20. ***"Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there he saw two other brothers..."*** I told you God loves to save families. ***"...James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he***

called them." Look. This word is repeated. ***"Immediately*** [in a moment] ***they left the boat and their father and followed him.***"

Now, scholars and commentators struggle with this, because it seems so dramatic. I mean, can you imagine? A guy walks by, looks at you, and says, "Follow me," and you drop everything. Part of it is we don't realize that Jesus Christ is not an ordinary person. He's the God-man himself. The call creates the response.

Charles Spurgeon, who was a very famous pastor, said when Jesus said, "Lazarus, come out of the grave..." He basically said, "I'm glad he put the word *Lazarus* in front of it, because if he just said, 'Come out of the grave,' every dead person would have risen." So, there's something about Jesus' truly felt, authoritative presence that leads to a response of obedience.

Here's what I want to focus on. They do three things that I think every Christian must do to become a Christian, to begin the Christian life, but also, to become a better disciple, you need to continually do these. They're right in the text. I'll show you.

The first one is they drop their nets. So, what are you holding on to that you need to let go of? It's hard to follow Jesus carrying a bunch of stuff. Do you get that feeling? You're like, "I can't keep up with him." Because you're holding on to too many different things. Some of you have bad beliefs, and you have wrong ideas about yourself, about God, about sin, and about the world.

Who knows? You learned it from your parents or your professors, and you're 30 years old now, and your mind is all messed up. You need to start reading the Scriptures. You need a renewal of your mind, and you need to drop these bad beliefs. Some of you are holding on to some sin, and you need to drop it and let it go and begin to follow Christ at a whole new level.

There are different things in our lives that we need to drop and let go of. Maybe even more importantly, for some of you, there are things you don't just need to drop; there are things you need to leave. Notice it says the sons of Zebedee leave their father and his boat.

Now, there's debate among scholars. There are two camps. Some people go, "Look. The fishermen were just blue-collar, lower middle-class guys. God can use anyone." I think that's true, and that may be the case for some of the fishermen he calls. Most likely, though... You look at the sons of Zebedee, and you go, "They have their own boat, and they have their own business." So they're pretty far ahead. It would be like two young men leaving their father's successful business to go into ministry. So they leave.

Now, let me tell you this. Some of you need to leave toxic relationships. Some of you today, this service, need to have an ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend. I can tell you how to do it. You take out your phone right now and text this: "I'm at church. You're not. We're done." *Send*. I'm telling you.

Guys, listen. Some of you have toxic relationships with friendships. Women are the worst at this. You stay in all of these relationships because you feel like you have to be loyal to this person. You don't. Christian, you get to pick your friends. You don't have to spend a bunch of time with people who bring you down and wear you out.

Some of you have two or three relationships in your life that you need to get rid of so you can more faithfully follow Jesus Christ. You are the average of the five closest relationships in your life. Every parent knows this. Everything becomes so clear when you're a parent. My kids are 13, 11, and almost 9. Outside of their salvation and their health, there is nothing I care about more than them finding great friendships.

By the way, sometimes you have to leave good relationships. You have to leave good relationships because God is calling you to say a gospel goodbye. We have a lady in our church, and her daughter is a missionary. This is an older lady in our church. Right around Thanksgiving and Christmastime, she pulled me aside at those doors right over *there* and said, "I really miss my daughter." It was sad. It's like, "Yeah, she's not around, not because she doesn't love you, not because it wasn't a great relationship, but because she had to move for the sake of mission."

Some of you may have to leave careers. Hopefully, you're just going to get used to this. Over the next 5 to 10 years, we're going to be like, "All right. Who's leaving to go to *this* place in the world to plant a church? Who's leaving to go to *this* place in America to plant a church? Who's leaving to go to *this* place in the Triad to plant a campus?" We're just going to leave.

There's a third thing that's really interesting. Sometimes you have to drop things, and sometimes you have to leave things, but there's an interesting one. Sometimes you have to repurpose things. Now, I'm leaning on tradition. I don't have a Bible verse for this, but tradition tells us the boat Jesus went around on was Peter's boat. Do you ever think about that? You're like, "How does a poor itinerant preacher always have a boat?" You're like, "I need a friend who has a boat."

How does Jesus have a boat? How is he able to have the boat all the time, and how is he able to sleep on the boat? At one point, it gets really crowded and he preaches from the boat, and they use the boat to travel all over the place. Most people think this was Peter's boat and Peter repurposed the boat for the purposes of Jesus.

What in your life do you just need to go, "I need to..." You can do it right now in your mind and heart. "My career is repurposed. I'm repurposing my home. I'm putting the word *Christian* in front of my family. I'm taking all of my hobbies and repurposing them for Christ."

I was somewhere recently... I'll try to keep this story coded, because I don't want to reveal the people in it. I was at this place recently, and it's a place where you'd have a hobby. Let's just say that. I see a church member there, and he comes over to me. He says, "Hey, Pastor Kyle," and we talk for a little bit. Then another guy I don't know comes over to me and says, "Hey, Pastor Kyle. I went to your church one time."

I go to *this* guy, who's at his hobby place, and I say, "Dude, who is *this* guy?" He says, "He's my one." If you're not in our church and you don't know that, that's "He's the person who's far from God and close to me." Then he said to me, "Kyle, I have 19 'ones' here." I don't know if I was amazed at how many "ones" he had or that he knew he had exactly 19. Here was a guy redeeming his hobbies, repurposing his hobbies for Christ and his kingdom.

What do you need to repurpose? What do you need to drop? What do you need to leave? Really, here's the question we're going to end with. If we said that what it means to be a disciple is to follow Jesus and help others find and follow Jesus, here's what this means. This means you're always asking this question: "What is my first step, and what is my next step?"

By the way, I feel so good about this language because it's so biblical. What is the first thing we're told about Adam and Eve? They walked with God in the garden. The idea of walking with God is taking your first step and taking your next step. Here's why I love this. Some of you are in a really dark place. You're suffering a lot or you're deep in some kind of sin or whatever you're dealing with.

Here's what I want to encourage you with: there is no place you could be where you couldn't take your first step. I mean, that has to be so encouraging. Right? You're in some deep addiction. Oh man, I'm sorry. Just think about it. I know there's a first step for you. What is it? Do you need to invite one person into your life so they could know about this and they could help you think what your next step would be? Maybe your first step is to invite somebody in.

By the way, don't we all...? Parents, we know this. Parents of little kids know this. We all get excited when our kids take their first steps. Right? It's like little Timmy and Tommy and Jimmy. They're standing at the couch, and they're wobbling, and they go *Boop! Boop!* Then they fall back, and we're like, "He took his first step!"

I want you to know that God is as excited as a parent when you take your first step. He looks at you, and he's like, "You've never, ever read the Bible until today. Congratulations. I'm so excited." He looks at you and goes, "You prayed out loud. You prayed out loud with other people in the room. You've never done that. Great job." "You gave something! You never give anything. You gave something!" God rejoices in your first step.

But here's the other thing. You have to take your next step. Here's what I love about the next step. If the first step works in the worst situation, the next step works in the best situation. I can see some of you out here. You might be like, "Kyle, I've been a Christian longer than you've been alive. Not only do I have kids; I have grandkids. I've been in the church for a long time. I've read the Bible a ton of times, and I've led all of these different things."

I would just look at that person and say, "Take your next step." You can find out your next step by simply doing this: sitting on the edge of your bed and saying, "God, what is my next step?" Then something you don't want to do will appear in your mind, and that will be your next step. Listen. For some of you, I actually think many of you, your next step is to help somebody with their first step.

What would this church look like if everybody was walking around here, especially those of us who have been believers for a while, going, "What if my next step is to help somebody take their first step?" Then they look around and go, "Oh my goodness. There's a new mom. I bet she's going to struggle to know how to be a mom and a wife and a Christian. I bet I could help her. I've done that. I bet I can help her take her first step."

"Look at that guy over there. Man, that guy over there is still single and needs to grow up. I bet I could help him take his next step." "Look at that lady over there. She's struggling with some sin and temptation, and she doesn't understand spiritual warfare. I think my next step is to help her take her first step."

By the way, as I'm talking today... You know this, right? I'm just going to say it. I've kept it till now, but I'm just going to say it. For some of you, your next step or your first step is to get baptized. Here's what happened. I'm talking today, and you're going, "I need to get baptized, but I didn't sign up, and I didn't talk to anybody. What am I going to do?" We thought about that.

What I want you to do is if you need to get baptized... And some of you do. You just need to go... You're done making excuses. Nobody and nothing is holding you back. I want you to find a staff person or a pastor, and I want you to tell them that you need to get baptized. They're going to meet with you, and you're going to come back at the

5:00 service, and we're going to baptize some more people. Amen? And we're going to rejoice with you, because that is your next step.

Now, last thing. I did tell you that Jesus does not follow you, and you know that, but I forgot to say this. Jesus does not follow you, but he *will* pursue you. If you think about this, all of the things we're told to do to become a disciple are basically things Jesus did. It's like, "Okay. What am I going to do? Well, I'm going to have to drop everything in heaven, and I'm going to have to leave my Father and my home." Jesus Christ is the first fisher of men who comes after us, and he says to us, "Follow me."

Now, here's what's interesting. They didn't know what was going to happen, and *you* don't know what's going to happen. If you commit today to saying, "I'm going to follow Jesus, and I'm going to help others find and follow Jesus," you have no idea what's going to happen. It's going to be very exciting. Your life is no longer going to be boring. You're going to have the adventure and the mission of your life.

So, I want to give us a moment at the end just to create a space for you to respond. If you'll bow your heads and close your eyes, this is just to create a moment for you to think about what we talked about. I want to ask you...*Are you a disciple?* I want you to be honest.

Maybe today you need to become a disciple right now, and you need to get baptized tonight. You need to give Jesus your sin, and you need to give Jesus yourself. You can do that right now. You can transfer trust to Jesus. Some of you need to become a disciple, and you need to get baptized tonight.

Others of you right now just need to go, "Okay. What does it look like for me to drop something?" If you're struggling to drop it, maybe (I do this sometimes) you just put your palms up to Jesus and say, "Jesus, I'm struggling to drop it. I'm going to need you to take it." Others of you need to leave. It's going to be hard to leave. You can't leave until you cleave, so you're going to have to find some new relationships. Hopefully this church community can be that for you.

Others of you, as I talked about repurposing, you literally thought, "I have a boat I could repurpose" or "I have a house I could repurpose" or "I need to go into my career on Monday with a whole new mindset of 'This career is for Christ'" or "I have a hobby I could repurpose for Christ and his kingdom."

Lord, would you do it? Would you take our church, and would it be a place where discipleship is defined and displayed? Lord, we know the reason to be a disciple is you are worthy of it. You are worthy of all of our heart, all of our time. You are worthy to be followed. You are worthy to be worshiped, and we're going to do that together now. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.