



Discussion Guide

Invited to Serve—Mark 1.16-20

Getting Started: 10 minutes

- Respond to the following statement. “I am wanted.”

Setting the Stage: *Jesus wants you. Jesus wants me. Great! That makes me feel wonderful. Useful. Desirable. How wonderful it is to be wanted, in demand. But when the warm fuzzies of being wanted fade, the cynical side whispers, “wants you for what?” Why does Jesus want me? Does he want me for what I can do, for what I can accomplish, for some benefit I bring to him? If so, then Jesus doesn’t really want me, he just wants to use me. Or is his desire much purer, simpler? Could it be, really be, that Jesus just wants me?*

Diving Into the Text: 60 minutes (The following questions are intended to provide your group with a simple road map through the text. Feel free to use these questions in ways that best fit your group and the dynamics of your own meeting.)

- Using the group notes, describe the background, context, and content of Mark 1.16-20.
- Read Mark 1.16-20 slowly, pausing with the major phrases. Ask the members of the group to imagine they are experiencing the scene as a bystander. Allow them to sit for a few moments to soak the scene in.
- Read Mark 1.16-20 once more, pausing with the major phrases. Ask the members of the group to imagine they are experiencing the scene as a Simon. Allow them to sit for a few moments to soak the scene in.
- Read Mark 1.16-20 once more, pausing with the major phrases. Ask the members of the group to imagine they are experiencing the scene as Jesus. Allow them to sit for a few moments to soak the scene in.
- To what is Jesus inviting these men? (Seek to discover as many answers from the text as possible.)
- Why do you think these men responded as they did? Can you elaborate?
- Do you feel that if Jesus passed by your work today, he would extend a similar invitation to you? Can you explain?
- Jesus invited these men to be with him. In relationship with him lay the promise of transformation and opportunity to share in Jesus’ mission and ministry. How might this promise of transformation which in turn opens the door to mission and ministry encourage one to serve?
- Read Mark 1.16-20 once more, pausing with the major phrases. Ask the members of the group to imagine they are experiencing the scene as Jesus is speaking to them.
- In what ways did you experience Jesus speaking to you? What is he saying and to what is he calling you?
- What is your response? In what ways might we encourage you to respond to Jesus’ call?

Wrapping Up: 20 minutes

Group Notes

Invited by Others: John 1.35-42

Context and Background

Mark: The Gospel of Mark is the second Gospel in our New Testament. It was perhaps the first Gospel to be written, and as such, is the shortest, and most straightforward of the Gospels. The Gospel of Mark stresses the actions of Jesus. It is likely that this Gospel was written as the first eyewitnesses of Jesus' life were beginning to die and it became necessary to record what Jesus had said and done, thus the emphasis on Jesus' actions. The Mark that wrote this Gospel is probably the Mark who was the mission companion of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 11.27-30, 12.25, 13.5, 13). Church tradition notes that Mark wrote what he heard from Peter but not in order. The tradition further states that Mark wrote in Rome. This tradition makes sense as we see that Mark's Gospel differs in order from John's Gospel. The difference seems to be that of one writing as an eyewitness versus one writing down what he heard from an eyewitness. Further, Mark's Gospel seems to be intended for Gentile readers. It explains Jewish customs and uses a high number of Latinisms.

Apprentices / Disciples: In the ancient world, disciples attached themselves to teachers for the purpose of learning from them and learning to be like them. In many ways, the ancient discipleship model resembled our modern day apprenticeship model, with a student following a teacher and learning both by watching and doing. In the Jewish context, rabbis accepted students and trained them in the tradition of the ancient discipleship model. A disciple attached himself to a rabbi by first following and listening to him. During this time the rabbi would test the student to verify his interest and potential for learning. The rabbi was also looking for the person that they felt could become like them. Once a rabbi found such a person in their crowd of followers, he would extend an invitation to become an official disciple. Most rabbis accepted young men who were in their teens. In Jesus' ministry, discipleship was central to how he handed off his mission and ministry. Like other rabbis, he invited people to be his disciples from the larger crowd of those who listened to him. Unlike other rabbis, he chose men who appeared to have little potential of ever being like him. Further, Jesus did not choose young men but seems to have chosen men who are in the middle to later stages of life and are already established in other fields and callings. That Jesus called such men implies the great transforming power of apprenticing with him. One need not have potential nor be young to follow and be transformed by Jesus. That is to say, following Jesus is less about the ability of the disciple and more about the availability of the disciple and the power of Jesus expressed in that availability.

The Text

Jesus' Invitation (Mark 1.16-20): In this text, Jesus extends an invitation to his first disciples. In one sense, the scene is somewhat anticlimactic, coming on the heels of Jesus' announcement of the arrival of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1.14-15). One should expect nothing short of apocalyptic fireworks. What we find is Jesus walking on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. That we discover Jesus walking by the sea and engaging ordinary men serves to redefine the nature and purpose of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom's substance and purpose involves the ordinary and daily mundane. It does not deliver from the mundane but profoundly impacts what one might label as the basic stuff of life. Jesus first encounters Simon and Andrew, fishermen casting nets into the lake. This is not Jesus' first encounter with these two men. Andrew and Simon have already spent time with Jesus and expressed a desire to follow him as they believe him to be the Messiah (John 1.35-42). It is possible that Simon and Andrew have also experienced Jesus' power (Luke 5.1-11). These two men would have already been strongly drawn to Jesus. They would have greatly desired to be his apprentices. However, the likelihood of fishermen being invited to learn from a rabbi, much less the Messiah, as an apprentice was low. Fishermen were of a class of people considered to be laborers. Laborers were considered to have little potential save for possibly succeeding in their chosen profession. As Jesus passes by he invites Simon and Andrew to follow as his apprentices. The invitation is primarily to come and be with Jesus. Jesus invites these men to orient their lives around him. This does not seem to involve a complete leaving of their profession (Mark 4.35-41; 8.14; John 21.1-14). It is, however, a call for radical reorientation of their lives in such a way that Jesus becomes the focus. Jesus invites these men to become part of his life and for him to become part of their lives. In so doing, Jesus promises to transform them so that they are co-laborers in his Kingdom ministry. That Jesus invites fishermen to be with him and promises to transform them is surprising. Obviously, Jesus saw something in these men that other rabbis and the general population did not. Simon and Andrew respond to Jesus' invitation by physically following him, a tangible symbol that they are ready to make him the focus of their lives. Likewise, Jesus passes by James and John, fellow fishermen. As he sees them, Simon and Andrew are in tow, following behind along the seashore. He extends the invitation to these brothers that he gave to Simon and Andrew. These two brothers also have experienced Jesus' power (Luke 5.1-11) and probably know Simon and Andrew. They too choose to follow Jesus as his apprentices, making him the focus of their lives with the hope that he will transform them and make them a part of his Kingdom ministry.

Application: Jesus invites people to become his apprentices/disciples. He longs for people to be with him so that they might learn from him. He extends this invitation to all people, seeing beyond who they are or how they have been labeled by society. In being with Jesus, people find they are transformed, changed in such a way that they can join him in his Kingdom work.