

BEING A DISCIPLE

Welcome to the first KidzLife of the year! This is going to be great. This year is going to be, I think, one of the most exciting years of your entire life.

Hold up a letter. I stopped and checked my mailbox as I was pulling out of my driveway to come here tonight. There's no return address; I wonder who it's from. When I was a kid, I always loved to get mail. How many of you guys get actual mail, in the mailbox? Maybe on your birthday? Seems like I only get bills in my mailbox these days. Do you mind if I take a peek? (Quickly open and skim over the letter, looking very pleased and flattered. Apologize for the distraction, and set it aside.)

Jesus Calls The Disciples

Okay, the place we're starting tonight is in the book of Matthew. If you have your Bible, open it to the book of Matthew, chapter 4. We will get to know this part of Matthew so well, we're going to know it better than you know your sister, or your brother, or your room. We will get to know it all the way down deep in our hearts.

Now, I want you guys to listen to this. This is verse 18:

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.

Are there any brothers here? So Jesus is walking by the Sea of Galilee, and He saw Peter, and He saw Andrew, and they were throwing a big net into the water. Why? To catch fish.

And verse 19 says: *"Come, follow Me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."*

That's kind of a weird thing to say, isn't it? We're used to catching fish, but what would happen if one day you pulled up your nets and there were a bunch of people in there? And then verse 20 says:

"At once they left their nets and followed Him. Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them. And immediately they left the boat and their father and followed Him."

Now here is the big question. Let's say you were sitting in class one day, doing your everyday stuff, and someone you knew just a little walked up to you and said, "Hey, follow me." Would you go? Or what if you were right in the middle of football practice, running wide receiver drills, and someone you knew just a little bit walked up to you and said, "Follow me." Would you do it? What kind of person would it take for you to drop everything and go? Hmm.

The Letter

Oh Wait! That reminds me of my letter. Listen to this!

"Dear _____ [Teader's name],

I just wanted to write you this note to say I think you're very cool. I've thought this for a long time, and I would actually love for you to come spend some time with me. In fact, I would really love to teach you how to do the things I do, and maybe you could be like me one day. I think we'd definitely laugh a lot, we'd have some adventures, and I'd really like to be your best friend. I think you'd also have a lot of fun hanging out with my friends. If you're interested, come over as soon as you can.

Wow. I'm not going to mention who this is from. But it is quite an invitation isn't it?





Now, what if this letter was written to you? Who would you want it to be from? Think about it. This person wants you to come hang out with them and teach you how to do things like them. Who would it be? Who would you most like to hang out with and learn from? Would it be Gabby Douglas, the Olympic gold metal winning gymnast? What about Michael Phelps? Who here is on swim team? Would you like to know exactly how to practice in order to win 28 Olympic metals? What if it was your favorite actress? Would you like to hang out on a Hollywood set? Or your favorite singer? Who would like to hang out with him or her for a while? Who here likes baseball? (Call on a child.) Who is your favorite player? Imagine, you start reading, and the letter says, "I'd like you to come spend time with me and the rest of my team, and I want to teach you how to be an amazing baseball player. Sincerely, (fill in name)." How long would it take you to go over there? I'd go right away!

Following Jesus



Let's go back to our story from the Bible. Those fishermen are fishing. It's their job – they can't just leave their job, can they? But they drop everything to go follow this guy. Who is this guy, that they're willing to leave everything to follow him? He's got to be better than Michael Phelps. He's got to be better than _____. He's got to be better than anybody you can imagine, because they're about to leave their full-time jobs to follow this guy. Who is this guy?

I want to tell you something. As you grow up, this thing happens that's sort of sad. When you're a kid, you think famous people are so great, but as you get older you realize that they're just normal people. In a few years you'll say, "Boy, LeBron James sure is a great ball player, but you know, off the court he's just a normal guy. He's not perfect; he has his own problems."



But here's the thing about Jesus. When Jesus says, "Hey, come follow Me. I want you to spend time with Me and I want to teach you how to be like Me and how to live life," and you start following Him, that thing doesn't happen where you say, "Oh, He's not as good as I thought." You start following Jesus for a little while and you say, "Wow. This guy is amazing." And you follow Him a little more and you say, "This guy is really incredible." And you follow Him a little bit longer and you say, "Gee whiz, I had no idea this guy was so amazing." I can tell you, I've been walking with Jesus since _____, and I can tell you that right now is the best time following Him so far. It hasn't gotten boring or old or stale. It's gotten better, and better, and better. Why is that? Who is this guy? Why is it that you could follow Him your whole life and still have so much more to learn?

For Older Kids: You guys remember Moses, right? Let me tell you something about Moses. Moses saw God do some of the most amazing things ever. Who knows some of those things? What happened to the Red Sea? What happened when the people didn't have water in the desert? What happened when Pharaoh didn't let the people go? Moses saw God do some of the most amazing things ever, and here's what Moses said at the very end of his life. He'd walked with God all these years, and he said, "God, you've only just begun to show me your wonders. I've seen all this stuff, but it's like a tiny drop in the infinite sea of your majesty and glory. You've delivered the people of Israel out of Egypt, and I've only seen a tiny bit of who you are." (paraphrase, Deuteronomy 3:23-25)

Jesus was God walking on the earth, and he said, "Come, follow Me." You can spend all of your life walking with Him and see unbelievably amazing things, and it's only a drop of who He is.

So what did He say to these fishermen? In the original language, Greek, Jesus walked up to these guys and said, "Come follow Me. I've got space for you, right here (indict a space right next to you). I want you right here. I've got a space for you right here next to Me and I want you to follow Me." That's pretty cool, because when I was little, I walked into the lunch room on the first day of school, and when I saw that whole lunch room, I thought, "I don't know if anybody has any space for me." Do you know that feeling?

Here's what Jesus says: "Come follow Me. I've got a space right here for you." That's quite amazing, because Jesus was the infinite God walking around, saying, "You know, I'm the *Creator of the universe*, and I would actually like to be your best friend. I have space for you right here with Me." Pretty cool.

But then He said, "*I'm going to make you fishers of men.*" He didn't just want to hang out with these guys and talk with them. He actually wanted to teach them something: how to be fishers of men. What does that even mean? What does Jesus want to teach these guys?

The Kingdom Life

We're going to fast-forward the story a little bit. These guys ended up following Jesus for a few years. Does anyone know how long? They walked with Him for three years before He had to leave. What we find is that these guys ended up doing some of the most ridiculous things imaginable!



One time, Peter walked up to a guy who was completely crippled and couldn't walk. If there were wheelchairs back then he would have been in a wheelchair, and Peter walked up to Him and said, "*In the name of Jesus, stand up and walk.*" And God's power came down and touched this person, and he got up and walked! Have you guys ever seen that? That's wild. Who else did things like that? Jesus did. Jesus actually taught Peter how.

So Peter went off and travelled, and a whole part of the map started following Jesus. And the other guy, Andrew, he went up to the region of Russia, and the whole region of Russia started to follow Jesus. James became the pastor of the biggest church in Jerusalem, which was the most important city in the world at that time for this stuff. John saw miracles all the time, and he actually wrote several books of the Bible. God gave John this gift of being able to see some of the most spectacular pictures of Heaven that anybody has ever seen, and he wrote about them in the book of Revelation.



These guys had these totally wild, out-there, crazy, adventurous—sometimes dangerous—lives. Did these guys know what was ahead when Jesus said, "Come follow Me?" Did they know where it would end up? No, they didn't. So why did they decide to leave everything that was familiar to them to follow Jesus? That's the question. They didn't know where it was going to end up, so why did they get out of their boats and follow this guy? Why is He worth following?



This question is not just for them. Let's say tonight, and over the course of this year, Jesus is asking you to follow Him. If Jesus walked in here and said, "Hey guys, I've actually got space for you right here and I'd like you to follow Me," what would it take for you to follow Him?

This is the massive question that we have to answer throughout the rest of the year. We're starting right from the beginning with this big question. Will you follow Jesus? Why would you follow Him? And if you begin to follow Him, where will it take you? These are huge questions. These are the things I want you guys to think about in your small groups. Who is this guy Jesus that you hear your parents talking about or you hear your KidzLife leaders talking about? Who is He? Is He worth following? Is He still powerful? Can He speak into your life?

Before I dismiss you guys, I want to tell you that I absolutely follow Jesus. I feel like He said, "I want to lead you, I've got a spot for you. Will you come?" And in my heart I said, "Yes. I'm totally in." And here's why: First of all, because I believe He is the King over heaven and earth. And that He is powerful and can do whatever He needs to do. It's also because He's good. He has wisdom to be able to make the very best decisions at all times. I also follow Him because He understands, and has the advice that I need in every situation. So I follow Him because I believe that if I do, this will be the best life I could ever live.