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## SESSION SEVEN

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# Jesus Called the First Disciples

### SESSION SUMMARY

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In today's session, Jesus' called people to repentance. Jesus extended this call to unlikely and unexpected people. Instead of ignoring the call, the first disciples abandoned their old ways of life and received Christ's invitation to follow Him. Now, as believers in Christ, we have the privilege of answering God's call to discipleship and extending the same call to others who need to repent and believe.

### SCRIPTURE

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Matthew 4:17-22; 9:9-13

# THE POINT

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**Discipleship means faithfully following Jesus as Savior and Lord.**

## INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

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### Option 1

Imagine that you are sitting at your desk, in your room, taking a walk outside, or playing volleyball with your friends at the beach. Now, someone walks by and says, “Come follow me.” Maybe you’ve seen this person do and heard him say some amazing things, or maybe you have no idea who he is. What would you do? Would you drop everything to follow this person? You would probably want more information, right?

When Jesus called His disciples, they were engaged in everyday activities—Matthew was collecting taxes; Peter, Andrew, James, and John were fishing. Maybe one of the most surprising things about this call isn’t the way that Jesus asked these men to be His disciples, rather it is the way the men responded to His call. They immediately stopped what they were doing and did exactly what Jesus said—they followed Him.

- **If you were in the same situation as Andrew, Peter, James, John, or Matthew, how would you respond?**
- **Why do you think people have a tendency to want more information before they follow Jesus instead of immediately responding to His call?**

### Option 2

In the history of schools, churches, governments, and humanity in general, people groupings have always existed. People have been divided by social class, beliefs, sport and club participation, level of intelligence and much more. Labels and people just seem to go together.

- **What are some common groups you see in your church, school, or community? Describe the people who seem to disregard these social groupings.**

Jesus’ society was divided much like our own, particularly between the Gentiles and the Jews, the religious elite and those they deemed unworthy. However, Jesus came to rescue all people, regardless of what “group” they were a part of. Viewed through the eyes of the religious elite, those Jesus chose as His first disciples were surprising choices. These men weren’t educated like them, and some of them were even tax collectors. Jesus was often accused of hanging out with the “wrong” people. But Jesus saw all people as those who desperately needed healing from their sins. As Jesus went to all people, we are also called to go to all people—regardless of what “group” they’re in.

- **Knowing how Jesus treated the outcasts and those society considered unimportant, how will you treat people around you who are mistreated and forgotten?**
- **Think of a few people you know who are “on the outside.” Pray that God would give you the opportunity to share His love with them this week.**

# HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

## THE POINT

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**Discipleship means faithfully following Jesus as Savior and Lord.**

## CHARACTERS

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- **Jesus** - the eternal Son of God; second person of the Trinity
- **The Disciples** - the group of individuals Jesus invited to follow Him and be a part of ushering in the kingdom of God

## PLOT

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As we continue our journey, we see Jesus call His first disciples—a call to not only follow Jesus, but also a call to repentance. These first disciples abandoned their old way of life and received Christ's invitation to follow Him.

## TIMELINE

### THE CALLING OF THE DISCIPLES

*Jesus invites ordinary people to follow Him.*

### BORN AGAIN

*Nicodemus encounters Jesus and learns about the new birth.*

### THE ECLIPSE OF JOHN'S MINISTRY

*John the Baptist points others to Jesus.*

## JESUS CALLS FOR REPENTANCE

The gospel storyline moves us from the scene of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness to the launch of His earthly ministry.

**17 From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 4:17)**

When Jesus began His earthly ministry, He called for repentance as the prerequisite for discipleship. To *repent* means *to change one's mind, to turn around in a way that leads to a change of life*. Jesus did not merely make a suggestion, but issued a command. The person who hears the command should make a conscious decision, and then live accordingly. Repenting means leaving your former way of life to follow Jesus and is demonstrated through faithfully following Him.

But does God call people to repent? And what are we supposed to repent of? Jesus gave a reason the people needed to repent. The announcement that the kingdom of heaven was near laid the foundation for repentance. Jesus expressed the truth that God's kingdom—His rule and reign—would come to earth through Jesus and His work. God kept His promise to bring salvation to sinful humanity and restoration to a broken, fallen world. He kept His promise to send the Messiah to make everything right. Because God acted, Jesus said the people needed to repent—to get on board with what God was doing.

As far as what we are to repent from, look back to the beginning of the Bible where Adam and Eve fell into sin. From Adam, we inherited a sinful nature (Ps. 51:5) and have become slaves to sin (John 8:34). When we repent, we admit our need for God's power to save us and our desire to be involved in His kingdom agenda, not our own.

The gospel message proclaims Jesus' perfect life, His death in our place, and His resurrection, and it tells us that Jesus is the only qualified Savior for sinners. We put our faith in Him, and we renounce our sin and self-righteous attempts at earning salvation. We turn away from our selfishness and sin in order to follow Jesus, the One who brings God's kingdom to earth.

- **Out of all the things Matthew could focus on, why do you think he summed up Jesus' preaching ministry with the call to repent? What does Matthew's summary say about the significance of repentance for the Christian life? (p. 54, PSG)**

## JESUS CALLS UNLIKELY PEOPLE TO FOLLOW HIM

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Jesus demonstrated that the prerequisite for discipleship is repentance. Jesus also called people from different walks of life to repent, to turn from their own agendas and join the mission of His kingdom. In this passage, Jesus called His first disciples. These first followers were fishermen, probably not the kind of occupation or position in society you'd expect a Messiah to choose when bringing together men who would change the world. Take a look:

**18 While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. 19 And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him. 21 And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. 22 Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. (Matt. 4:18-22)**

Jesus didn't choose celebrities with money and influence. He didn't choose politicians with connections or CEO's of Fortune 500 companies with excellent leadership and managerial traits. Instead, He chose two sets of brothers who were both fishermen. The first set (Peter and Andrew) were everyday, blue-collar workers. The second set (James and John) worked for their father.

In His call, Jesus used a play on words when He took their occupation (fishermen) and turned it around, saying He would make them fishers of people. What's amazing is that both sets of brothers immediately followed Jesus when He called them. They didn't have all the details, they didn't have a destination in mind, but still they obeyed Jesus' call to follow. Like Abraham who left his country to go to a place promised by God, and like Samuel who was eager to hear the instruction of God, the disciples followed in the footsteps of their faithful ancestors and heeded God's call.

## JESUS CALLS UNPOPULAR PEOPLE TO FOLLOW HIM

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Jesus didn't only call fishermen to follow Him; He also called people with despised occupations. Matthew, for example, was a tax-collector.

Look at how one commentator explains the role of a tax-collector and how Matthew would have been viewed in his day: "These collectors were hated and despised by the Jews, both because they served the Roman oppressors and thus lacked all patriotism, and because of their greedy exactions, for they usually demanded all they could get in order to enrich themselves. Naturally, only men of lower types of character took positions of this kind."<sup>1</sup>

Jewish tax-collectors had a terrible reputation. They were seen as traitors. And yet, Jesus extended His call of discipleship to someone who had this occupation, even when He knew there would be criticism from others.

**<sup>9</sup> As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. <sup>10</sup> And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. <sup>11</sup> And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" <sup>12</sup> But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. <sup>13</sup> Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." (Matt. 9:9-13)**

After Matthew obeyed Jesus and followed Him, Matthew quickly saw his worlds collide. His old world of relationships with tax-collectors and sinners now mixed with his new world of Jesus and the other disciples. Put those two worlds together and, not surprisingly, the tension led to a confrontation. The Pharisees saw who was at the party and they questioned Jesus' faithfulness because of the company He was keeping.

Jesus heard their questions, and He answered them by saying the sick need a doctor. He came for the sinners. It was Jesus' heart to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). Jesus is the great physician seeking to heal those who are spiritually sick, infected by the disease of sin (Ps. 103:3).

### TIMELINE

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#### **THE WOMAN AT THE WELL**

*Jesus reaches out to the outcasts of society.*

#### **HOMETOWN OPPOSITION**

*Jesus makes plain His identity and is rejected in His hometown.*

#### **ZACCHAEUS AND THE SYCAMORE**

*Jesus has come to seek and save the lost.*

## 99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

### Discipleship (p. 55, PSG)

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*Discipleship is a process that takes place both formally and informally to effect spiritual maturity as people follow Jesus. Informal discipleship, as passages like Deuteronomy 6:4-9 suggest, happens everywhere, in every arena of life. Growing in our faith and deepening our walk with Christ is something that requires our whole life, not just the mind. Formal discipleship refers to periods of instruction. We make disciples through our words and actions, providing verbal instruction from God's Word and non-verbal examples through our lives (Acts 20:17-24).*

## CHRIST CONNECTION

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When people respond to the call to repentance, they place their faith in what Jesus accomplished perfectly on behalf of sinners. God commands and compels His children to share the good news of the gospel with people everywhere, from all walks of life. God's compassion on sinners is witnessed when we, the body of Christ, testify about His plan of redemption found in Jesus. We must fight any tendency to profile people and assume they're not redeemable or attractive enough to be ministered to.

# YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

## GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Once again Jesus talked about repentance. What is the role of urgency in the call for people to repent?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What strikes you the most in this account of Jesus calling the disciples?** *Answers will vary.*
- **Why do you think the Pharisees felt offended by the people at the dinner? How does Jesus' response impact the way we think about ministering to those in our schools, on the athletic fields, or within our homes?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What kinds of people should we minister to? Why is it sometimes difficult to minister to all people?** *As implied in the second question, Christians should minister to all people.*

### HIS STORY

*God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.*

### YOUR STORY

*Where your story meets His.*

# YOUR MISSION

10-15 MINUTES



## HEAD

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Throughout the story of Jesus' earthy ministry, He called, ministered to, and forgave of the sins of various people. He healed an official's son (John 4:46-54), cleansed the Leper (Matt. 8:2-4), healed the Paralytic and forgave his sins (Matt. 9:1-8), healed the woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5:25-34), fed the multitudes (Matt. 15:32-38; John 6:1-14), and raised the dead (Luke 7:11-17; 8:41-56; John 11:1-44). Because Jesus calls everyone to repent, there is no specific "profile" that describes followers of Jesus. The only qualification is repentant faith.

- **What does Jesus' ministry to all types of people communicate about His character?**  
*His compassion and mercy extend beyond any social statuses or physical differences.*
- **As followers of Jesus, how can we model His actions to those around us who are in need?**  
*Answers will vary.*



## HEART

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Today, Jesus calls people from every walk of life to leave their selfish pursuits and follow Him. That call may or may not require you to sell all your belongings or commit to living overseas as a missionary, but at the very least it will definitely require you to give up the idea that you command your own destiny. It will mean you give up any trace of selfish ambition that affects your life decisions. God's kingdom must be first, which is why we ask God to remove the remaining selfishness in our hearts and replace our desires with His heart for the world and His plan for our lives (Ps. 37:4).

- **What are some things you must leave behind in order to follow Christ?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What are the advantages of setting aside selfish pursuits to follow after Christ?**  
*Some advantages will include an increase in personal joy and fulfillment by doing what God has created and call you to do.*



## HANDS

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The beauty of God's call to repentance is that He brings together people from various backgrounds and groups, in order to highlight His glorious work of redemption. He calls people you'd least expect. He does things you would never predict. He doesn't just call "the cream of the crop" to be His spokespeople, but unlikely people whose changed lives will demonstrate the glory of His work. And since we are commanded to imitate Christ (Eph. 5:1), we have the privilege of taking the gospel to those who might be viewed as undeserving, neglected, and overlooked in our society.

- **If you were picking a team of people to help you change the world, what types of people would you want? Why?** *Answers will vary.*
- **Why is it both comforting and empowering for believers to know and understand that God calls ordinary people to proclaim His extraordinary gospel?** *Answers will vary.*

## ► ADDITIONAL INFO

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### **LEADER PACK**

For this session, refer students to pack item #8, containing biographical information about the 12 disciples.

### **SOURCE**

I. R. C. H. Lenski (1961). *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel, 1-14* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing), 362.

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to [lifeway.com/TGPRescueSpr17](http://lifeway.com/TGPRescueSpr17))**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

**[GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources](http://GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources)**

And for **free online training** on how to lead a group visit

**[MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject](http://MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject)**