

Becoming a Disciple

by Joseph Preston

“What does Jesus have to do with me? Why should I bother with him? Why would Jesus care about me? Why would I want him to? I know some Christians – why would I want to be like them?”

Maybe you’ve thought this way and maybe you have good reasons for thinking this way. But I’d like you to take another look at a relationship with Jesus. The journey of faith has its challenges, but nothing is better than knowing Jesus personally. So come explore what it means to follow Jesus.

Let’s take a look at Mark 2:13-17. Jesus finds Levi sitting at the tax collector’s booth and calls him to follow. Tax collectors had a reputation for being dishonest. Some people think Levi was different, but I doubt it. There is nothing to suggest Levi was a “better” tax collector than others. One reason some think Levi was different is because they think Jesus would pick good people to follow him.

So why would Jesus call a dishonest tax collector? Because Levi got up and followed Jesus. Jesus wasn’t looking for good, perfect people to be his followers. Jesus was looking for those who would get up and follow him when he called. It is not about being the right kind of person. It’s about getting up and going when Jesus calls, trusting him to lead you where your life needs to go.

Following Jesus isn’t about being good enough for Jesus. None of us would qualify. Not even the most righteous person is good enough because we have all sinned and fall short of God’s standard (Romans 3:10, 23). The bad news is that we are all sinners who deserve the penalty of death for our sin (Romans 6:23). Because we are condemned under the penalty for sin, every person who does not have a relationship with Jesus is headed for eternal separation from God. It may sound harsh, but it is the problem that Jesus came to resolve.

Back in Mark 2, as Jesus eats a meal at Levi’s house, some religious experts confront the disciples. “Why does he eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners?’” It’s as if they can’t even imagine a reason for Jesus to be doing this. *After all*, they seem to suggest, *good people don’t eat with sinners.*

Jesus answers with a word picture: *just as sick people need a doctor, sinners need Jesus.* It is not about appearing good to other “good” people. It is all about finding those who desperately need what only Jesus can offer. He came not to call the righteous but to call sinners. *What Jesus is all about is rescuing sinners from their eternal destiny (eternal suffering separated from God) and giving them a new destiny (eternal life in the presence of God) through his death for us.* Jesus offers the solution that only he can provide.

In 1 Corinthians 15:3-5, Paul explains that the solution to our sin problem is that Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead. Jesus died as our substitute – he took our place, paying the penalty that we deserved (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21). When he rose from the dead, he proved that he had conquered sin and death and that we can be delivered from death and eternal punishment to eternal life through a relationship with Jesus.

The Bible makes it clear that people will receive what Jesus has provided when they place their trust in Jesus alone as the one who paid for their sins and who can save them. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “It is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.” Faith in Christ means trusting Christ to save you and not trusting anything else. John 6:40 says, “For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him will have eternal life...”

Following Jesus is about trusting Jesus. That is why he picked a dishonest tax collector – Levi was ready to trust Jesus and follow him. Levi wasn’t good enough and knew it. And he knew Jesus was the answer. How will you respond to Jesus? Are you ready to become one of his disciples, one who follows Jesus and trusts in him because he is the only solution to our sin? Disciples of Jesus are not perfect (just look at the Christians that you know). But disciples of Jesus have discovered that the greatest thing in life is trusting Jesus who died for our sins and rose from the dead. We trust in Jesus alone because only a relationship with Jesus can give us an eternal destiny with God and only a relationship with Jesus can give us hope and joy for our lives now. So what will you do? Are you ready to join our journey of faith in Christ?