

Sermon Based Small Group Guide for January 22, 2023 sermon:
"A mission and message that will change the world"

Warm up:

1. When did you leave home to be "on your own" for the first time? Was it more difficult or easier than you expected?
2. How are you with the "timing" of things? Have you ever spoken or acted too soon or too late? When did you realize that you had misjudged the timing of that situation?

Digging deeper: (20-30 minutes)

1. ASK: We have said that Matthew's target audience is Jews and he is showing them that Jesus was the Messiah they were looking for. How does frequently referring to prophecy add strength to his argument? Matthew points out that Jesus fulfilled two very specific geography prophecies: 1.) That he was born in Bethlehem (see Matthew 2:6). 2.) That the region of Galilee (and Nazareth specifically) would be seen as his true "home town" (see Matthew 4:15-16). An additional "wrinkle" is that many people only knew the Bethlehem reference, not the Galilee reference, so they rejected Jesus out of ignorance, in spite of the many mighty signs that accompanied his ministry. (Read John 7:40-43). Discuss: As Matthew walked with Jesus, he had prophecy unfolding all around him, but do you think he actually understood that "in the very moment it was happening", or only when looking back and guided by the Holy Spirit? What is the lesson or warning we can take from that?

2. ASK: What is the invitation Jesus gives these four fishermen? Does anything seem unusual or surprising about their response? Most of us can identify steps or stages in our life as a Christian. The time when we first believed/prayed. Often, later in life, an understanding that Jesus deserves to be the true Lord of our life, etc. What we are seeing in Matthew 4:18-22 is actually the second stage and call on these fishermen's lives. Read the first life-changing encounter they had with Jesus in John 1:35-42. Who were they disciples of when they first met Jesus? The third encounter/call is in Luke 5:1-11. It sounds similar to Matthew 4, but there are key differences. Why do you think Jesus needed to call them again, and this time accompanied by a miracle? Mark 3:13-19 is the final "call" and they are given more than a "title" (apostle), they are given responsibilities. What are they to do?

Apply it: (10 minutes)

These people were called to follow Jesus and were changed by him. So were we! Read Romans 8:28-30 and talk about what happens when we walk in obedience to our calling.

These first disciples had to be called "again and again" because they would follow for a time, then go back to their earlier way of life. Any parallels to that in our lives? Talk about how Christian growth is NOT a matter of "never falling", but allowing God to pick us back up again and again to walk straighter and stronger than the previous time.