

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: May 11, 2008

First Steps With Jesus: Relationship and Discipleship

by Dan Trygg

“Do two walk together *unless they have agreed to do so?*”

Amos 3:3

Matthew, Mark and Luke skipped over a rather long period of time, probably about a year in length, from the time of Jesus' baptism until the time John the Baptist was taken into custody. Without John's gospel, we would have some serious misconceptions about things. One area has to do with **how was it that Jesus found and developed a band of committed followers to travel with Him, spend time with Him, and to learn from His teachings and example?** They were given active roles in Jesus' ministry work from very early on in His ministry, long before they were chosen to be part of "the Twelve". **The gospel of John fills in some of the missing details** that help us piece together the flow of events, and offers insight into what these men were going through in their recruitment by Jesus. **This is important**, not just for historical curiosity, but also **as a model of how to train up others to be active disciples of the Lord. These men did not spend years in school classes before being included in ministry situations. They were "apprenticed"**. That is, they *learned by observing* the Master, receiving instruction and asking questions in real-life scenarios, and *then they were asked to do as the Master did*, putting into practice what they had been learning. This process did not take *years*, but just a matter of *months*. It is challenging enough to our way of thinking to see Jesus' hands-on training with these men, once He had chosen them to be His twelve special trainees (Mk. 3:14; Lk. 6:12-16), but it is even more challenging to see that He was doing this from the beginning of His relationship with them.

This is not to say that everyone in the crowds that soon would be following Jesus were set into active ministry roles as the twelve came to be. We are not told *that*, though there are indications that Jesus eventually was doing this same kind of thing with a much larger number than just the twelve apostles (e.g., the 70 from Lk. 10). The point is that **Jesus was very mindful of training others to do as He was doing. He was very purposeful about finding and developing mentoring relationships with those who were responsive to Him.** Let's take a closer look at some of the clues in the text that reveal this to us. As mentioned above, the events of John 1-4 had to occur in the gap between Matthew 4:11 and 12. Why? Because John the Baptist was still actively ministering in John 1-4, while Matthew begins describing Jesus' ministry *after* John was imprisoned (4:12). So, **the information in John 1-4 tells us about Jesus' earliest dealings with some of those who would later become His chosen followers.**

What do we know of those days? What did those first followers of Jesus experience? **What kind of people were they**, and how did that affect their involvement in ministry? **What did Jesus do to deepen and develop His relationship with them? What did they do to deepen and develop their relationship with Him?**

When first introduced to these men, we find they are at "Bethany beyond the Jordan" (Jn. 1:28), a town most scholars believe was in Perea, across the Jordan from Jericho, almost as far south as the Dead Sea. *This was a very long ways from home for any of the men*, including Jesus. It was about 65 miles, as the crow flies, from Nazareth, Jesus' hometown, and about 75-80 miles from the hometowns of these early disciples. From there, it was another 23 or more miles to Jerusalem, if you went by way of Jericho. Why were these men there? It may be that, like many Jewish men, they had traveled that way in order to go to one of the three major feasts at Jerusalem. It was not uncommon for Jews from Galilee to cross the Jordan in the north, travel southward on the east side of the river to avoid Samaria, and then cross again here, in the south, and proceed up to Jerusalem from Jericho. Of course, all of this travel would be on foot, and the terrain was not easy, but it was an expected part of life for most Jewish men. We find that Andrew and one other (probably John the son of Zebedee) were followers (disciples) of John the Baptist (1:35,40). We do not know what level of involvement that may have entailed. At least, it indicated that they believed his message, and probably hung around to hear him teach, and had been baptized by him. Remember, their homes and livelihoods were many miles to the north. They may have had their families with them, as well. The fact that they tarried here, however, reveals that **they were interested enough in God and His Kingdom to go out of their way, to put their lives on hold, for a few days in order to learn a little more.**

When John the Baptist pointed out Jesus to these two "disciples of him", they responded by beginning to follow Jesus, ...a complete stranger to them..., to see where He was staying (camping). Jesus noticed them, and asked, "What do you seek?" When they explained that they wanted to know where He was staying, He invited them to remain with Him for the rest of the day, which they did (1:35-39). This incident reveals that **they were people who were willing to**

take risks, to move out of their comfort zones, to find out more of what God had for them. They were curious and responsive enough to the teaching and counsel of John to do as he directed, to want to know more about Jesus. They were willing, again, to *go out of their way*. **They were willing to feel awkward**, when confronted by Jesus. And they were willing to put everything else on hold to spend time with Him, when He invited them to. **They didn't put it off. They immediately took advantage of an opportunity to know more of God's will** recommended to them.

Then, they were quick to share with others. Andrew wasted no time telling his brother, Simon Peter, about Jesus, and the next day Jesus sought out their friend, Phillip, who also brought another compatriot, Nathanael, to Jesus (Jn. 1:41-49). The fact that all of these men were there indicates that they, too, had been tarrying to hear the Baptist. They all knew each other (the first three even having come from the same hometown, Bethsaida), but more importantly **they were like-minded people. They all had a yearning in their hearts for more of God. They were already inclined toward obedience to Him, and were already doing things that indicated their desire for Him.** God brought a group of ready, spiritually-hungry people to Jesus to become the core-group of His future apostles. God had been preparing these men ahead of time. When the opportunity came for more, they were ready to check it out.

Jesus was preparing to head back to Galilee, and these new acquaintances decided to travel with Him, talking and sharing as they went (vs. 43). Cana was a small village 8 miles north of Nazareth. Vs. 2 states that Jesus and His new friends had been invited to a wedding there. They attend this wedding feast on their way home, and, consequently, they were present to see His first miracle, which created an even deeper belief in Him. Following this, we read in 2:12 that Jesus, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples went down to Capernaum for a few days. This was apparently at the request of Peter and Andrew, who now had a home in that city (Mk. 1:21,29). Observation: They spent a great deal of time together. **Quality time comes from quantity time, and because they were with Jesus, they had the opportunity to see the miracles He did. On the other hand, those who weren't there did not see or experience what they did.** Because *they went out of their way*, they were present when God moved. "You snooze, you lose."

Think of what was involved in all this investment of time. It meant time away from work. Now, we know that Peter and Andrew were fisherman. They had their own business, and if they chose to not work, it did not mean the loss of their jobs, just the loss of their earnings. They also lived at a time when you had to pay for what you have. Buying things on credit was not generally accessible, as it is today. Part of the freedom of that was that if you took time off, you did not have a pile of bills waiting for you. You could work ahead, save up some money, and then go travel to visit people or whatever. When they ran out of money, they could go back fishing. Don't kid yourself, however, **this was a sacrifice. These guys were not rich.** If you had a good day, or a good season, there was extra. If not, you went without. These men had just taken probably two weeks off in order to travel to Bethany to see John, and return via Cana, especially if there had been a feast they had attended. That meant a loss of two weeks' catches.

We read next of a Passover, and Jesus and His disciples went up to Jerusalem (2:13). On this trip, they not only witnessed His bold cleansing of the Temple, but also saw many of the miraculous signs which He was doing. In 3:22, on yet another trip from Galilee into Jerusalem, Jesus was spending time with His disciples and baptizing. More people began to come to Jesus than were going to John (vs. 26), so His popularity was increasing and the crowds following Him were becoming quite large. In a brief aside in 4:2, John shares with us that **Jesus was not doing the baptizing, rather His disciples were.** What! No seminary?! No ordination?! No. **They were just helping out, doing what Jesus was asking of them. It was about the Kingdom of God, not them.**

Now, let me remind you that this all had taken place before John was thrown into prison (Matt. 4:12). These disciples that we have been introduced to had not yet even been formally recognized as a group of apostles, or anything of that nature. Matt. 4:19 had not yet occurred. He had not yet walked by on the seashore and called these men to follow Him. Yet, here we see them *already* following Him. *At their own personal expense*, they were devoting themselves to Him, travelling all over the countryside, listening to Him, asking Him questions, observing what He did, and helping out wherever they could. He, on His part, willingly met with them, took time for them, instructed them, and included them in His work. *All of this quantity time was an investment into their lives.* In the end, **the commitment to share time**, ...to invest time and energy..., with the accompanying sacrifice necessary to make that time available, **was the key ingredient both for being a successful discipler, as well as an outstanding disciple.** Someone has said that "80% of life is showing up". If you are not present, you will not see, you will not hear, you will not experience God. **If you don't "go out of the way" for God, you will not find Him**, ...because *that* is where He is, not in the paths you normally go down. **If you want God, ...if you want what He has for you..., you have to travel with Him. You have to go where He is, ...do what is acceptable to Him.** If you persist in being offensive to Him, He will withdraw. **You can't expect to have God on your terms. It doesn't work that way.** You must adjust to Him.