

Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

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Responding To The Call To Live By Faith

by Dan Trygg

“From that time Jesus began to preach and say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’¹⁸ And walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was 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 And they immediately left the 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 And they immediately left the boat and their father, and followed Him.”

Matthew 4:17-22

“He was going about from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God; and the twelve were with Him,² and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,³ and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means.”

Luke 8:1-3

“So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.”

I Corinthians 9:14

“Let him who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches.”

Galatians 6:6

“Beloved, you act faithfully in whatever you do for the brethren, and especially strangers...⁶ You will do well sending them forward in a manner worthy of God.⁷ For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the unbelievers.⁸ Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth.”³ John 1:5-8

I want you to put yourself in the shoes of Peter, Andrew, James, and John. These were blue collar fishermen. They were entrepreneurs. **They were hard-working, self-employed, strip-for-work, hands-on, work-all-night kinds of guys** (Lk. 5:5; Jn. 21:3,7). They worked in all kinds of weather, often long hours. They knew what went into a good day's work, ...and they knew the reward of selling a good day's catch. Because they had their own business, they enjoyed a little more freedom from other laborers, who had no job security. These others had to just wait in the marketplace, and hope to be hired. Often, they would be passed by, or there would be no work. Fishing was a good business. People needed to eat. A major highway ran alongside the Sea of Galilee, and these men had managed to relocate their businesses to Capernaum, a decent-sized town on this route. The demand was there, the supply was available, ...it just took work and skill to catch the fish and deliver them to market. These were independent, hard-scrabble people. **They were men who were used to working for what they had, and were proud of their accomplishments. If they wanted something, they worked for it. They were dependent on no one, and enjoyed their independence.** Peter was married (I Cor. 9:5), and a homeowner. He had a good-sized home, right next to the synagogue. His mother-in-law lived in his home (Mk. 1:29). John and James were following their father in his business, and they were a large enough business concern to have hired others to help in the work (Mk. 1:20). They had enough status and connection to be “known to the high priest” and his household (Jn. 18:15,16).

John and Andrew had been taken by the preaching of John the Baptist. Undoubtedly, they heard him preach at the fords of the Jordan, near Jericho. Most Galilean Jews would cross the Jordan in the north, and then travel on the east side of the river, to avoid going through Samaria. They would then have to cross the Jordan again, to go up to Jerusalem. John the Baptist stationed himself to preach to the multitudes passing by, and these two men began to follow him. **The Baptist kept talking about how he was sent to prepare the way for someone much greater, one whose sandals he was not even worthy to untie. One day, he pointed out Jesus to these men, and said that He was this one.** He called Him the Lamb of God, who would take away the sin of the world, ...the one who will baptize people with the Holy Spirit, ...and the Son of God (which was a messianic title) (Jn. 1:29,33,34). **They began to follow Jesus,** and He invited them to spend the evening with Him. They were so impressed that they immediately found their brothers, and introduced them to Jesus. **They became the first, foremost and most frequent of His early followers.** They still worked their fishing business, but would often take time away to follow Him on His preaching engagements.

Jesus, too, had been a self-employed, blue-collar carpenter or builder (Mk. 6:3; Matt. 13:55). The Greek word, *tektōn*, means someone who was a worker in wood, stone, and possibly metal. **For eighteen years, or more, He had worked with His hands as a tradesman.** He had been apprenticed by His earthly father, Joseph, and probably had provided for His mother and siblings, after Joseph's death. **He, too, knew about hard work, long days, working in the heat and cold, and physical exhaustion.** He, too, would have known about keeping accounts, making bids, and writing up contracts. **He, too, was used to working for what He had.**

When Jesus was baptized, and began His ministry, He left His carpenter shop and trusted God to provide for His support. After about a year of following Him sporadically, when Jesus came and called His twelve

disciples, part of the arrangement was that they had to leave their jobs in order to follow Him. It is clear from the passages that these fishermen understood this, for they left their boats to follow Him, ...just as Matthew left his tax booth in response to His call. **This is very much like the call of Elisha by Elijah in the OT. He not only left his farm, he sacrificed his oxen and burned their yokes to clearly delineate the change in his life (I Kg. 19:19-21).** He was no longer going to be a farmer, he was going to be an itinerate prophet. **There would be no going back.**

Jesus' fishermen disciples did not make such a drastic step, so they were tempted to go back to fishing. The incident in Luke 5:1-11 recounts Jesus' calling them *again!* Apparently, **living by faith was not an easy thing.** They missed the independence of earning their own money. The uncertainty, anxiety and tension of having to "wait on God" was too much, and **they decided to go back to what was seemingly under their control. They worked all night, but caught nothing!** (Not *really* under *their* control, was it? The Bible says that God is the one who gives the ability to get wealth – Deut. 8:17,18.) So, they were on the beach, washing their nets, when Jesus came along with a huge crowd. (I'm sure Peter and the others were feeling guilty for having bailed out on their commitment to Him to go back fishing, and was probably acting nonchalant as Jesus approached.) The crowd was pressing on Jesus, trying to touch Him or get His attention. So, Jesus asked Peter if He could preach from his boat. (Oh, no!) Peter accommodated Him, and sat there listening while Jesus taught. When He finished, **Jesus told Peter to put out into the deep water for a catch.** Peter told Him that they had fished all night, and had caught nothing, but out of respect for Jesus, he would do as He asked. **When he put down the nets, he captured an entire school of fish, so many that the nets were breaking!** He called to the others to help, and they filled their boats to the point that they were sinking! **Suddenly, Peter realizes that this was God at work,** and he falls at Jesus' feet, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man!" Jesus' response, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men." Sure enough, when they came to shore, **they left everything to follow Him.**

Jesus established a normative pattern for people called to preach the Word. His example, and His requirement for His disciples, was that those who preach the Word should be supported by contributions. Notice that Luke mentions three women who were contributing to His support. They are specifically mentioned because they had been healed of sicknesses or demonic affliction, and were supporting His ministry because of the help they had personally received from God through Him. **People will support the ministry if they are significantly helped by it.** The fact that they were able to contribute to His ministry also meant that they were women of means. Most women did not have the ability to contribute in any significant way, but these women did. Note, too, that there were "many others" who also contributed. **Paul said that those who are taught the Word ought to share all good things with those who teach them.** This indicates how we value the things of God. The next few verses declare that God will not be "chumped" or "mocked", ...whatever we sow we will also reap. If we sow, or invest, toward fleshly things, we will reap corruption. If we sow, or invest, in spiritual things (including supporting the ministry), we will reap life and peace (Gal. 6:6-8). In I Cor. 9:11, Paul asks, **"If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?"** In Romans, he states that there is an obligation there, a debt (15:27).

In I Corinthians 9, Paul came at this from a different direction. He said, "Who plants a vineyard, and does not eat its fruit? Or, who tends a flock, and does not use the milk of the flock? ...The ploughman ought to plough in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops." **These are clearly word pictures that indicate that those who minister ought to be provided for by those they teach. He also refers to OT precedent,** "Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar?" This would have dialed up the entire OT system of support for the Levites and priests. **The tithe was given to set full-time ministers aside for God's service. Paul's conclusion, "So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel"** (I Cor. 9:14).

Why is this important? Paul uses another illustration, "Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense?" or, "No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him" (I Cor. 9:7; 2 Timothy 2:4). **God wants ministers freed up from other civilian pursuits, so that we can be totally dedicated to Him, and so we can be more available to bring the message to other people.** Paul wrote, "How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent?" (Rom. 10:14,15) **God wants to release an army of workers to proclaim the gospel far and wide. He wants people freed up to teach and disciple people, to help them grow to maturity and obedience in Christ. These people cannot do this, unless other people support them to do this vital work.**

Whether we are called to live by faith, or whether we are called to support those who are, our response to Jesus' direction is crucial. How will you respond to His directive to live by faith? "Act faithfully, in whatever you do for those who minister, ...you will do well sending them forward in a manner worthy of God. For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the unbelievers. Therefore we ought to support such people, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth."