

THE BEGINNING OF THE WALK
One on One: Drawing Nearer to Jesus
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... to discovering the will of God, to developing Christ's character in your life, dealing with self esteem, depression, anger, all those good things. As I was preparing for this Sunday night series in the fall months I was casting around in my heart for a direction. Through a conversation I had with one of our young people I came to focus on the fact that my heart was really wanting to do something that until the moment of that conversation I hadn't had words to express. It wasn't anything really glamorous like how you can overcome anger in three easy steps or how you can follow these seven methods and never sin again. Or how you can be a totally successful, wise, loving and humane individual. I didn't have anything like that. I realized that simply in my heart there was a hunger for a deeper knowledge and intimacy with Jesus Christ.

So I want to begin a series that off and on the times I'm speaking in these next few months will draw us back into the gospel of John under the title "One to one: drawing closer to Jesus of Nazareth." I want to encourage you with me to draw closer to Jesus Christ and see how He revealed himself to the people whom he first came in contact with.

Tonight's message, the beginning of the walk. We look at some verses out of the first chapter of John, verse 35-42. *"The next day John [John the Baptist] was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by he said, 'Look the Lamb of God!' When the two disciples heard him say this they followed Jesus. Turning around Jesus saw them following and asked 'What do you want?' They said 'Rabbi [which means teacher] where are you staying?' 'Come,' He replied, 'and you will see.' So they went and saw where he was staying and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah, that is the Christ, the anointed one.' Then he brought Simon to Jesus who looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas which translated is Peter.'"*

Several decades ago Albert Schweitzer the noted theologian and medical missionary to Africa wrote a book called The Quest for the Historical Jesus. Not a whole lot of people in the evangelical church realized that Schweitzer was more of a humanitarian than he was a Christian in the biblical sense. He had high Christian ideals as they related to ethics, but he never reached a settled opinion of who Jesus of Nazareth really was. He wrote his book as an attempt to give greater definition in his life as to who Jesus was. Using the higher German scholarship critical methods which he had learned while a student in Germany, he examined the life of Christ that had been written in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which tried to look at whether or not there should be a distinction drawn between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. That seemed to be a great tension for the higher criticism scholars. There was a general predisposition among the scholars to assume that the New Testament was not a reflection of the real Jesus of Nazareth. But rather the real Jesus of Nazareth had been painted over many times with Christian tradition until what had emerged was a layer of paint so thick that no one any more with any confidence could pick up the New Testament and know who Jesus really was. The assumption therefore came to be that anything in the New Testament which speaks of the miraculous was a gloss or a fabrication of a faith of the early church that developed over decades of time. And finally in order to rediscover the real Jesus one had to strip away all details relating to miracles

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and get back to simply the Jesus, the humanitarian, the ethical teacher who died a violent death. But whose physical resurrection hangs so much in doubt.

Schweitzer was never sure whether or not Jesus of Nazareth had physically risen from the dead. Yet he was charmed as he picked up the New Testament with the ability of this Jesus to mesmerize human beings and to call forth disciples who would give themselves in a complete way to him. All of them giving their lives in such a way as to serve him irrevocably and serve him by the laying down of their own lives. He had this view of Jesus therefore as Jesus as kind of a super hero humanitarian figure who served the world with the goodness of his nature – whatever that nature was – and it was a goodness which called him – Albert Schweitzer – into Africa to serve humanity.

I look at Albert Schweitzer and say if he can serve in such a way with such a limited view of Jesus what a great stimulus to us who know Him in a fuller and deeper way to serve Him. Schweitzer though in his book, which is kind of an intellectual challenge to read, comes to the close of his book uncertain as to whether or not it is possible to reconstruct an historical life of Jesus. So he writes and these are his wistful last words of his book, the last paragraph of his book. He's thinking back to this scripture in John's gospel of Jesus' first appearance to disciples where he said, "Come follow Me."

Schweitzer says "He comes to us as one unknown without a name as of old by the lakeside. He came to those men who knew him not. He speaks to us the same words 'Follow thou me,' and sets us to the task he has for us to fulfill for our time. He commands. And to those who obey him whether they be wise or simple he will reveal himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in his fellowship. As a mystery they shall learn in their own experience who he is."

Poetic and mystical words. Although he speaks them Schweitzer himself was never sure who he really was.

But through the decades of my adult Christian life since I read this book decades ago myself, I've always been struck by Schweitzer's words "he comes to us as one unknown." That is certainly the case here as we open the gospels tonight. When the disciples were first in contact with Jesus they were not sure who he really was. There were a couple of catch buzz words floating around. But they had no idea of the mission that was in store for them. Nor did they have any idea of what the mission was that was in store for him, Jesus of Nazareth. They knew so very little about him.

And they knew so little about themselves. But in following him they came to know both him and themselves.

I want to pick up on this phrase "He comes to us as one unknown" and talk about four things out of it that arise out of this particular text in John, the beginning of the walk with him. Whenever we first meet Jesus there are some truths we know about ourselves and there are certainly some truths that we know about these first disciples – John and Andrew and Peter. I would like to suggest for your life and for my life that the truths that we know about them from this text ought to be the same truths that would characterize our own lives personally. There are these things which I know based upon a reading of the text about John and Andrew and Peter.

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The first thing I know about them is they were discontented with religion as usual.

There being present with the radical preacher John the Baptist out in the wilderness is suggesting to me that growing up in the society and milieu which they grew up they looked at all the religious and secular options of their day and their presence with John indicates that they have rejected any number of alternatives already.

They have for example rejected the liberalism of the Saducees of their day. The Saducees who were saying, this is the only world we know so let's get as much of it as we can and there's nothing after this. They had rejected that. And I think you have rejected it as well or you wouldn't be listening to my voice this evening.

They had rejected the legalism of the Pharisees. The Pharisees are an example of a holiness movement that goes sour. A holiness movement that starts out in a revival emphasis which Phariseeism did and then degenerates into a series of rules. These young people were not looking for a set of rules. They were looking for a relationship. They were looking for a heart holiness. Not someone just drawing something in the dust and saying "Don't step over this line."

Ken Blanchard, author of The One Minute Manager writes in an article "Praise should Outweigh Criticism Four to One. Giving as much phrase as criticism may not be enough to save you from being thought of as a bad boss or parent. In healthy groups such as families or companies there's a need for four times as many positive interactions for every one which is negative. This means that every time you give someone a reprimand hopefully you'll have the opportunity to catch that person doing something right four times and give him a praising. Here's what happens if you don't follow this four to one ratio. I was involved in a corporate study where the criticizing and praising were actually tabulated and the reactions measured. When there was one criticism for each praising, people felt as though they had a total negative relationship with their boss. When the ratio was changed with two praisings and just one reprimand, people still thought their boss was all over them. It wasn't until we got to four praisings to one criticism that people began to feel as though they had a good relationship with their boss. The perception of a reprimand is powerful. One negative word can only be balanced by four positive words. It's clear that if you don't start giving a lot of praise the people you work around or live around will begin to think of you as negative and unfair."

That's why so many people have so much difficulty accepting the fact that God loves them. Because every time they turn around they're thinking, What's wrong with my life today? Why isn't God pleased with me today? The gospel sets out for us this great fundamental definition that because of Jesus Christ, God is looking at us from a standpoint of grace and acceptance. He's already saying, "I accept you. I love you. You're going to be ok if you put yourself into the care of My Son."

These young men had rejected the legalism of the Pharisees. And they had rejected the revolutionary methods of the zealots. In America we don't have a lot of political zealots around but in third world countries, if I weren't a Christian I'd probably be a radical revolutionary of some kind. I think it's a monstrosity for a president of a country to take all the money out of a country that he can possibly get his fingers on and pack it away in some Swiss bank account while his people are starving and lacking in education. It's immoral for a leader of a country to

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be living in a place in a village where there are mud hovels with thatched roofs, five hundred yards from his palace while the people of his country are living in wretched poverty. I would probably be a zealot. A Christian radical revolutionary I guess. I don't see how missionaries can stay out of politics but I know they've got to or they'll for sure get kicked out of the country.

We have a thing in our country today that says Get involved in politics. The answer is in the political right some thing. I don't think the answer's in the right or left. We have proven in this country that even if we elect a Christian president it doesn't mean you get the kingdom of God. We'll always be appointed with political leadership no matter what strip it bears.

These young people – James and John and Andrew and Peter have already said the answer is not in the political system. It isn't as though they teach us to be unengaged. The New Testament goes on to teach us to be good citizens, be salt and light. But that's not where the ultimate answers are. By walking away from political revolution and there was lots of injustice to revolt over, they were saying, we take our stand here. We've dismissed theological liberalism, which says there are no ultimate answers in life, there is no ultimate authority. We have dismissed the hyper religion of the Pharisees. Rules,... glum, ...criticize.... We have dismissed being a theological liberal revolutionary.

And we also know that they have moved away from traditional religious institutions of their day. The two were the Temple and the synagogue. John the Baptist wasn't associated with either one. He was saying in his message that the Lamb of God was coming and the way to get resolution from sin was to repent and be baptized. He never said one hoot about the temple in Jerusalem, which is where you're supposed to get your sins forgiven by offering a sacrifice.

John in his message was saying God has washed his hands of the temple. He's done with it. It's all over. Going up there and putting your hand on a lamb or a goat and saying it's going to atone for your sins isn't going to work. You need to repent. You need a change of life. He was not even preaching in the synagogues. Jesus came back to balance. He went back into the synagogue to preach until he got thrown out. He went back into the temple until he got thrown out of it.

Tremendous thing we need to understand about young people. Youth often challenges things as they are. Sometimes we as older people get upset with that and nervous that institutions are being challenged. But I have found that if the church of Jesus Christ is to survive into the next generation, young people have got to own the church. And have got to sense how the Holy Spirit is going to move in your lifetime. If the institution of the church or any part of it needs changing and it can be changed consistent with the nature and personality of Jesus Christ then change the thing. Dismantle it. But go out in the name of Christ and reach for reality.

I know that these young men had rejected a lot of things that weren't speaking to their own needs.

They were not only rejecting things that weren't relevant but they were seekers after truth and reality. That's why they were out there with the preacher John the Baptist. There were other youth in their day who were, what I'd call, into things Greek. The secular pull on Jewish young people growing up at this time was to go to the gymnasium. To wrestle in the buff. To be intrigued with Greek art and Greek ideas. These young men did not place themselves at the foot

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of a philosopher. Nor did they put themselves at the foot of a guru. Nor did they put themselves at the foot of an athletic trainer. But they took their place at the foot of a prophet. They wanted to be around somebody who said, Thus sayeth the Lord. And said that without in the next breath saying, The Lord said to me for you to send me an offering in the next collection.

I hope that young people clean out the church of Jesus Christ in your lifetime. If you can. But the weeds are going to keep growing with the wheat.

They were not into somebody setting in a big chair puffing a cigar and talking Jesus and pyramids. They were aware of radical truth, root truth, gut truth. Truth that reaches right to the core. They were where that was.

I have faith in young people. They're going to sense what's right.

These young men were at the foot of the prophet. The great thing about young people they can hang loose a few weeks. I have a relative that earns just enough money to keep going for a few months then he says, Why work so hard? So he floats free for a few months till he runs out of money and goes back to work again. It seems to me that John and Andrew and Peter were a little like this. We know they were middle class fishermen and they were 60-80 miles away from home, down where the Jordan river intersects the Dead Sea where it comes out of Galilee where they fish. They were willing to take off and leave dad at the nets.

Their church for truth was not simply metaphysical but it was moral. In following John they were buying into his high call of a moral life. He demanded a moral life of religious, tax collectors, politicians, soldiers, people in general. He was saying straighten up and fly right. If you're in a church for truth make sure that truth includes moral truth and righteous living. There is no such thing as abstract truth. There has to be truth, which is concrete and is lived out in holiness in life.

Out of these three people we run into in John 1, two of them. John and Andrew had already become disciples of John the Baptist. Peter was near enough to be a hanger on. We know he was near enough because they could go get him and bring him back in one day, which meant he wasn't up in Galilee. He was hanging around probably listening. None of them were dilettantes. They were ready to have a personal encounter with God and ask Him to cleanse them from sin. And they were young people seeking a cleansing from sin. They were not old hardened sinners who had committed every sin in the book.

I'm convinced that the people who have the greatest consciousness of sin are not the people who have done everything that is wrong to do. But the people who have the deepest heart hunger for God. It's when we see God as compared to what we really are that we are the most conscious for our need for His cleansing. And these young people that we find encountering in the gospels were not out having immoral affairs so far as we can see from the text. But they were persons who were deeply convinced that only God could cleanse them of their inner sin.

So we know that about them. They were seekers after truth and reality. And they were discontent with religion as usual.

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And a third thing we know about them was they expected God was going to do something great in their lifetime. They were attracted to this man, John the Baptist. This strange prophet who ate locusts. That was probably a karab that had a lot of high protein in it. There's a similarity between the Aramaic word for karab and grasshopper. So the whole idea of crunching wings and little legs and antenna is probably more mythical than it is real. He was out there eating this stuff that we like dried dates and it gives high bursts of energy. Good desert food. Eating karabs and wild honey.

And he was saying God's bringing the Messiah and he's going to baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

I have no doubt at all of what John meant about the baptism with Spirit and fire is that the Messiah when he came would act in a parallel fashion on the one hand he would be baptizing people in the age of the Messiah, the age of righteous and goodness which is the baptism of the Spirit and fire the judgment. His winnowing fork is in his hand and he's going to throw the chaff into the fire. John expected God was going to move in his generation.

I'm becoming more and more conscious that if Jesus tarries we're heading in now to the end of this century. I remember a hundred years ago there was a group of students that began meeting called the Haystack Prayer Meeting. They just began to call out on God to begin to move in their generation. The modern missionary movement owes its origin to those groups of students who began to pray because they wanted God to do something in their lifetime. The movement I'm particularly associated with the Assemblies of God, had a bunch of people three hundred, many of them who were young who met in an unlikely place of Hot Springs, Arkansas in 1914 and prayed for a whole lot of days before they ever started doing business then marched down the main street of the town and said that God was going to reach the world in their generation. And they believed that God was going to do it partly through them. What faith!

I want to identify with the youth of Azusa Street who came from all over the world and waited on God. Even though I'm three times the age of a teenager at this point I still want to consider myself young at heart and want to see God move in my generation.

Those are truths we know about them.

Then a second category of truth, there are truths we know initially when we meet Jesus.

These three knew some initial truths about Jesus. Very fragmentary. They were solely dependent on what somebody else was saying about Jesus and that was John the Baptist. And he was calling Jesus two terms. The Lamb of God – a strange term. Nobody had used it. No prophet had ever used it of the Messiah before John and John was obviously taking it out of Isaiah 53. But the Lamb of God, the sacrificial lamb. And he was calling him the Son of God. They had to be intrigued. Who is this Jesus? They were thinking, is salvation personal? What does it mean that he's going to take away the sin of the world? What does it mean to be baptized with the Holy Spirit? They were curious about Jesus.

The two began to follow him and then they got Simon Peter. When John and Andrew came that day to Jesus they were following him and Jesus turned around. You know what Jesus' first words are after his temptation that are spoken in all of the gospels? I realized that for the first

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time this week. I don't know why I never saw it before. But as I was studying this passage this week it dawned on me that the very first words that Jesus ever said once his ministry had begun are so profound. They are said to people who are intrigued with his personality and don't know a whole lot about him at that point other than some catch phrases, some buzz words. They're following after him and he says to them these tremendous profound words "What do you want?"

It seems to me that that is one of the most basic questions in life. If you can identify that to any degree you're on the way to really being alive. They didn't have any profound thing particularly to say at that moment – what do you want? Where are you staying Jesus? What are you doing Jesus? Where are you living Jesus? What do you want to accomplish in the world Jesus? That's what we want. We'd like to spend some time with you.

No big commitments at first. And here am I many times as a pastor doing the role of an evangelist and asking people to make big commitments to Jesus Christ. But it's interesting, in the first instance, it wasn't some big commitment of "If you cross this line you're never turning back. If you says no now you never get any other chance." It was just kind of off hand, informal. "Come and see." If you'll just spend some time getting close to Jesus in his word and in prayer you'll come and see too.

He reveals himself to us along the road of life. John and Andrew are very typical young persons who in a matter of hours become drenched in the enthusiasm of youth have formed quick first impression. They already know everything that others have looked for centuries to find and they have said to Simon Peter, "We have found the Messiah." They know zilch about what is invested in this word Messiah and what it really means. They thought it was something that Jesus through three years of teaching re-beat the term Messiah until they understand it fits what he says it fits rather than their idea of a political revolutionary who was also a religious person.

But again, typical of the enthusiasm, which should be present in young people and young at heart they are saying, We have found him.

And they were right.

There are some things thirdly that we don't really know about Jesus when we begin to follow him. I didn't really know a whole lot about Jesus when I began to follow him even though I've had the joy and advantage of being raised in a Christian home and a pastor's home. If you'd asked me when I was 18 years of age what is in the gospel of Matthew. I'd have said, I know it talks about the life of Jesus. If you'd asked me what the kingdom of God was I wouldn't have given a very good definition of it from Jesus' vantagepoint. I just knew that I loved Jesus and wanted to follow him. That's all I knew when I started out following Christ.

That's what these men did. They didn't know the content of his teaching. He hadn't even taught the Sermon on the Mount yet. How could they know it? He hadn't given a parable yet. How could they know any of his great stories? How could they know the love of God when he hadn't even yet taught on the prodigal son? They hadn't seen any of his miracles when they first began to follow him. They didn't have any understanding of the kingdom and they certainly didn't have any idea of his passion. His laying down his life. In fact, two years later when he began to talk about it, they said no way.

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But here are some things you only know when you follow Jesus. The bystander who waits on the sidelines and says I want more information before I make a commitment, that person never knows. Biblical truth, God's truth, is not idle truth. It's not simply propositional truth. Or intellectual content truth. It is experiential truth. We must enter into relationship with him and the only way we know him is to learn of him is walking through life and obeying him.

I'm finding there's more about Jesus to be known every day. I think we as older people in the church need to recognize less we feel that we have learned everything about him that he reminds us sin Revelation 19:12 that when he comes again he has a name written on him that no one but he himself knows. Which is to say there is an aspect of his being and character that is still within himself. There is more of him yet to learn in heaven.

The people who have quested after God have talked about the beatific vision of God. That is that face to face encountering which is so breathless that it makes every other human experience pale by comparison. A vision of God that is far deeper than intellectual knowledge but which reaches into heart and spirit knowledge. The kind of vision which Moses experienced. That heart to heart relationship. That's what these young people were in for as they began to follow Jesus.

That's what I want. When that reality of God began to come to me I realized in its beginnings that it was more than just keeping a code of laws. It was more than faithful church attendance. It was an encounter with God. That's why I think for me, and why I'm so committed to Sunday night services is really my deeper life with God and experience with God really occurred at the close of Sunday night services when I spent time in personal prayer just seeking God and being available to him and wanting him above everything else in my life. When you want God in that deeper way he will reveal himself to us. All the stale times in my life occur when I no longer have that hunger and when I am seeking after other kinds of things and get lost in a myriad of details.

At this moment in John 1 they know so very little. But oh, will they know by sticking round him. There are some things we know for sure about them. Some things we know for sure about him. Some things we don't know about him, which he'll reveal. Then some things we don't know about ourselves when we first follow him.

Can you imagine that first day when Andrew and John (and John is unnamed. John the Baptist is named but not John the disciple) what would have happened that first day that they said, Where are you staying? And Jesus would have said, Before I tell you where I'm staying let me tell you that I want you to follow me. And while you're here, let me tell you that if you follow me what's going to happen to you. Andrew, you follow me and serve me with your whole strength then at the end of your life you're going to be crucified on an X shape cross in southern Greece. In fact there is going to be a cross that some day decorates a whole denominational wall called the cross of Saint Andrew. You're going to get a cross named after you for dying for me in Southern Greece.

And Peter. You follow me and one day you're going to escape imprisonment in Rome and you're going to be going out of the city and as you go out of the city I'm going to be coming into the city and you're going to say to me *Quo vadis?* Where are you going? And I'm going to say, I'm taking your place to be crucified in Rome.

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I know that's church tradition and that conversation is probably mythical but there is reality to the tradition that Simon Peter was crucified in Rome and that as an act of humility he asked his accusers to be crucified upside down because he didn't consider himself to be worthy to be crucified right side up as was his Lord. Can you imagine Jesus saying to Peter, I've got a wonderful future for you! Heaven by and by but first crucified upside down.

And saying to John, the beloved disciple. He was not all that loving a guy when he started following Jesus. He was a son of thunder and he liked to burn villages up that were inhospitable to Jesus. The degree of change that Jesus accomplishes in his life is seen in the fact that when he's an old man he's all the time talking about love. He becomes a loving person.

But what if he'd have said to John, You're going to live to an old age. Not die an early death like Peter and Andrew. And you're going to pass your last years in exile on a lonely rock strewn island called Patmos. Isn't it great that the Lord doesn't tell us all that is ahead? I couldn't handle that much.

If it's something that involves fame or success and we knew that in advance we'd become so worthless to God because our buttons would be popping all the time. If it involved any cross or suffering we'd say let somebody else do that.

But the great thing, when Jesus calls us he just says, come follow me. He does come to us as one unknown and simply says follow me and let me have control of your life. I'll lead you a step at a time. A day at a time.

The one thing that Jesus does do is direct the attention of one of the disciples to the great potential that is within him and I think within all the rest. He says to the one disciple, I'm going to now start calling you Rock because you're loaded with potential to become a rock-like person. He points him to his potential and I think Jesus does that with every disciple.

Looking back through 60 years in time, John the writer of this gospel when he writes this gospel it's 60 years after this event of John 1. He's now an old man. He looks back through time when his life took a significant turning of the road and changed forever. He's one of those persons who remembers even the time that it began to take place.

If you asked me when did you become a believer? I always give a two-part answer. When I was around 10-12 years of age I had dream that the Lord had returned and I didn't go up and I was scared stillborn into the kingdom of God. The second conversion was when a young man who was 29 years of age and just got his doctorate from Stanford University came to Evangel College and preached a series of messages on the validity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ when I was a junior in college, that I really made a commitment of my life to him. But I can't tell you the date, can't tell you the time. I can tell you approximate.

Here is a person who says here was a moment on a Palestinian afternoon when I began to follow Jesus and I have always followed him and I'm going to follow him right into glory.

Some of you have had an experience like that. You can look at the time and the date when your life began to change. But if you don't know the time or the day may there be an experience in your life when you have had such a tremendous personal encounter with Jesus that your life can

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never be the same. It begins with him coming to us and we don't know everything about him. I've got books about Jesus in my library, lined with books. Most of the books I've read I've forgotten what they say. Some of them I haven't read and I've got a stack to read. I'm trying to learn more about him. I realize the left side of my brain needs to learn about him but the right side of me, the subconscious, mystical experiential side of me can only know God through his word and through prayer and through the ministry that occurs when I'm in a place where I'm calling upon the name of the Lord. It is in that knowing that learning both on the intellectual dimension and that learning on the experiential dimension that we're drawing close to Jesus of Nazareth. He'll never dump it all on us at once. His glory is too great to ever be contained at one time. So he'll never dump it all on us at once. And he'll never all at once tell us everything that's in store for us. He just says Wait and see. I've got a great surprise for you. Follow me.

I want to hear his call. I want to present myself again to Jesus Christ and say I'm here. In answer to your question, Lord, I've hung around where there is truth. All my life I've hung around the church. That's because I want truth. I hear you saying to me again. "What do you want?" and all I want to say is "Jesus, I want to be with you. Whatever you want to do in my lifetime and my generation that's where I want to be." I hear Jesus saying again, "Come and see." I'd like for you to hear that as well and know it in your heart Jesus calls you to follow him.

Our Lord, the world in which we live today is probably even more complicated than the world in which Andrew and John and Peter lived. Although the eternal choices are still the same. There are those who are still in the cult of the physical body. And everything is the body. And physical recreation. Muscles and beauty and good looks. Nothing wrong with these things by themselves, Lord, but there are some that are just into the body in our world. Like the Greeks were. Some are just into knowledge – get smarter and smarter. Go to a big university and get smarter and smarter. There are some who are into all kinds of weird religious groups and gurus. But Lord we're here because we simply want to be where the truth is and where reality is. And where our hearts can be satisfied with the kind of life, which only you have to offer. We want to present ourselves in yet a new way. Sometimes, Lord, we don't know how to do this. We want to physically represent it by walking down an aisle because that says, Lord, we're coming to you. We want to do it sometimes by raising our hands and saying Lord, here I am available. I surrender to you. We want to do it at other times by just giving praise from our heart in a verbal way to you. Sometimes we want to do it by just kneeling or falling prostrate on the ground and saying, Lord, I'm your servant. I prostrate myself before you to say, Whatever I am take me. Have me. You're holy and you're majestic. I just lay low at your presence. We want to say in so many ways that we're here to follow you. There are so many complicating issues of life and especially as the years come along there are so many things that intervene in our life, so many things that are always up in the air. But help us Lord, those of us who have walked with you a little way to keep our relationship with you very simple and clean. That we're still out first and fundamental to please you, to love you, to serve you and to know you more and more every day. Let us never grow stale. Let us never, Lord, be like the Saducees who checked out of really believing in your power and just dismissed your power as something that is myth. And let us never be like the Pharisees who simply keep religion going in the name of religion and have no joy or love associated with it. But just wanted to do things right out of a legalistic sense. Give us a heart for you. Let our heart be broken and open to you. To follow you in whatever way you'd call us in our life. Help us to open our lives to your call. You're calling us just like you called those young people back then. You're calling us to

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follow you. Just like all the decisions we make when we're young, we don't have a whole lot of information we have to go on what your Spirit is speaking to our heart. We just have to follow you and the information will come. But, Lord, we'll never make any progress if we wait until we've collected everything together. It'd be too late then to make any intelligent decisions. Let us follow you now while there's time and there's strength and serve you with our whole heart. We pray it in your name. Amen.