

Following Jesus When He Calls

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 September 2022

Preacher: Jonathan Clark

[0 : 0 0] Good morning, everyone. Would you remain standing for the reading of God's Word? Our text today comes from Matthew chapter 4 and Matthew chapter 9.

We'll start in chapter 4, verse 18. While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea.

For they were fishermen. And he said to them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother.

In the boat was Zebedee, their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. And skipping ahead to chapter 9, verse 9.

As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, Follow me. And he rose and followed him.

[1 : 1 0] And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. Then the Pharisees saw this.

They said to his disciples, Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners? But when he heard it, he said, Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

Go and learn what this means. I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. This is God's word.

Please be seated. Would you pray with me? Father in heaven, we pray now as we have sung and have given and have praised you and have greeted one another now as your spirit comes to us through your word, that you would speak to each one of us, convicting us where we are unrepentant, comforting us where we are wounded and encouraging and strengthening our weak hands to faithfully run the race that you've set before us.

It's in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen. Well, good morning. Some of you all know who I am. My name is Jonathan Clark. I am the pastor with Reformed University Fellowship.

[2 : 2 6] Jim mentioned my name in our congregational prayer. I work as a campus pastor at University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. I've been there all of two weeks. My family and I moved from New Mexico in May.

I was a campus pastor with RUF there for the last five years, and I've recently come home. I grew up in Colorado Springs. I've got long, old roots with this church.

I did my internship while I was in seminary here. So some of you all have been around for a while, knew that. If not, welcome. We're glad you're here. If this is your first time, I'm still figuring out to myself. So Reformed University Fellowship is the campus ministry wing of our Presbyterian Church in America, which is the denomination which Cheyenne Mountain Prez is in, along with other churches in our city.

And we exist to reach students for Christ and equip them to serve for a lifelong of faith in and out of the church. Just briefly, we've started ministry as classes resumed or started on campus the last two weeks, and it's been a good start.

And most of that is due to your very own Miriam Shamus. If there's ever a history of RUF, UCCS ever written, Miriam will be the first name mentioned. She was the one who pushed the paper to get us club status in the last few weeks.

[3 : 4 0] She's helped sign up for tabling and all that stuff. So, I mean, literally, I would not have—we would not be where we are without Miriam. So thank you. Thanks for her.

Thanks for helping raise her up. We're not here to talk about RUF. I would love to talk with you more about that if that's something you're interested in. But here, we're here today, this running right now, to see what God's Word speaks to us today.

And many of you, as I want to start off this with you, many of you have either been parents or are parents currently, or you watch parents try to raise children in church, maybe nieces and nephews or something like that.

And I've been reflecting on parenting for my little girl. She's three, and she's at this age where she's basically testing her world out in many ways. And this is really exciting in a lot of ways and really challenging in a lot of ways for her.

And most of her formation is basically, as parenting, my job of training her as a woman, training her character, shaping her heart and her mind and her values into values that are basically social, you know, things that are good for society, good for our family, good for the church, right?

[4 : 49] Steering her away from behaviors that are antisocial, narcissistic, and towards ones which are healthy and sustainable. And so things like not opening the door to strangers or not watching too much TV or how to go potty or how to cook a healthy meal, right?

These are very, very mundane details, things that are working in her life, but they're shaping her and training her how to be a healthy person, a healthy, functioning little toddler in society, right?

And so this is, as I was reflecting on this with my daughter, I was thinking, man, how analogous is this to what Jesus does for every single person who encounters him in a meaningful way, right?

That Jesus takes those whom he encounters and he shapes them, he forms them into healthy people, both in the world and in society, right? In the church and in the world.

And the Bible talks about this in a very specific way. It calls it discipleship. It's the formation of followers who are healthy and healthy emotionally, spiritually, in their interactions in the kingdom, right?

[5 : 53] So Jesus teaches, evaluates, and encourages and forms his disciples into people who are going to be healthy members of the church, right?

And this is what we have called discipleship. And today we are going to study this idea of discipleship, right? Once again, some of you have maybe thought about this a thousand times. Maybe some of you today are like, I don't know what this is, but I'm interested.

Or maybe you're not sure what this applies. Well, hopefully you can see over the next few moments why discipleship is such an integral and important part of the life of encountering Jesus, right?

We'll see here today in our text that Jesus calls men to follow him. And when he calls men to follow him, he shows us his gracious heart toward each and every person, including you, including me.

And how he is in calling us constantly to follow him. So the heart of Jesus is to train and shape and disciple followers to engage the world and shape his church.

[6 : 54] And so we'll look at what is discipleship. Well, discipleship is one thing with three parts, and this is how we'll look at it today. Discipleship is following Jesus when he calls, together welcoming others.

Discipleship is following Jesus when he calls, together welcoming others, right? And so that's how we'll look at this. So I've read our text today. Let's start off at the very beginning.

Discipleship is following Jesus when he calls. So we read two sort of stories, little vignettes, of Jesus calling people to follow him. Well, let's look at each one of these briefly.

In chapter 4, you see that Jesus first, he calls a set of brothers, a set of men who are fishermen, right? Peter or Simon, Andrew, John, and James, right?

And just think about what these men are doing, right? So they're just sort of lost in their work.

They're vocational fishermen, and they're doing what they have done for their whole lifetime, right?

[7 : 50] They're mending their nets. Their heads are sort of stuck down in the daily grind of Monday through Friday, right? They're doing what they have always done, right? And so we see that they're fishermen, right?

The text tells us this, right? And so they're lost in the business of business, of making money, of they've got to catch fish because they've got to eat, right? They've got to make money, right?

And so this net is their source of hope. Where am I going to get money? Well, I've got to catch it. I've got to make sure this net doesn't have holes, and so it can catch a fish, right? They're lost.

They're caught up in their occupation.

They're fishermen, right? In their jobs. They're probably, they've been doing this for a long time. The text tells us that for at least two of these men, their father is a fisherman.

And so this net, this idea of fishermen is they're just, they are focused on life. They're focused on what they've always done. They're focused on what their dad has always done, right? And into this

world of just sort of mundane daily focus, Jesus steps into the scene, right?

[8 : 51] And does something fairly unique, fairly radical, right? And we'll look at that in just a second. But then let's look at chapter nine briefly. Chapter nine ups the ante a little bit.

We look at Matthew. Matthew is far worse than a fisherman. The fishermen, they're just normal blue-collar workers who are doing their job, not looking for Jesus, but not necessarily doing anything wrong.

Matthew is a completely different situation. Matthew also is lost in his work. He's caught up in his occupation. But his occupation is a sinful occupation, right?

His occupation is actually bad for society. It's not a good thing what he is doing, right? Matthew is a tax collector. And a tax collector in the Jewish world of the first century meant that he was a collaborator.

He was allied with the Roman government, which had invaded Israel, had taken over them, and had effectively colonized the Israelite and Jewish nation, right?

[9 : 47] The Romans had colonized Judea, and Matthew was helping them. He was basically trying to help them take and steal money from the Jewish people.

And tax collectors were well known to charge exorbitant tax rates beyond what the Roman government required them to charge, right? And so he was a traitor to his own people.

He was a thief. And he was a political enemy, right? So he's a financial cheater. He's a traitor. In today's today, if we were to put it in these words today, that he is an inside stock trader who's allied with the Russian government that has successfully colonized America.

That's what Matthew is, right? That's what he represents. He's an inside stock trader who's allied with the Russian government, which has invaded and colonized America, right? So Jesus here comes to two different groups of people.

One just normal people doing their life, and one who is in almost every way an unsavory person, right? And in both of these stories, Jesus comes to them and says, follow me, right?

[10 : 55] And both of these stories behind those two little words is a wealth of theological rich food for us to meditate on. And so let's look at that, that these stories show us theology, that there is a spiritual lesson here for those of us who would hear it.

And the first is that this, notice here that Jesus, when he calls, his call to these men, either Matthew or these two sets of brothers, in no way does it depend on the worthiness of the men that he's calling.

It does not hinge on the value added that these men bring to Jesus or to his mission, right? In fact, for Matthew and John, there's probably, I mean, for John and Simon and Peter, there's probably, there were dozens of men who were fishing along the river, I mean, along the sea.

And Jesus picks these two. Why? The text doesn't tell us. He just comes to these two sets of brothers and says, follow me. Nothing about these people tips Jesus' hand and says, this one or not that one.

And in Matthew's case, it's even worse. Matthew is doing all kinds of shameful, dishonorable, socially unhealthy behavior that would say he does not deserve to be one whom Jesus calls, right?

[12 : 11] And all of us, if we were to zoom out a little bit, are somewhere on this brothers doing their life to Matthew spectrum. That there is nothing about us which commends Jesus to calling us.

In fact, for most of us, if we're honest with ourselves, we're probably more on the Matthew side of the spectrum. That there are things in our life that we would say, if Jesus knew about this, he would never have called me, right?

There are things in my story that I'd say, if the people of the church knew this about me, then they would say, ooh, Jesus shouldn't call him. Jesus is not supposed to call him.

And yet, what happens? Jesus comes to these people who are doing either nothing or everything to, nothing to deserve it or things to not deserve it. And he says, come follow me.

And theologians have studied this over the years and they've come up with a term for this. They call it unconditional election. That is, Christ's call, his electing of these men to follow him is not conditioned, is unconditioned upon any merit, upon any deserving, any value that these men bring into Jesus' life or work or ministry.

[13 : 23] And the best way I can try to think to illustrate this is to look at how Jesus, who was a rabbi in the Jewish world back then, how other rabbis would have called their followers. And so Jesus is a Jewish rabbi, which is a religious teacher in the first century, right?

And so it was common for religious teachers to gather their pupils, to create a little cohort of other men who would follow them. And they would teach them. And this is, we know this well from Jewish literature, that there's different rabbis like Shammai and Hillel and other ones.

And they would form little groups who would say, I'm in the school of Shammai or I'm in the school of Hillel. And Jesus is doing the same thing, right? But if you think about how academics work, even today, you want to choose the pupil who has the most potential, right?

You want to find someone who's going to be in your school who you think this is the outstanding pupil. You know, this works in academics all today. The one who gets to be the teaching assistant, the one who gets to be the next doctoral student is the one who's really up to snuff academically, right?

And you would think that Jesus would call someone like Paul, right? Paul tells us in Galatians that he was better than all of his contemporaries. In all the ways that you could have been a really good Jewish leader or a good Jewish theologian, Paul says, I was here.

[14:40] Paul met the conditions to be the one who follows a rabbi. But what does Rabbi Jesus do? This is so cool. He turns all of that upside down, right?

He picks blue-collar laborers who have probably the equivalent of a GED and says, you, follow me. And he picks a political traitor and a government-sanctioned thief and says, you, follow me, right? And this challenges me. And if you think about it, it should challenge all of us, right? This idea of unconditional election, that when everything about a person in a culture or a moral status says, pick that one, Jesus says, no, no, I'm going to pick the one who doesn't really up to snuff or even doesn't deserve it, isn't up to snuff, right?

And that's true today that here's where the gospel, the sweetness of Jesus' gentle heart ministers to us is that there is no virtue or accomplishment that commends you to Jesus.

And on the flip side, there is no vice or failure, which is so bad that it alienates you from Jesus and his call.

[15:57] And this is really, really good news. This is why Christianity is unlike every other religion or value system in our world, because it says that the good grace, the favor of the most important person is not dependent on what you've done in the last week or in the last lifetime, good or bad.

It's just contingent upon his free grace to say, come, follow me, be in my presence, be in my midst. I will train you. I will shape you into the best, most socially productive, most healthy version of yourself, right?

That no one is so good that they deserve Jesus' call and no one is so wicked that they are beyond God's call. That is a sweet grace that if you sink your teeth into it, shapes how you think about not just religion, but all of life, right?

We can talk about grace in the Christian faith a lot, but grace, unconditional election, is undeserved or unmerited favor. Christ doesn't call people who deserve it to come close to him, but he calls people who are either doing their own thing or actually doing unhealthy things to come and follow him, right?

And there's a second sweet truth in this, is that this, that Jesus' call always works. We saw this in our Old Testament passage of Isaiah 55. When Jesus calls someone to follow him, he always gets his man.

[17:22] He always, the person says, yes, I will. He breaks these men out of their nets, out of their focus on their nets, or he breaks this man out of his great sin. And they rise up out of it and they say, yes, I will follow you, Lord.

Jesus' word disengages us from ourselves and engages us with Jesus. Look at verse 20. It says, immediately Simon left his nets. In verse 13 as well, Matthew gets up.

And the same is true as Jesus. When Jesus calls us, he causes us to leave ourselves, leave our priorities, leave our sin, and sets us on a new trajectory, a new goal for our lives, for our stories, for our families, for our vocations, for our money.

Everything about us is reset in a way that is disciplined to Jesus, right? Again, another theological term. We call this effectual calling.

It's an invitation that leads to a decision. That when Jesus calls, people respond and they respond in, yes, I will follow you. I understand now, Jesus, that there is something about me that would keep you from calling me.

[18:30] But nonetheless, you do call me. Why would I not want to be in the presence of such sweet, free acceptance? I want to follow you with my whole life, with my whole family, with my

whole heart.

Jesus calls. They trust. They obey. And they follow. And notice that Jesus doesn't come up and strong-arm Matthew and say, follow me and I'll get you out of your sin. No, he says, follow me. And he just, he does it. He leaves everything. He stands and he comes and follows this man, right? And we know from the rest of the scriptures that we know that this is because the Holy Spirit is working new life in the life of every person, every woman, child, and man that Jesus calls what we call regeneration, a desire to be in the presence of Jesus for eternity.

That is effectual calling, right? And the motor behind all of this, the motor, the energy behind unconditional election and effectual calling is nothing less than the sweet, persistent, kind, gracious call of Jesus and the heart of Jesus, which is gently calling women and men to follow him.

Nothing less than the sweet, persistent, kind Jesus is at work all this. That scripture is all about human beings who are stuck in their own occupations or stuck in their own sin.

[19 : 59] And Jesus coming into the midst of that and saying, come, follow me. And Jesus looks in compassion upon these men and upon each of us and says, come, follow me. And this is discipleship.

It's Jesus' word tearing us away from what is most debased in us in the case of Matthew or what is most distracting about us in the case of the brothers, the fishermen, and saying, come, follow me. Right? And these stories show us that Jesus is like a spiritual doctor. This is what he compares himself to in chapter nine. There's those who are sick don't need a doctor, but those who are, well, don't need a doctor, but it's a sick.

And every person we know from sin is spiritually sick. And I have come that they may have life, as we read. Right? So that's our first point, that Jesus following, just like Jesus is, discipleship is following Jesus when he calls, but that's not it.

It's following Jesus when he calls together. Right? That the first part of discipleship is Jesus' call, but that the simple truth is that you can never have a healthy disciple who's out on his own.

[21 : 05] Jesus doesn't say, come, follow me, and go out there. But no, he begins to form, starting with these first men, a community, a new radical type of connection of people who are going to follow Jesus together.

Right? He builds healthy disciples who depend on him and depend on each other. Right? The best way I can think about this is recently, as I've moved back to Colorado, I've started thinking about being in the mountains again.

So growing up in Colorado, I love mountaineering, which is this, frankly, not safe version of climbing mountains in the winter. So, you know, you're climbing in ice, you're climbing in snow, it's cold.

I have a brutal failure rate because I don't want to die. Right? So it's highly, it's a little technical. There's elevation. And so mountaineering is the art of climbing really hard mountains.

And so last year, there was a documentary that came out about an alpinist, a guy who climbs mountains in the winter. And the documentary is called The Alpinist. I recommend it. It is kind of intense.

[22 : 06] So maybe not with little kids, but it is a great documentary. Right? And so this alpinist named Mark Andrew Leclerc. Right? And he's one of the best out there. He's known, everybody knows that Leclerc is the best alpinist out there.

He's doing some of the hardest routes without ropes. Just people are like, oh, he'll never pull this off. And then he goes and pulls it off. Right? And there's this historian of alpinism named Bernadette McDonald.

She's an alpinist herself. And she says this. She says, climbing is a form of freedom, of physical freedom and a form of philosophical freedom. And the ultimate experience of freedom is to do it alone.

Right? The ultimate experience of freedom is to do it alone. And so both in alpinism, they're doing these brutal mountains. But if you're going to be the best at it, you do it alone. You go at it by yourself.

Right? And so there's this culture within that climbing mountains of, can you do it alone? Are you by yourself? If you're really good, you do it by yourself. Right? And so as a result, there's a brutal failure rate.

[23 : 09] And alpinists know that they're basically just a ticking time bomb of when they're going to die. Right? And that desire for freedom leads to soloing not only brutal mountains, but ultimately to

death.

Right? And as I was watching this, I was like, man, I think that's not just in climbing mountains. That that spirit of, if you're really good at life, you do it by yourself, has sort of permeated and sunk into every facet of our culture, of even of our church, and certainly of our discipleship.

That we think if we're doing a good job at this, I'm doing it, I'm on my own. Right? How is this true? Well, think of it this way. When I'm on campus and I'm asking students like, hey, how's your life? How's your walk with Jesus? Right? How are you doing in your faith right now? You know what every single time students say to me? Every time without fail, they say, hey, I haven't been reading my Bible.

I haven't been reading my Bible. You know what that tells me? That tells me that these students, and probably if I were to ask you the same question, ask myself this, we have trained ourselves, disciplined ourselves to think about discipleship as what am I doing by myself with my Bible?

[24 : 19] That we think about discipleship in one track, by myself, that I haven't been doing a very good job of it, my works, my effort for Jesus. I haven't been reading my Bible very much.

That tells me that in this individualist mountaineering personal drive within mountaineering has sunk into how we think about discipleship. What am I doing by myself, right?

Too many Christians think about discipleship as me and Jesus, right? Another story to think about this. So I just moved from southern New Mexico. If you've ever been to southern New Mexico, you know that it is effectively Afghanistan.

In fact, when they were bringing Afghan refugees back from Afghanistan, they brought them to southern Texas, and they got out and they're like, oh, we're home. This fits in, right?

This looks like Afghanistan, right? And so part of the experience of southern New Mexico is everybody feels like they have to grow grass because it's a Texas import, right? Grass is not meant to grow in southern New Mexico.

[25 : 20] It just does not happen, right? So me being a good landowner, a good homeowner, I look at the Johnsons, I look at the Davises, I look at my neighbors and say, I got to grow grass, right? So I'm trying to grow grass. Does not grow well.

But the only thing I've learned, the only way you can make grass grow in southern New Mexico is if there's other grass around the grass you're trying to grow, right? That's the only way it happens.

If you've got a little tuft of grass out there in the middle of the desert by itself, it will die. It cannot live. If 105 degrees for three weeks will happen, no rain, and that grass will burn and die.

The only way it can happen is if there's other grass around it to hold the moisture in, to prevent weeds from coming in and destroying it. And I was thinking, I was watching this, I was like, this is how discipleship works.

If we're going to be a functioning, healthy society, a functioning, healthy church, the only way that you're going to survive is to have other grass around you, other disciples around you who are going to protect you, who are going to nourish you, who are going to feed you in a way that keeps and sustains your following of Jesus, right?

[26 : 27] The only way that we can grow as disciples in a hostile environment is to be surrounded by other disciples. And the rest of the Bible tells us that this is abundantly clear, right?

That Jesus calls people out of sin, individuals out of sin and into a community of other disciples.

First, he starts with the 12, but it quickly expands to the 70 and to the 500.

And by Acts, we see thousands of people gathered together to follow Jesus, their risen Savior, right? Paul, later in the Bible, in the New Testament, describes the church as a body, right?

You do not have a healthy arm just lying around over by the side of the stage. No, that would be a very unhealthy arm. Healthy followers of Jesus are connected to each other.

And if I can drive this home, what does this mean very practically? It means that the content that you get from your pastor is not enough to be a healthy follower of Jesus. It means the content that I'm saying even right now is maybe good by God's grace, but it is insufficient to be a healthy follower of Jesus.

[27 : 39] We need a body. We need a whole organism of other followers around us to be shaping us to be faithful followers of the one who calls us, right?

Think of it this way. Last year, Elon Musk. Anybody heard of Elon Musk? He makes waves a lot in our world right now. He said this. He said he's a—I don't know what he is. He does a lot of weird stuff. But anyways, he's a technocrat.

He invented Tesla. He's doing all these things. But he says this about college. He says, college is for fun and to show that you know how to do your chores, but it's not for learning, right? He says, college is for fun, but it's not for learning.

He says, you can learn anything you want from Wikipedia, right? And he's probably right. You can learn anything you want from Wikipedia. But then if that's true, why are colleges still a thing?

Well, the reality is we all—if you're going to learn effectively, you need the community context that a college campus provides of professors, of classmates, of the time, of the culture and the community that a college provides to grow into the field that you want to study, right?

[28 : 44] So Elon's not wrong, but he's also not right. That if you want to be a healthy kinesiologist or a healthy doctor, you need the formation of the school that you're in, right?

It means—what does this mean for us? It means that you and I have a call to follow Jesus together, to exhort and encourage and even rebuke one another to follow Jesus in every facet of our lives, which makes me ask, do I have that?

As I move to a new city? It makes me ask, do you have that? It makes me ask college students, do you have that in the most isolated time in human history?

Do we have people who say, let's follow Jesus in the Bible? Do you see how is Jesus working in your heart recently? How is your prayer life right now? How are you encountering your own sexuality and the call of Jesus?

How are you encountering your relationship with money and the call of Jesus, of politics? Here's another one. How are you encountering technology and media and the call of Jesus, right?

[29 : 57] Let's say you read your Bible for 30 minutes a day, five days a week. That's two and a half hours. Let's say you go to church for an hour and a half a week. Let's say if you're really up to snuff, you go to a home group for an hour a week.

That means you're getting five to seven hours of time with the body of Christ. But then I get every week this daily report of how much time I've spent on technology and in social media.

And it's like five to seven hours a day because of my job and because of my addiction to social media. That means that there are five to seven times more formation, hours on task with technology and media than even would be a healthy Christian life.

And I have a feeling that most of us aren't very different. That we are being tremendously shaped, informed by communities and by voices that are not Jesus. Am I saying get rid of social media?

Am I saying get rid of technology? Not necessarily, but I'm saying ask what communities are you being formed by? What relationships are discipling you and your marriage and your family, right?

[31 : 02] What's the strongest pull, right? So discipleship is following Jesus when he calls together, last but not least, welcoming others. Just as Jesus invites us to follow him, he calls us to invite others to follow him.

What does Jesus say here when he says, very, very beginning, he says, follow me and I will make you fishers of men, right? And he says this to men who are fishermen. So they would have thought, oh, we're supposed to, we're going to go out and catch new people.

And they're going to get welcome into this as well. Well, what do we call this? Evangelism, sharing our faith, right? That our discipleship to Jesus always has the goal of being missionaries, of going and bringing others into the community that we are ourselves a part of.

This is what's really, here's something that's really interesting that struck me as I was thinking about this. Notice in chapter four that Jesus does not say, follow me and I will free you from your sins. Or follow me and I will satisfy all of your deepest spiritual needs.

Or follow me and I will give you success in your fishing. No, that's not what he says. He says, follow me and I will make you go get people who will follow me. That the goal of discipleship, the purpose of discipleship of Jesus is welcoming others into being disciples of Jesus, right?

[32 : 19] Discipleship is not for your personal experience of God, this means. It's not even for necessarily, hear what I'm saying. It's not even for our salvation. That is a step along the way that we experience intimacy with Jesus and are saved from our sins.

But the goal is to be a people who are bringing other people into knowing and following Jesus, right? It's evangelism. And Jesus models this to us in chapter nine.

He calls Matthew, who should not have been a disciple, and says, follow me. And then he goes to Matthew's friends, who also shouldn't be disciples. And he scandalizes the people who were supposed to be the experts and say, why is he hanging out with people he should not be hanging

out with?

Jesus is incredibly evangelistic in how he does discipleship. He tells his disciples even, you are the light of the world. Let your light so shine that others may see your good deeds.

Glorify God and be disciples, right? Jesus models this and he calls us to do the same thing. I've been listening to this podcast by a man who's really shaped my own thinking about ministry, a pastor in New York.

[33 : 32] And he says that if the church is going to have an effective missionary influence in our world today, it's probably not going to happen through pastors. And I've experienced this already on campus, that when I go to campus and students ask, so what do you do?

I say, well, I'm a college pastor. Wall goes up and they go, and they take a couple steps back, sometimes physically, definitely socially. They look at me as a liability to campus health and life, right?

I knew of pastor actually who got out of ministry because he felt like his vocation as a pastor was getting in the way of evangelism. Now, that's not my experience. I know that I'm still called to be a minister of word and sacrament.

But what I'm saying here is that in the past, we could rely on pastors to be doing this. We could count on people coming in, but that's not the case anymore. Effective ministry is going to happen by people who are not paid to do it.

It's going to happen through the laity, even through people like you, because people look at us and they mistrust and they're cynical of pastors. And on this podcast, there's a pastor in Rome.

[34 : 39] He says this. He's an evangelical pastor. He says, unofficial ministry is more effective than official ministry. Unofficial ministry is more effective than official ministry. What does that mean?

It means that having your neighbors, having your coworkers, having your kids and their parents from school into your house for dinner, those sorts of things, going in how you behave at your kids' sports programs, this is the ministry that is going to be maybe more effective at discipleship than maybe what I can do sometimes.

You maybe are better gatherers than I can be, right? The people in the pews are the best disciple makers. My wife does this amazingly well. My wife is an artist, and so she connects with other artists who are especially cynical of the Christian faith.

And already she's met a ton of artists in our area. And like just on Friday night, we were touring and touring that old Colorado city looking at art. And she's just effortless in how she can make a switch from talking about art to talking about beauty to talking about the God of beauty.

And if I try to do that, they go, you're a pastor. You're paid to do that. Sorry, bud. But she does it so well, right? So she's found her niche. God has given you a niche someplace.

[35 : 57] God has placed people in your life whom only you can love, whom only you can say, Jesus is more gracious than maybe you and I expected. Would you study and follow him with me, right?

We must be an outward-facing community, right? So Jesus says, first, come follow me. And he says, come follow me in the community of those who are following me, and then come welcome others into following me.

And in this, we see the heart of Jesus is to train disciples. And that's really sweet, good news to each one of us. So first, does that minister to you?

Does that shape you in a way that you say, my gosh, Jesus is more generous than I thought when I came in this morning. He's more kind, and I want to follow him more. Second, does it shape you to say, I want to welcome other people.

I want to include others into this community. And I want to be following Jesus together. And lastly, do I have people who I can bring into gently, but slowly, prayerfully come and follow Jesus, right?

[37 : 00] Two takeaways from this is, do you see the generous, gracious heart of Jesus towards you and his call for you to follow him? And do you see how you are being disciplined?

Do you welcome others into that? Would you pray with me? Father in heaven, we're grateful, first and foremost, for your gracious call to us. We don't deserve it.

We need you to work in our hearts and our lives to follow you more and to welcome others in. We know that you are doing this. You always have been. And we pray that you would be faithfully tilling the hearts of our soil and our heart and our city.

It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
[38 : 09] Amen.