

Small Groups Study Guide

Matthew 4:12-25

October 15, 2023

1. Spend time discussing how everyone is doing.
2. Open up with a short prayer or popcorn style (where everyone can pray a little bit)
3. Lesson
 - a. Gets into what the next sermon series is about (Jesus' sermon on the mount in Matthew ... there is also a sermon on the plain in Luke). I want to get you in the mindset that he taught everywhere that he could ... see Matthew 4:23-25.
 - b. Matthew 4:12-25 (MSG)
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12-17 When Jesus got word that John had been arrested, he returned to Galilee. He moved from his hometown, Nazareth, to the lakeside village Capernaum, nestled at the base of the Zebulun and Naphtali hills. This move completed Isaiah's revelation:

Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,
road to the sea, over Jordan,
Galilee, crossroads for the nations.
People sitting out their lives in the dark
saw a huge light;
Sitting in that dark, dark country of death,
they watched the sun come up.

This Isaiah-prophesied revelation came to life in Galilee the moment Jesus started preaching. He picked up where John left off: "Change your life. God's kingdom is here."

18-20 Walking along the beach of Lake Galilee, Jesus saw two brothers: Simon (later called Peter) and Andrew. They were fishing, throwing their nets into the lake. It was their regular work. Jesus said to them, "Come with me. I'll make a new kind of fisherman out of you. I'll show you how to catch men and women instead of perch and bass." They didn't ask questions, but simply dropped their nets and followed.

21-22 A short distance down the beach they came upon another pair of brothers, James and John, Zebedee's sons. These two were sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, mending their fishnets. Jesus made the same offer to them, and they were just as quick to follow, abandoning boat and father.

23-25 From there he went all over Galilee. He used synagogues for meeting places and taught people the truth of God. God's kingdom was his theme—that beginning right now they were under God's government, a good government! He also healed people of their diseases and of the bad effects of their bad lives. Word got around the entire Roman province of Syria. People brought anybody with a sickness, whether mental, emotional, or physical. Jesus healed them, one and all. More and more people came, the momentum gathering. Besides those from

Galilee, crowds came from the “Ten Towns” across the lake, others up from Jerusalem and Judea, still others from across the Jordan.

c. Info on scripture (use as you see fit)

* Much of this information comes from Matthew: The NIV Application Commentary

- i. Jesus’ ministry has traditionally been reckoned as lasting three years: a year of obscurity, a year of popularity, and a year of increasing rejection.
- ii. V. 12 Jesus returned to Galilee to pick up where John had left off before he was imprisoned most likely. John had been preaching ... it looks like this spurred Jesus into activity for the first time.
- iii. V. 12 Josephus underscores that Herod Antipas imprisoned John for political reasons; that is, he feared that John’s popularity with the people, along with his preaching and baptism, might lead the people to some form of sedition. Matthew fills in later an additional moral reason behind John’s arrest: John the Baptist had publicly condemned Herod Antipas for having an affair with, and eventually marrying, Herodias, his half-brother Philip’s wife.
- iv. V. 12 We might assume that Jesus withdraws from the area of John’s arrest to distance himself from danger. But when we realize that Herod Antipas ruled the region of Galilee, Jesus is not going to Galilee to escape danger from him. Herod’s capital city, Tiberias, is only eight and a half miles down the coast of the Sea of Galilee from Capernaum, the base of Jesus’ ministry. One commentator even suggests that Jesus goes to the center of Herod’s realm of authority as a challenge to him. Whether or not this is the case, Jesus certainly is not fleeing danger.
- v. V. 12 Returning to Galilee, Jesus goes first to his hometown of Nazareth, where apparently his mother and brothers and sisters are still living. Matthew says only that “leaving Nazareth,” Jesus goes to Capernaum, but Luke fills in some of the details of his time in his former hometown. Jesus attends the synagogue, and as a returning successful preacher, reads from Scripture. However, he offends the townspeople’s ethnic sensitivities when he reveals that his ministry will include Gentiles, so they attempt to kill him (see Luke 4:16–31).
- vi. V. 17 Matthew’s summary of Jesus’ message is the same as that of John the Baptist: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near” (4:17; cf. 3:2).
- vii. V. 18 Jesus is doing something so innocent as walking down the shore of the sea of Galilee. THE KINGDOM OF God advances in a unique way as Jesus walks along the shore of the sea of Galilee, probably near Capernaum, and calls fishermen to join him. The “Sea of Galilee,” located about sixty miles north of Jerusalem, is called “Sea of Kinnereth” in the Old Testament.
- viii. V. 18-20 Jesus approaches these men and calls out, “Come, follow me ... and I will make you fishers of men” (4:19). Simon Peter was most likely using a cast net ... large net with weights all around outside so it would cover fish like a parachute (it was hard work). Surprisingly, in the middle of their workday, they immediately leave their nets and follow him (4:20). The expression “left their nets” implies that they are leaving behind everything, including livelihood and home. Peter states it emphatically later: “We have left everything to follow you!” (19:27).

- ix. V. 21-22 They were most likely using the much more complicated trammel net ... a three-layered net made of sections making it up to a hundred feet long. James and John were getting ready in the morning for the next round of fishing. Jesus doesn't seem to care much that the nets need mending. They also leave everything behind to follow Jesus, including their boat and their father (4:21–22). By obeying Jesus' call, they are relinquishing commitment to the family business, their assets, and their livelihood, surely having an impact on varied family relationships, responsibilities and obligations.
 - x. Maybe by no small chance, these four would be the inner circle of Jesus' ministry and mission. Simon himself would become the "rock" that the church was built on.
 - xi. Gospel of John shows us that there is a very good chance there was a prior relationship between these four and Jesus. Andrew was one of the two disciples of John the Baptist who left him to become a disciple of Jesus, and he immediately brought his brother Peter to Jesus (John 1:35–42). Likely many of them accompanied Jesus at the wedding in Cana.
- d. Questions and prompts
- i. Even if these four already knew Jesus before he asked them to follow him, can you imagine the enormity of what he is asking them to give up? Name some of the things these four were giving up by choosing to follow Jesus wherever he went (geographically or spiritually). Discuss.
 - ii. What questions does this story bring up in your mind?
 - iii. Also, don't forget the beginning of the scripture where Jesus truly starts his ministry once John is jailed. Do you think Jesus really knew then what would happen to him about three years later?
 - iv. Of course, you have to be asked if you were in Jesus's shoes or the shoes of any of the four of these men, what would you do or say when Jesus said, "Follow me"?
 - v. What do you think it was about Jesus or the situation that convinced these men to follow Jesus?
 - vi. I think that part of our job as Christians and the church is to continue to offer that simple invitation ... "Follow me." How can we do that right here in our community or wherever you live?
- e. Watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0eODunc52EQ>