

Called ^{by} Name

ISAIAH 43:1

Theme Verse: *Do not fear, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name, you are mine.*

—Isaiah 43:1 NRSV

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Called by Name-Part 2: Called to Discipleship

Opening Thoughts: Knowing our first call by God is a *Call by the Gospel*, we learn we are not only God's children, but also disciples, followers of Jesus. We are *Called to Discipleship*.

Opening Prayer: Heavenly Father, we are thankful you have called us by name to you through the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We know we have not done anything to make us worthy of this call, but that it comes to us only from your love. Open our hearts and minds so we may listen to what your Word is saying to us. Bless our time together, binding our hearts through the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Called to Discipleship

Read Matthew 9:9-13, Mark 1:16-20, and Acts 9: 3-9

- How are these three passages similar? How are they different?
- Did those who were called have to do anything before they could be called?
- Were any of these men called based on their talents or abilities?

Read Matthew 8:18-22

- How are these two examples different from the ones in the previous passages?

When Jesus called his disciples and Saint Paul, he did it without basing the call on what the disciples wanted to do or might be able to offer. None of them were particularly well suited for discipleship. Jesus would spend nearly three years teaching and preparing 12 of the disciples for their future ministry. Paul, too, would receive special revelations from Jesus to prepare him to become a missionary to the gentiles. There is nothing in the Bible that states those called had any reason to follow Jesus. First God calls us to believe in Jesus. Then, he *Calls Us to Discipleship*. Both calls come by God's grace.

The four passages we just read underscore the fact **we cannot choose to be disciples of Jesus; the choice is Christ's**. Without the *Call by the Gospel*, without faith, discipleship is impossible.

Reread Matthew 8:19-20

- What does Jesus tell the scribe being a follower really means?

Be sure to download both Part 1 and 3 of this Adult Bible Study at the web page listed below.

The book of Acts was authored by Luke.

Paul spent almost three years being prepared for discipleship.

Reread Matthew 8:21-22

Jesus makes it clear the terms of discipleship are not negotiable; the call will not wait for us to fulfill our earthly obligations.

- **Do you identify with any of these people? How?**
- **What are some things that make it hard to accept the *Call to Discipleship*?**

In the book *The Cost of Discipleship*, the Lutheran pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer says, “Only he who believes is obedient, and only he who is obedient believes.”⁽¹⁾ Bonhoeffer links faith in Jesus to discipleship and discipleship to faith in Jesus. Bonhoeffer also insists that an equal emphasis on both parts of this statement must be part of being a true follower.

- **Do you see any truth of this statement in the Bible passages you just read?**
- **Have you found this statement to be true in your own journey of discipleship?**

Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

- **Who does God call and why?**
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
- **How does this instruction to the church in Corinth apply to your congregation and to you personally? (v. 31)**
- **How is Paul’s description of those who are called remind us of Jesus Christ?**

We are accustomed to making assessments and judgments based on social and cultural customs of this world. Our human nature draws us toward the idea of earthly perfection. We seek the smart, the wealthy, the powerful and the noble because that is what the world values. We often get caught up in the world’s ways.

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities are often left on the fringes of culture and society. Unfortunately, in many cases, this is also true within the church, the *Body of Christ*. Many people with disabilities are left out or singled out. They are considered to be the object of ministry rather than partners in ministry.

- **How could things change in your congregation if Paul’s words to the Corinthians became a pattern for your ministry?**
- **Is there something that could be changed that would encourage a fuller participation of people with disabilities in the life of your congregation?**

When we are *Called by the Gospel*, through Word and Sacrament, we are also *Called to Discipleship*. God chooses who will be called and he maintains the relationship by the power of the Holy Spirit. Discipleship is a *divinely-empowered human action*; it is obedience enabled by faith and faith that is enhanced by obedience. It is equally accessible and available to every believer. There are no prerequisites or exclusions based on abilities. The exact details of what discipleship is will vary with each individual. This diversity strengthens the *Body of Christ*.

Closing Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for calling us to you and making us your disciples. We ask that you continue to strengthen us through the work of the Holy Spirit. Enable us to follow your ways. We know we do not deserve your love, but you have chosen us by your grace. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

(1) Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, *The Cost of Discipleship*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1959, page 54.

God calls us to faith.
God calls us to tell others.
Both “callings” *Call Us to Discipleship*.

Does your congregation minister to people with disabilities or with people with disabilities?

Word-the Bible
Sacrament-
Holy Baptism,
Holy Communion

We obey because of faith; our faith grows as we obey.