



NAC-USA  
DEVELOPMENT  
INSTITUTE

**Discipleship:  
Who is  
invited?**

**Deciding for  
Discipleship**

**Discipleship:  
How can we  
continue to  
grow?**

# MIDWEEK SCRIPT

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**2017**

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February

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## Session 1 – Discipleship: Who is invited?

Welcome to our first session of February. This month we will be exploring the topic of discipleship and we will discuss how all are offered the invitation to follow Jesus and are given the opportunity to decide whether or not to make Him their Leader and Teacher. We will conclude the month by growing in our understanding of what disciples are called to do and how they live day to day as followers of Jesus Christ.

Before we dive into our theme for this session, the invitation of Jesus, let's first understand the word disciple. The word "disciple" was the most common name for the followers of Jesus Christ in the early church, and is used more than 245 times in the four Gospels and the Book of Acts. A disciple of Jesus is someone who has decided to follow Him daily and encourages others to do the same. Following Him means that they are continually seeking to learn from His example and strive to change their nature so that they can reflect the majesty of their Teacher to the world. Discipleship isn't a short-term program. It's a life-long journey that is filled with ups and downs and challenges but brings great reward.

During the sessions this month we will be referring to Jesus's calling of Andrew and Peter to follow Him. We find the first encounter of these two apostles with Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew:

*And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." They immediately left their nets and followed Him. (Matthew 4:18-20)*

So we see here that the journey of discipleship for these two fishermen began with a simple invitation, "Follow Me." The Bible doesn't provide us with a background story of Peter and Andrew outside of their relationship and their occupation. We aren't given much of an indication as to why they would immediately change the course of their lives to accept the invitation of a stranger. But they put down their nets, they put down their lives, and set out on a new life offered to them by Jesus. Just imagine this! They left their nets and followed Him. They immediately answered His call.

We learn from their experience that this invitation that Jesus offers to be His disciple isn't so simple because in order to accept the invitation, one has to be willing to let go of their life and let Jesus **become** their life. That's what Peter and Andrew were saying when they put down their nets. The invitation that Jesus presented to them was a call to turn away from all they had known, all that they had been trained to do. It was a call to leave behind the past and embrace a future with Jesus. They weren't given much insight into what that future would hold, but still they were inspired enough to let go of the control they had on their lives to become something new.

How incredibly blessed were these two men and the other disciples who heard the same call? They were invited to walk with, talk to, and learn from Jesus on a daily basis. Do you want to know something? We are all incredibly blessed because Jesus's invitation to follow Him has been offered to all of us! At some point in our lives, we also heard the call of Jesus Christ. The very same invitation offered to these two fishermen is ours to accept if we are so willing. But just as Peter and Andrew had to be willing to drop their nets and let go of their lives, we also have to be willing to do the same and that isn't often easy.

We'll get into making the decision to follow Jesus more in our next session, but to close our time together today, let's focus on what we are being invited to. First, we are being invited by the Son of God to be His follower so that He can be our teacher. So many seek to learn from the best teachers in their fields or read from the best sources of knowledge to grow in their understanding. We are invited to learn from the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. The Messiah, our Savior, the only begotten Son of God. We're invited to learn from the Master. Second, this invitation is a calling to embrace the person you were made to be by God. He has called us all to do great things in His name and we do that by accepting His invitation to leave behind the old and become new. And third, it's a personal invitation from the One who has always existed, to live eternally with Him. This isn't just an invitation for a few weeks or years, it's an invitation to eternal glory with Him.

There is always time to accept the invitation of Jesus to follow and as the Gospels tell us time and time again, Jesus did not withhold the invitation from anyone. It was offered to all, yet only a small number accepted it and experienced its

life-changing impact. The invitation has been offered to you and to me. Have we accepted it? Have we let go of our past in order to embrace a future with Him? Does our life reflect the impact the Teacher has had on us each day?

Please turn to your guides to discuss these and more questions.

## **Session 2 – Deciding for Discipleship**

Welcome back! Last session, we discovered that Jesus' call to follow Him is for all people. He has given each one of us the opportunity to transform our nature with Him as our example. In this session, we will look at the moment we make the decision to follow Jesus and become His disciple.

We've already learned what it means to be a disciple: someone who has decided to daily follow Jesus and encourages others to do the same. So what does it mean to follow? When we decide to follow Jesus, it means we are devoted to living our lives for His glory. When we behave like children of God, we glorify Him. From that point forward, we have the opportunity to impact lives in the name of Jesus. With our words and actions, we share Jesus and proclaim His glory with each person that we interact with. This means that, as disciples, we need to be credible witnesses of Jesus Christ. Our lives need to be proof that we stand for our God, His mission, and His love for all people. How do you daily follow Jesus and prove that you stand for God?

Being a disciple of Jesus sounds like a lot of work because it is a lot of work. We cannot make the decision to be His disciple and then continue to live our lives the same way we did before. We are called to something more. When we live out the purposes that God intended for us, when we follow His will, we become the best version of ourselves – the person God created us to be. Being Jesus' disciple means we are prepared to be disciplined in His teachings. When we embrace Jesus as our leader and Savior, then we want to act and speak in ways that reflect Him. And when our nature is transformed, that is when people can see Christ through us and experience His love.

Were the disciples of Jesus' time prepared to follow Him? How prepared do we have to be before making the decision to follow Him daily? Let's look again at Matthew 4:18-20:

*And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." They immediately left their nets and followed Him.*

We can notice how Jesus' invitation to Peter and Andrew alludes to their profession as fishermen. In His call, He assures Peter and Andrew that they do not need to be afraid of the work of discipleship. They used to be fishermen and will continue doing the same thing as disciples, except that they will be fishers of men and bring people to Christ.

As we discussed in the first small group session of this month, Jesus' invitation to follow Him is offered to all people. It's not just for people with certain skills or jobs. God has given each one of us specific gifts and talents. And we have each been called to different paths of life. We have been equipped for a life of following Jesus. Peter and Andrew didn't completely abandon their skills as fishermen; they were able to use the gifts they already had to be disciples of Christ. We already have what it takes to jump into a life of discipleship. Fear and self-doubt should not be factors in our decision to follow Jesus.

It's also important to notice their actions after they make the decision to follow Jesus: "they immediately left their nets." When we decide to follow Jesus, we do not want to hesitate with what we should do next. We need to be firm in our decision so that should we struggle on our journey of discipleship, we're not tempted to turn back. Instead, we must be sure of our willingness to follow Jesus even during trials. Peter and Andrew's immediate following displays their trust in Jesus and His impact on their lives. They however had to make the decision every day to continue to be disciples and

grow more into His nature. We can display that same trust by accepting Jesus' invitation to be His disciple with eagerness and passion. And with this passion, we can declare and live out the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ to the world. Please turn to your guides and discuss the questions.

### **Session 3 – Discipleship: How can we continue to grow?**

Welcome to our last session in February. This session we will discuss how to grow in our understanding of what disciples are called to do and how they live day to day as followers of Jesus Christ.

One last time, let us review Jesus's calling of Andrew and Peter to follow Him:

*And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." They immediately left their nets and followed Him. (Matthew 4:18-20)*

We know the rest of the story of Andrew and Peter. They became Apostles of Jesus Christ and fulfilled their calling. We too have been called and have also answered this call. What now is expected of us by God?

Our life with Jesus begins with putting our faith in Him and accepting His Gospel of salvation. From that point forward we are expected to grow in our knowledge of God and transform our nature so that our lives will reflect the love of our Savior to all around us. In short, we are to glorify our God each day by behaving like children of God. Our conduct should be worthy of the gospel. In Philippians 1:27, the Apostle Paul encourages the believers with the following:

*Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.*

Our conduct and behavior will more and more exemplify Jesus Christ when we seek to grow and develop as His disciples every day. Some ways to grow and develop are:

- By having an active prayer life. Jesus prayed to His Father often during His time on earth. Speak with God. Seek His guidance in all matters of life.
- Pause and meditate on what God has done, is doing, and will do.
- Spend time in His Word by reading the Bible.
- Share your testimony. Tell others about the great things God has done for you.
- Glorify God by using what you have been given to assist others.
- Allow His messages and sacraments, received through the divine services, to shape your actions.

When you incorporate these disciplines into your life, the nature of Jesus can be continually cultivated within you. As mentioned in the first session, discipleship is not a short-term program. It is a life-long journey. Strive to adjust your lifestyle to include these faith-enriching practices. It's not always easy to change and adjust. That's why a disciple is willing to work hard, fight, and suffer for Christ. To become like Christ, we must defeat the old creature. This "killing" is often painful. Let us not be complacent with ourselves.

Part of being a disciple is to encourage others to do the same. One way of doing that is by living a changed life that has been impacted and transformed by Jesus. When those around us are able to see evidence of the goodness of God in our words and actions, they may be inspired to follow as well. Another way is by proclaiming the Gospel. Let people know that Jesus came to earth and died to redeem mankind from their sin and that He is going to return again to be united with the believers in His kingdom for all eternity. Share that message and invite people to believe in Him, and begin to walk the path of discipleship.

As we conclude this month, be encouraged and know that no one walks this journey alone. It is a blessing to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Our decision to be a follower of Jesus and our willingness to transform our nature to be like His brings glory to God.