



**Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on Sunday February 21st 2021 at 10:45.**

The current lockdown restrictions have resulted in the decision to not meet in person at Bethesda Chapel at present. We plan to use our YouTube channel to broadcast the services, but will still continue to provide this written service sheet. We hope and pray that you will find this outline of our service helpful, as we all seek to worship God as a Church family, wherever we are.

**Tim welcomes us.**

“Hi everybody - thanks for joining us at Blackburn Baptist Church today. It's great to have you with us, wherever you are watching. It also great, even if we can't meet together to do it in person, to sing praise to our great God, the Almighty God who's the king of creation. Let's do that now as we join in our first hymn and join the congregation of St Andrew's Cathedral in Glasgow.”

(This may be a familiar hymn and tune to many, but for the musically minded, it is sung in 6/8 time, which gives it more of a lilt than we may be used to!)

### **Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation**

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!  
O my soul, praise Him, for He is thy health and salvation!  
All ye who hear, now to His temple draw near;  
praise Him in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things so wondrously reigneth,  
shelters thee under His wings, yea, so gently sustaineth!  
Hast thou not seen how thy desires e'er have been  
granted in what He ordaineth?

Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee;  
surely His goodness and mercy here daily attend thee;  
ponder anew what the Almighty can do,  
if with His love He befriend thee.

Praise to the Lord, oh, let all that is in me adore Him!  
All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before Him;  
let the amen sound from His people again,  
gladly for aye we adore Him.

### **Tim leads us in a brief prayer.**

Father God, that song we've just sung says it all, really. We praise you today because you deserve all our praises – you are the mighty King who created all the wonders of creation that we see around us. Yet, you are so kind to us, your wayward creations, that you have made a way of salvation for us through your matchless son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you that you have brought us through him to be privileged members of your own family, a place where we know your unfailing protection and your faithful provision. Indeed, your goodness and mercy are truly with us daily. Thank you, with all our hearts. May our lives and not just our voices continue to be an offering of praise to you. Now we invite you to be with us in our service today and to speak to us through your word – please use it to show us your ways. Amen.

### **We can join in singing, or reading: Thy Word**

Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.  
Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

When I feel afraid, think I've lost my way,  
still you're there right beside me;  
and nothing will I fear as long as you are near,  
please be near me to the end.  
Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.  
Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

I will not forget your love for me and yet  
my heart forever is wandering.  
Jesus be my guide and hold me to your side  
I will love you to the end.  
Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path  
Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path

Songwriters: Amy Lee Grant / Michael Whitaker Smith  
Thy Word lyrics © Warner Chappell Music, Inc, Universal Music Publishing Group  
CCL.No 5664  
<https://youtu.be/a6LC8cu03Iq>

### **Debbie shares our Bible reading: Luke 5 1-11:**

One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signalled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw

this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"  
9For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people." So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

'Thanks be to God.

**We can watch, listen to or read our next song, which was written and is sung by Graham Kendrick: All I once held dear**

All I once held dear, built my life upon,  
all this world reveres, and wars to own,  
all I once thought gain I have counted loss,  
spent and worthless now, compared to this.  
    Knowing you, Jesus,  
    knowing you, there is no greater thing.  
    You're my all, you're the best,  
    You're my joy, my righteousness,  
    and I love you, Lord.

Now my heart's desire is to know you more,  
to be found in you and known as yours,  
to possess by faith what I could not earn,  
all-surpassing gift of righteousness.  
    Knowing you, Jesus.....

Oh, to know the power of your risen life,  
and to know You in Your sufferings,  
to become like you in your death, my Lord,  
so with you to live and never die.  
    Knowing you, Jesus,  
    knowing you, there is no greater thing.  
    You're my all, you're the best,  
    You're my joy, my righteousness,  
    and I love you, Lord.

Graham Kendrick  
Copyright © 1993 Make Way Music, used by permission, CCL no 5664  
<https://youtu.be/pTTISx6zXio>

**Tim and Debbie lead our prayers:**

Tim begins: In our prayers today, we will follow a mnemonic that's sometimes useful to guide our prayers: ACTS, standing for 'Adoration', 'Confession', 'Thanksgiving' and 'Supplication'. So let us pray.

**Debbie:** 'A' is for Adoration – it's right that we praise and honour God for who he is and all he's done for us. In the next few quiet moments, express your praise to him in your own words. (Pause)

Father, we want to praise and worship you today as you deserve. You are the great King over all kings, the creator and sustainer of our universe. You are right and true in all your ways and loving towards all that you have made. Your plans are perfect and your promises never fail. Praise you Lord.

**Tim:** 'C' is for Confession – God is all that we are not – we are fallible and go our own way so easily, but thankfully, God has made the way to forgiveness open in Jesus, so that, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. In the next few moments of silence, confess your own failings to the Lord in your heart and ask him for his cleansing. (Pause)

Forgive us, Lord, for all our wrongdoing, overt and hidden, those we are all too well aware of and those we don't even know ourselves – as the psalmist said – forgive my hidden faults. Restore us and help us to walk in humility before you.

**Debbie:** 'T' is for Thanksgiving – A wise person said that we should count our blessings. As we reflect on this, we soon realise how much we have to thank the Lord for. In the next few moments, I encourage you to name before him things to give thanks for. (Pause)

Lord, you are so good to us. Thank you for every reminder of your goodness and faithfulness towards us – and may we continually live in an attitude of gratitude towards you.

**Tim:** 'S' is for Supplication, making our requests known to God. As our loving Father, he expects us to do this and encourages us bring him our concerns, expressing our dependency on him. There are so many things we may need right now – take a few moments to talk to him about the most pressing ones that are on your heart today. (Pause)

Thank you, Lord, that you are able to do more than we can even imagine. Please hear all our prayers today as come to you in the name of your son, our saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen

**Those with access to the Internet are able to watch a short animation of the story before Tim shares the message for today based on Luke 5 1-11:**

**What makes a disciple?**

<https://youtu.be/B5qFj04eTjI>

## **Introduction**

In the NIV, this section is headed, 'The Calling of the First Disciples'. That might make us ask the question, 'What is a disciple?' Put simply, in the Bible, a disciple is a learner or student, but not in general sense we might think of that today. Today, someone is usually a student of a *subject* (law, maths, architecture or whatever), but back then, being a disciple primarily meant being a student, a follower of a *person* – it was all about being in a relationship with the teacher, whom you respected and acknowledged as greater than yourself.

This kind of discipleship is generally not a very popular idea today. People want to be leaders. They want to go on their Twitter and Instagram accounts and boast about how many ‘followers’ they have gained. If you go into a bookshop, you’ll find loads of books about leadership and how to get on in life, but not so many books in the section about being a humble follower or learner.

Yet that’s what the Bible teaches us we should aspire to – to be life-long disciples, learners from Jesus – not learners about ‘Christianity’ or ‘theology’ as our general *subject*, but those who are in a relationship with a *person*, Jesus our leader and teacher. And we never graduate from that – we never become the master with all the answers, but we continually sit at the feet of Jesus, learning from him, getting to know him better every day and becoming more like him – that’s discipleship.

In today’s passage from Luke’s gospel, we’re going to see some challenging lessons about what makes a true disciple, particularly as this worked out in the life of Simon Peter. So let’s get stuck into our passage...

### **1. Disciples Love to Hear and Learn from the Word of God (verses 1-3)**

(Verse 1) Jesus was by the Lake of Genessaret, another name for Galilee. Although, as we saw with Alec a few weeks ago, the content of Jesus’ message had caused his rejection in his home-town of Nazareth, it was not the same everywhere. Here, people were crowding around, eager to hear and be taught by Jesus. The key phrase comes at the end of verse 1 – they were ‘listening to the word of God’ – Luke leaving us in no doubt that this was exactly what Jesus was delivering. This eagerness to hear and learn from God’s word is a key characteristic of disciples of Jesus.

Although we can be part of a crowd when we are listening, God’s word reaches out to us as individuals. Jesus contacted many, as we saw last week, but he was always concerned about the individual. We’re going to see that truth throughout Luke 5, as the impact of Jesus on four different individuals is described, starting with Simon Peter in today’s passage. For each of the four, Jesus’ word transformed their lives and led to them sharing the message of Jesus in some way with others. That’s what Jesus wants to do in all our individual lives – but it starts with listening to him.

(Verses 2, 3) It was no doubt practically difficult for Jesus to talk to the crowd when they were so closely crowding round, so he came up with a great solution, asking one of the nearby fishermen, Simon, to allow him to use his boat as a floating pulpit and to teach from just offshore. (A strange pulpit we might think, but the American preacher J Vernon Magee thought not – he said that every pulpit should be, in a sense, a fishing boat.) Simon and the other fishermen were busy washing their nets, after having been out fishing during the night, as we learn shortly. This was an essential task for them – without this time-consuming activity, washing the nets to remove weed and debris, and allowing them to dry thoroughly, the nets would have tended to rot and break. The life of a fishermen, then as now, was not an easy one – fishing takes effort and preparation. So although Simon may have felt honoured that this popular teacher, Jesus, asked him to do this, we can also imagine that listening to a sermon might have been really the last thing Simon wanted to do, as a captive audience in the boat, after a fruitless night’s hard labour and then all the

effort of washing the nets. I wonder if we have ever felt like that? “I’m really too tired to read my Bible just now... I’m not sure I’m in the right frame of mind to listen to the preacher this morning.” But disciples of Jesus need to be learning from the word of God. We can’t physically listen to Jesus as those by the shore of Gennesaret had the privilege of doing, but we do have the privilege of having what they didn’t have – constant access to his written word in our hand or on our digital devices! When we don’t feel like it, those are often exactly the times when we most need to hear what Jesus has to say to us – and we should be praying that God, through his Holy Spirit, will use his word and speak clearly to us - and he will. Psalm 119 verse 105 is one of the first verses I learned by heart – ‘Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path’.

For Simon, listening to Jesus was to bring physical blessing, followed by even greater spiritual blessing in his life.

## **2. Disciples Obey Jesus (even when it doesn’t seem to make sense) (verses 4 – 7)**

(Verse 4) After the sermon, Jesus gave Simon what must have seemed a very strange instruction. Go out into the deep water and go for a catch of fish. This was contrary to all Simon’s practical experience and training in fishing on Lake Galilee. He knew that the best time to catch fish was in the cool of the night when the fish came up to the surface looking for food in the shallow water by the shore. In the heat of the day, the fish would seek the deep places to stay cool.

But disciples of Jesus obey him, even when his instructions don’t seem to make sense. The Bible is full of similar examples – God’s strange instruction to Noah to build an ark, God’s command to Gideon to send most of his fighting force away, God’s instruction to Joshua to capture the city of Jericho by marching round it... we could go on. The response of a faithful disciple is based not on the instructions themselves, but on the reliability of the one giving them.

Simon could have made all kinds of excuses to refuse this particular instruction:

- Hang on, you’re a carpenter, not a fisherman – who knows best about how to catch fish here?
- But we’ve already washed the nets – if we throw them in now, we’ll have to do it all over again
- The crowds will have scared all the fish away
- We’re too tired
- What if we make a fool of ourselves in front of all those people still on the shore?

(Verse 5) ... but he doesn’t. Although he points out that they’d tried the whole night long, he says he will do it. Why? Because it’s Jesus who says so. Simon calls Jesus ‘Master’ – Luke is the only one of the Gospel writers to use the Greek word (‘epistates’) that’s in this verse and it really means ‘commander’ or ‘boss’. So, in other words, Simon is saying – “OK, Lord, you’re the boss!” It’s a fantastic statement of faith – effectively he was surrendering command of his boat to Jesus. That’s what we’re all called to do as Jesus’ disciples – give over the command of the vessels of our lives to him without question – why? Because he’s totally trustworthy. Am I, are we prepared to do that?

Simon had already learned about Jesus from experience. If we take all the gospel accounts together, it seems very likely that Simon had known Jesus now for quite some time, probably a year – and we saw last week how Jesus had already done a miracle in his family’s life in healing his mother-in-law. The more we observe Jesus, the more we listen to him, the more we know we can trust him even when he calls for us to do something hard or that goes against the grain. Romans 10 verse 17 says that ‘faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ’. We see this here being worked out practically in Simon’s life – Jesus’ word has been at work in his heart and life and now was producing fruit of obedience. God’s word does that – it changes us from the inside out. To use a computer analogy, it ‘rewrites our operating system’ so that we behave in a totally different way.

(Verses 6,7) If we work on our own initiative like Simon had been the previous night, we may work hard for a long time without seeming success, but when we work at Jesus’ direction, failure turns to success – maybe not success as the world sees it, but definitely success in God’s eyes. That’s what we see in verse 6. An amazing miracle takes place, showing us clearly how Jesus is the king of creation – as we sang in our first hymn today – he made the fish in the first place! It’s one of the many miracles of abundant provision that we find in the Bible (like the provision of manna for the Israelites in the desert, the widow’s oil that never ran out, or the feeding of the 5000), reminding us that our God is not limited in any way. Isn’t that encouraging?!

### **3. Disciples are Aware of their own Sinfulness (verse 8 – 10a)**

(Verses 8, 9, 10a) When I read verse 8 again, it made me wonder why this was Simon’s reaction. If it were me, I might have been jumping up and down in excitement, celebrating – yet Simon does the opposite. Verses 9 and 10a suggest this was a record-breaking haul of fish – definitely more than they’d ever caught at one time before, probably more than they’d normally catch through several month’s efforts. Their boat had finally come in – literally! Maybe this could set them up for expanding the business, or they could sell the fish and put their feet up for a while. That’s what might have been going through my head. So why did this event cause Simon to reflect on his own sinfulness?

We probably need to put ourselves in Simon’s shoes (or sandals!). Perhaps a year previously, as we read about in John 1: 35 – 42, or Matthew 4:18 – 20, Simon had met Jesus, and Jesus had already invited Simon to follow him. And Simon had accepted the call and he’d seen Jesus at work and got to know him. He had followed Jesus – but in that year, he probably didn’t make a whole lot of money. He hadn’t starved, but there was probably rarely abundance – so now he’s gone back to his fishing job – he has a wife and family to provide for, after all. But somehow, it’s not like it was - a lot of times, he doesn’t even catch any fish. Now, on one of those occasions, Jesus turns up by the lake and starts teaching and, afterwards, he takes Simon out fishing - and they catch a record number of fish.

Maybe this incident made Simon realise that God could and would supply all his needs. If he follows Jesus wholeheartedly, he will not go without food or clothing. He’d probably heard Jesus say (Matthew 6:33) ‘Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well’. Simon perhaps

now sees his own proud self-sufficiency. He'd followed Jesus for a while, but then had gone back to fishing, and now he realises his mistake. There is nothing more important than following Jesus in what he calls us to do, and when we do it, he promises to provide for our needs. Making something or somebody more important than Jesus in our lives is sin.

Then, too, Simon realised that what he had just witnessed was the awesome power of God at work – there was no other explanation for this miracle. And like those in the past who had experienced first-hand a revelation of God (like Isaiah in Isaiah chapter 6), it left him reeling and acutely aware of his own impurity and inadequacy - and made him beg Jesus to go away. But of course, Jesus didn't go away – instead he offered Simon words of encouragement and hope for the future.

When we realise our sinfulness in the presence of Jesus, the amazing thing is that Jesus does not want to distance himself from us or turn away in disgust, but he invites us to turn to him, to come close to him and says to us that he can forgive us and work through us, sinful and inadequate though we are.

True disciples of Jesus are aware of their own sinfulness and unworthiness, like Simon was, but they don't ask Jesus to go away. Then turn constantly to him for forgiveness and listen for his further instructions.

#### **4. Disciples Receive the Call of Christ to be His Fellow-workers (10b)**

(Verse 10b) Simon and his fishing partners had got some nice boatloads of fish, almost more than they could handle, but Jesus had something still more valuable to offer – the chance to work alongside him in his mission to reach more people with the Good News.

It's amazing to me that God is gracious enough to invite us to be his fellow-workers (1 Corinthians 3:9), his ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20), through whom he makes his appeal to others to be reconciled to him in Jesus. He didn't have to do this, particularly when we can look at ourselves and realise that we are all unlikely candidates to do the job. But God consistently works through unlikely candidates. Simon Peter, a humble fisherman from an unfashionable region of a poor province of the Roman empire, was hardly at the top of any recruitment agency's most desirable list. Yet, Jesus could use these fishermen – and even use the training they'd gained in courage, persistence, team-work and hard work that they'd gained in their fishing jobs – to do the analogous thing he was now calling them to in catching people for salvation. [As many as 7 of the core group of 12 disciples may have been fishermen by trade - see John 21:1 -3.]

God can use you and me too, and all the background experiences that we've had in life, if we just receive his call as disciples. And he tells us, like he told Simon, not to be afraid. He knows that all of us tend to be daunted by this task of being his witnesses. But we don't need to be, because our success depends not on our own abilities, but on his power. When Jesus first called Simon in Matthew 4:19, Jesus said, "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Our first call is to *follow him*. When we do that faithfully, he can change us and help us to become fishers of men. We don't become fishers of men by being told over and over, "Hey, you must go and witness, because that's what Christians should do." We become fishers of men by following Jesus. If we follow Jesus in the path of discipleship, *he*

will make us fishers of men in the places where we are – that will look different for all of us, but we can all play our part.

## **5. Disciples Count the Cost and Follow (11)**

(Verse 11) Simon and the others realised that what Jesus was asking them to do was so important that they simply followed him. They didn't even pause to stop to weigh or count the fish they'd caught – they just got the boats on the beach and left it all behind. The boats, the nets, the record number of fish, everything. They'd learned that following Jesus was much more valuable than the boatload of fish.

And they also knew that, if Jesus could give them an impossible catch of fish in the middle of the day, he could certainly provide for all their later needs later as they came up. So they didn't care about what they were leaving behind. It didn't matter when compared to the worth of following Jesus.

To become a Christian is completely free – no cost whatsoever as Jesus paid it all in his death on the cross. He paid the penalty for us and we receive the gift of life simply by believing in Jesus and asking him for it. But becoming a disciple is different. There is great cost in becoming and staying a disciple – it may cost all we have. But it's worth it - the reward far outweighs the cost. This is what Simon and his companions realised, and why they left everything and followed Christ. They already believed in Jesus, but now were prepared to respond to his call to true discipleship.

What about us? Are we willing to give up our own priorities and make listening to God's word and following it the overriding priority of our lives, whatever that looks like? Are we willing to hand over captaincy of the sailing vessel of our lives to Jesus, and let him use us to bring others into his kingdom?

### **Recap**

So what are the characteristics of true disciples as we see them in today's passage, particularly through the experience of Simon? True disciples:

- Love to hear God's word and learn from it, asking God's Holy Spirit to illumine their lives and change them through it from the inside out
- Obey Jesus even when it doesn't seem to make sense to do so – but obey anyway because they know and trust the one who's instructing them
- Are aware of their own sinfulness in the presence of a holy God, but realise that he invites us to come to him rather than distancing himself
- Receive his gracious call to be fellow-workers in the kingdom work of calling others to faith in Christ
- Are willing to count the cost and give up their own priorities in favour of those of Jesus, knowing any hardships pale into insignificance compared to the reward of following him

**We bring our service to a close as we sing (or read) our final song today:**

## **I have decided to follow Jesus**

I have decided to follow Jesus;  
I have decided to follow Jesus;  
I have decided to follow Jesus;  
no turning back, no turning back.

Tho' none go with me, I still will follow,  
tho' none go with me I still will follow,  
tho' none go with me, I still will follow;  
no turning back, no turning back.

My cross I'll carry till I see Jesus;  
my cross I'll carry till I see Jesus,  
my cross I'll carry till I see Jesus;  
no turning back, No turning back.

The world behind me, the cross before me,  
the world behind me, the cross before me;  
the world behind me, the cross before me;  
no turning back, no turning back.

Songwriters: Traditional / Leslie B. Tucker  
CCL No 5664  
<https://youtu.be/YbvB8VrJVIQ>

## **Tim leads us in a Benediction:**

**May the Lord bless you and keep you, may the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious unto you, may the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you his peace. Amen.**

**We hope you'll be able to join us for virtual fellowship:**

**Sundays at 11.45, Meeting ID: 962 5576 8258, Passcode: 491306.**

**Wednesdays at 2.30pm Meeting ID: 954 0425 3654, Passcode: 064246.and the**

**Prayer meeting on Thursdays at 7.30pm. Meeting ID: 923 9680 7071, Passcode: 411034**

**Its very easy to join on the phone, and it would be lovely to hear your voices again!**

**Just ring 02034 815237, then the ID and password as above!**

