



Considering Next Steps in Spiritual Growth

Introduction – Invitation to Join a Quest

**Matthew 4:18-22; Matthew 11:29-30;
Matthew 16:24-25; Matthew 28:19-20**

Background

- Jewish community a very religious culture. Scripture and tradition were widely taught, understood and pursued. Many vibrant religious communities.
- Synagogues were central to community – places that echoed debate and discussions about keeping the Torah.
- Religious education taken very seriously. Schools were associated with the local synagogue. Rabbis taught these in these schools and were among the most respected members of society.
- *Beth Sefer* (“House of the Book”) was first step in process. Children began anywhere from ages 4 – 6). The focus was on the Torah (Genesis to Deuteronomy) and its memorization. When *Beth Sefer* completed by about 10 or 11 years old many students knew Torah by memory.
- *Beth Talmud* (“House of Learning”) was now for the best students coming out of *Beth Sefer*. Students started about age 11 and continued to about age 14. Here students would learn and memorize the rest of the Scriptures – Genesis to Malachi...39 books...memorized! Students would also learn oral tradition and interpretations of Scripture.
- By age 14 or 15, at the end of *Beth Talmud*, only the best of the best were still studying. Most others were now learning the family trade and starting their own families.
- *Beth Midrash* (“House of Study”). Those remaining (cream of the crop) would now apply to a well known rabbi to become one of that rabbi’s *talmidim* (disciples). The student desired to take that rabbi’s “yoke upon him”. He wanted to do what the rabbi did and be like the rabbi. Students fully trusted the rabbi they sought to follow. The rabbi would only consider the best...the ones he believed had what it took to be like him.
- Within this context, Jesus was considered a rabbi (Matthew 19:16; 22:35,36; Luke 7:40; 12:13; 19:39; 20:27-28). Jesus fit the description of a first century rabbi especially one at the most advanced level – the one sought by *talmidim* (disciples).

1. Unlike the rabbis of his day, Jesus _____ out his *talmidim* (disciples) and _____ them to follow him.

This implies Jesus _____ in them and invites them into a relationship and spiritual quest.

2. Going against the standard religious pattern, Jesus invites people to become his disciples who had not _____.

TAKE OUT #1: Jesus invites _____ to join his spiritual quest and become his follower.

Matthew 11:29-30; 1 Corinthians 1:26-28

Peter – The enthusiastic talmid!

Matthew 14:22-32

TAKE OUT #2: Since we have been invited to become one of Jesus’ disciples, there are _____ for all of us to consider.

TAKE OUT #3: Jesus’ word to us is _____! Jesus believes in us – he *invited* us to be his *talmidim*. He was not rebuking Peter for a lack of faith in God, but in _____.

Matthew 14:29; 31

TAKE OUT #4: Regardless of our next step Jesus is _____ of us.

Matthew 14:25-27

TAKE OUT #5: The next steps Jesus invites us to consider are not necessarily the _____ for other followers.

Matthew 14:28-29

CONCLUSION – What next step is Jesus inviting you to take?

Matthew 14:29

Home Church Questions...

WARMING UP...

1. Discuss the meaning and significance of the quote by M. Scott Peck: “The truth is that our finest moments are most likely to occur when we are feeling deeply uncomfortable, unhappy, or unfulfilled. For it is only in such moments, propelled by our discomfort, that we are likely to step out of our ruts and start searching for different ways or truer answers.”
2. After briefly reviewing this week’s message, share one thing that most challenged, encouraged or perplexed you. Was there a particular “Take Out” that challenged you?

LOOK TO THE BOOK....

3. Read **Matthew 4:18-22**. Discuss the implications of Jesus seeking out his disciples, rather than the other way around. Why do you think Jesus selected these guys? What are the implications for us? For others?
4. Read over **Matthew 14:22-33**. a) What about this account first strikes you the most? Why? b) In verse 23, Jesus remained on the shore alone in order to pray. What are some other reasons Jesus might have considered in not accompanying his disciples in the boat from the very start? What insight does this give us in our relationship with Jesus? c) What does the disciples’ response to seeing Jesus (verse 26) tell us about them or about the situation? d) Considering Peter’s response to Jesus – why do you think he felt he should go to Jesus on the water (verse 28)? Why do you think Peter began to doubt (verses 30-31)? e) Discuss the idea that Jesus was not commenting on Peter’s lack of faith in Christ, but in Peter himself. Implications for us? f) Why do you think the disciples responded as they did in verse 33?

SO WHAT?....

5. As you consider the coming year, what next steps do you think Jesus is inviting you to take? If you feel comfortable, share with the group.
6. Pray for each other as you consider what God might be saying about next steps.

Darrell Winger @ THE MEETING HOUSE – Sunday, January 1/8, 2006