

Discover God's Holiness  
Part 1B

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## Introduction

There was one Bible story that always amazed me  
ever since I was a little kid in children's church  
It just didn't seem realistic.  
I could believe God could load all the animals on an ark.  
I didn't doubt that God could part the sea.  
I never gave a second thought to Jesus' ability to heal the sick.  
As a little kid I caught on that God was able to do anything he wanted.  
So for me, the fabulous stories of what God could do  
were just a no-brainer.

But every once in a while the Bible would tell the story  
of some kind of fantastic thing involving the followers of Jesus  
and it has always just made me wonder.

I accepted that Jesus gave his divine power to his followers to  
enable them to accomplish healing and deliverance.  
I didn't have any trouble at all with those things.  
I heard all these stories as a small kid and I believed them.

But it's the way grown adults responded to Jesus --  
that amazed me.

It seems so simple -- Jesus called them to follow him,  
and they did!  
To think that these grown men would respond so easily,  
so completely,  
without even any questions...  
that's amazing!

For years I have been involved in trying to lead people to Jesus  
I have seen resistance,  
I have witnessed avoidance,  
I have heard all kinds of pathetic excuses...  
Some people just will not allow themselves to be lead to Jesus,  
or by Jesus.

I have heard people tell of how they resisted an altar call  
by holding on to the pew in front of them

until their knuckles turned white.

So I am totally amazed that Jesus could just call people to follow him, and they not only followed him but they left everything to do it.

I could understand it if the people he called had nothing else to do.

But in today's story he called successful business men who had their own family business.

They weren't looking for a career change but when Jesus said "follow me" - they left everything and went to follow Jesus.

It wasn't just in the good times that people chose to follow Jesus. They followed him through difficult times, in tough places. There just doesn't seem to be any human reason why they would do this.

*I. The amazing response*

John c. 6

We're going to look at the amazing response people had to the call of Jesus.

Scripture reader today is \_\_\_\_\_

The motel industry has been in a constant state of trying to improve what will attract people. For years their signs advertised swimming pools because people wouldn't stay at a motel that didn't have a pool. Then the signs began to advertise other amenities such as air conditioning and color TV.

When those amenities became the expected norm, the signs began to offer HBO, then internet and even today I will not stay in a motel that doesn't have Wi-Fi.

But these disciples not only followed Jesus without any of these things they were willing to accept the call to follow him without any kind of provisions at all.

Once people started following Jesus, things might have been exciting but life certainly wasn't easy.

Jesus had high expectations of his followers.

Following Jesus was not as simple as coming to an A/C auditorium, sitting in padded pews listening to a sermon.

Jesus expected them to be extensions of his mission and he was honest about how hard it would be.

Luke 9:2 **and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God**

Without seminary training?

**Yes, and to heal the sick.**

Luke 9:3 **He told them: "Take nothing for the journey--no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic.**

If that wasn't bad enough look at what else he told them

Luke 9:5

**5 If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their**

town, as a testimony against them."

There was only one reason to prepare the disciples for places where they would not be welcomed.

That was because there would clearly be places where they were not welcomed.

Some places begged them to leave and in those places where Jesus was unpopular the disciples were considered guilty by association.

This difficulty assignment gets worse as it goes...

Matthew 10:22 All men will hate you because of me

Notice he did not say "some people will dislike or ignore you"

He was preparing them for universal rejection.

He was sending them to preach the gospel to people who didn't want to hear it.

Matthew 10:23 When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another.

This is not a good sign.

Not only would they have to be constantly on the move,

not only would they be rejected,

he was preparing the disciples for persecution.

Maybe I'm just a little less interested in taking grief from someone but if Jesus said to me

Luke 6:22-23

Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.

23 *"Rejoice in that day and leap for joy,*

I'm not going to do any rejoicing, or leaping, not going to be joyful and I'm not going to be inclined to drop everything and follow him.

But that's what his disciples did.

I have had Hare Krishna's and Mormons, and Jehovah's witnesses

All try to influence me to get involved in their movement.

I wasn't interested.

Like most of you I'm constantly declining invitations to see the new time share opportunity,

get involved in this or invest in that, to  
 try window replacements or switch cell phone providers.  
 None of these things even interest me

I certainly would not be interested if they told me  
 “If you sign up with us you will be hated,  
 rejected, persecuted, frustrated,  
 and expected to perform miracles.

So you see, it’s amazing to me that when Jesus called these guys  
 immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Matthew 4:22

With every reason to not follow Jesus staring them in the face  
 I figure it must have taken something special to convince  
 these men to be dedicated to following Jesus.

If we could figure out what it was,  
 it sure would make it easier  
 for us to complete our task of reaching out until everyone knows and  
 follow Jesus.

## ***II. What would motivate them?***

So let’s look at the things that motivate people today:  
 money, sex and power.

### **A. Sex appeal**

Isn’t that what people are attracted to today?

Isn’t that what people value?

Isn’t looking good the most important thing in some people’s lives?

The cosmetic industry makes \$60 billion annually

They couldn’t be wrong could they?

Could Calvin Kline, Emporio Armani, and Christian Dior

all be leading us the wrong way?

Even the animals are attracted to each other by appearance:

The bright colors of the cardinal, and the peacock,

the flash of the lightning bug are all designed to attract a mate.

God made them that way, so don’t you think attractiveness

begins with a physical appearance?

Did people follow Jesus because he looked good?

Yes, God made the animals to be attracted to each other's good looks.

But we were created a little lower than the angels, not lower than the animals.

Despite the way we often act we are not just wild animals.

We have ways of evaluating things by more criteria than just sex appeal.

There was that something that sets people above the animals that attracted people to Jesus and it couldn't have been his good looks.

The prophet Isaiah makes it clear that Jesus was not good looking

*Isaiah 52:14 Just as there were many who were appalled at him -- his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness--*

### **B. Money?**

In contrast to what Benny Hinn might have told them, Jesus made it very clear that this was not going to be a financially profitable venture.

Following him was probably going to hurt them financially.

If they were motivated by money,

it sure would have been bad timing for Jesus to call them

just after they had made one of the best catches of their careers!

So they were not motivated by money, sex, but

### **C. Power?**

There's a possibility.

They certainly were interested in power, and Jesus had plenty of that!

I think at first they saw Jesus as a rising star and may have been

attracted to thinking if they stuck with him he would have places of power and influence for them once he took over.

At one point they got very bold about their desires

Mark 10:37-40

37 They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."

Jesus' response was not encouraging...

38 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

39 "We can," they answered.

Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with,

40 but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant.

There's not much gray area here.

Jesus gave a clear answer to let the disciples know any interest in following him in hopes of getting some power were going to be disappointed because that's not what he was about.

They were not attracted to follow Jesus by money, sex, or power. so how about

#### **D. Miracles?**

In Sunday School I heard about the miraculous things Jesus did and I thought those miracles should have attracted followers.

Things like walking on water and casting out demons were fascinating things to see!

You would think that each miracle Jesus performed would result in an increase of the disciple's faith.

But after nearly every miracle Jesus did there was a lapse in their faith!

John 12:37 Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him.

So it wasn't the miracles that got people to follow Jesus.

#### *III. The personality that was attractive*

As the cost of following Jesus began to rise some people who had started following him began to leave.

At one point a large crowd all walked away from him.

When the dust settled there were those same 12 disciples,

the ones who abruptly left everything to follow him.

Maybe we would have expected them to desert a sinking ship but they stayed with Jesus for the same things that brought them to Jesus in the first place:

John 6:67-69

"You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.

68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

69 We believe and know that you will bring us money sex and power

Doesn't it read that way in your Bible?

69 We believe and know that you..

...can do the miraculous?

It doesn't read that way either, does it?

69 We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

The Holy One

The guys who were with Jesus every moment, who saw everything there was to see about him were attracted to him because of his trait of holiness.

So the angels in Heaven are not standing around the throne praising God's money, sex appeal, and power.

The angels stand around the throne of God calling out

Holy, holy, holy because

his most dominant trait,

his most attractive trait ... is his holiness.

His holiness was the first thing that people noticed about him and the longer they hung around him, the more they appreciated it.

We tend to only use the phrase "your holiness,"

to describe the pope

but if we look in the six chapters preceding this story

we can see the kind of concrete characteristics of holiness

all of us need to develop.

## A. Consistency

John 1:37-41

37 When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. 38 Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?"

Too me, that seems like an odd request.

Why do they care where he is staying?

Maybe it's the same reason social services investigates a family, in their home,

before they are willing to approve that family for a foster child.

Maybe social services knows anybody can fake it at church.

Anybody can fake it at work.

But the way you are at home, the way you treat your family reveals who you really are.

39 "Come," he replied, "and you will see."

So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour.

What do you suppose they saw?

Jesus was not a wealthy man, so they probably did not see a lot of opulence, or possessions or any of the things people want to see when they tour the homes of the movie stars.

Whatever they saw certainly convinced them to follow Jesus

40 Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus.

He was so convinced by what he saw

41 The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ).

I think they saw holiness expressed in consistency.

The Bible tells us

*Hebrews 13:8*

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

But some people have to see it, to believe it.

In that day that Andrew spent with Jesus,

he saw the way Jesus was at home was consistent with the way he was everywhere else.

When our own lives are purified of competing priorities each of us can act with the same holy consistency as Jesus.

A second feature of his holiness, obvious to all who met him was he

**B. saw the good in people**

John 1:42

And he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas”

Andrew’s brother was named “Simon,” which means very little.

But Jesus changed his name to “Cephas,” which meant a lot.

“Cephas” was the equivalent of the name “Rocky,”

but at that time Simon was a long way from epitomizing anything related to a rock.

So the name Jesus gave him is prophetic –

reflecting the potential Jesus saw in Simon

because he saw eventually Simon would be solid as a rock.

Jesus did the same thing when he met a guy named Nathaniel

John 1:45-49

*45 Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”*

*46 “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked.*

*“Come and see,” said Philip.*

*47 When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.”*

*48 “How do you know me?” Nathanael asked.*

*Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.”*

*49 Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.”*

Did you catch that?

The very first thing Jesus says to Nathaniel is a compliment.

But if you look at the top of the story,  
the first thing Nathaniel says to Jesus is derogatory.

Saying something negative about another person's home  
is a good way to start a fight

But Jesus doesn't take the bait.

Instead of finding a reason to reject people,

Instead of finding an exploitable characteristic in people,

Jesus saw the good in people that was often  
down so deep, nobody else could see him.

That kind of holiness –  
the kind that builds people up –  
is the kind we need to maintain long after these 40 days  
are over.

### *C. His words*

If we advance a little bit further in the story we come to the  
conversation Jesus has with the woman at the well in chapter 4.

Not just any woman, but a Samaritan woman..

Because of bitter rivalry Jews do not associate with Samaritans.

I wish I had time to highlight all the positive characteristics  
revealed in this story as Jesus as he pushes prejudice aside,  
I'll do that in another time.

In this story Jesus speaks to a woman no Jew would speak to,  
he speaks to a woman the other Samaritans wouldn't speak to.

She is so amazed at what he has to say,

she runs to bring the whole town to hear him say it again.

*John 4:41*

**And because of his words many more became believers.**

Lots of people use words.

Some use notable words,

A quick look in the news and you'll see trouble when  
someone uses words they shouldn't use.

The race didn't turn out the way Kyle Busch thought it should,

he uses language certainly shouldn't,  
and has to write an apology for it all:

*To all,*

*I've had a lot of time today to sit and reflect, and try to put my thoughts into words as best I can. I want to sincerely apologize for my actions during Friday night's Truck Series race at Texas. I apologize to my fans, all my sponsors, everyone at Joe Gibbs Racing and Kyle Busch Motorsports.*

<http://www.examiner.com/nascar-in-national/kyle-busch-apology-rings-hollow-should-gibbs-park-him-for-the-season#ixzz1eYiqDiDc>

The NFL fines NY Jets coach Rex Ryan \$75,000  
for the words he shouted at a fan two weeks ago.  
The fine was high because the league considers him to be  
a repeat offender.

These things don't shock us anymore.  
We are desensitized to the whole issue.  
But the words Jesus used were so compelling  
they got everyone's attention.

John 4:42

42They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

The people heard his words and were convinced of his holiness.  
If we are going to build community in this church  
and with the important people in our lives.  
We need the kind of holiness  
that can control our mouths.

#### ***D. He did not need power***

If we turn to c. 6 we'll see one more story.  
This story occurs after the famous story of  
Jesus feeding five thousand people from just a small boy's lunch.  
Anybody who can provide for the masses like that  
is bound to be popular.

The crowd wants to make a king out of their great fish multiplier

John 6:15

15 Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force...

In our less than holy mindsets we look at that story and think  
 “Jesus, this is the very reason you came to the world –  
 to gain the affection of people and become their king!  
 Jesus, if you become king right here, right now  
 you won’t even have to go to the cross.”  
 If Jesus jumps up on a table, rallies the crowd to him  
 and in a show of popular force marches to the palace  
 deposes the king and takes power,  
 he will have become like every other power hungry leader  
 the world has ever known and be no different than  
 Ceasar, Napoleon, Hitler, Hussein, or Gadhafi.

The problem posed by his sudden rise in popularity  
 would be attaining a kingdom without the cross.  
 which would have been great for him,  
 but a disaster for us who needed his sacrifice on the cross.  
 So in a show of his true, holy nature Jesus  
 withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

In contrast to unholy human motivation  
 Jesus doesn’t need a position of power so badly  
 that he is willing to become king without a cross.  
 Imagine how holy our communities will become  
 when they are filled with people whose pursue holiness  
 more than they pursue power!

#### *IV. The good news*

So it was his consistency,  
 his ability to see the good in people,  
 the righteousness of his words,  
 and his lack of need for powerful positions  
 that made Jesus so unique.  
 It’s no wonder people followed him.  
 They saw, in his him, the kind of person they wanted to be around  
 and the kind of person they wanted to be.

All of this started with the comment about Jesus being the “holy one.” that occurred in just the sixth chapter of John. With these stories of Jesus and his consistency, his choice to see the good in people, the holiness of his words, and his humility also drawn from the first six chapters of John. You’ve seen some of what they say about Jesus. It’s not even ¼ of the book but even in that little bit they knew Jesus was worth following because he was “the holy one.” Hopefully this advent season’s focus on Jesus will bring you to the same conclusion.

I would also like you to consider people in your life that have hurt, disappointed, or even abused you. There’s no doubt in my mind those people were the type who were inconsistent, insulting, verbally abusive, and position conscious. They were the opposite of Jesus.

If you haven’t connected this message to the conclusion of these 40 days of community, let me make it clear to you. The kind of community we long to become will not arrive because I preached on it for six weeks. The kind of community we should become will not arrive because of a book you read, or small groups you attended. Those things all help, but they aren’t enough.

Our ability to become the kind of community we’ve studied for 40 day, to have a fulfilling family,

and a church full of loving relationships  
will only be attained when we respond to the call  
to follow Jesus --  
copying his consistency,  
acting with his kind of affirmation,  
winning people over with the words we use,  
while to serve rather than having the need for position.

So the good news for today is  
We can attain every bit of the holy character of Jesus!  
Our destiny is listed in

Ephesians 4:24

...created to **be like** God in true righteousness and holiness.

*Lights: turn off 14-17 / fade down, 9, 10, 12*

*Begin piano*

So **today** we transition our emphasis from  
40 days of community  
to four weeks of emphasis on Jesus  
because only Jesus can heal our relationships,  
only Jesus can build our relationships  
It is only as followers of Jesus  
we can become better together.