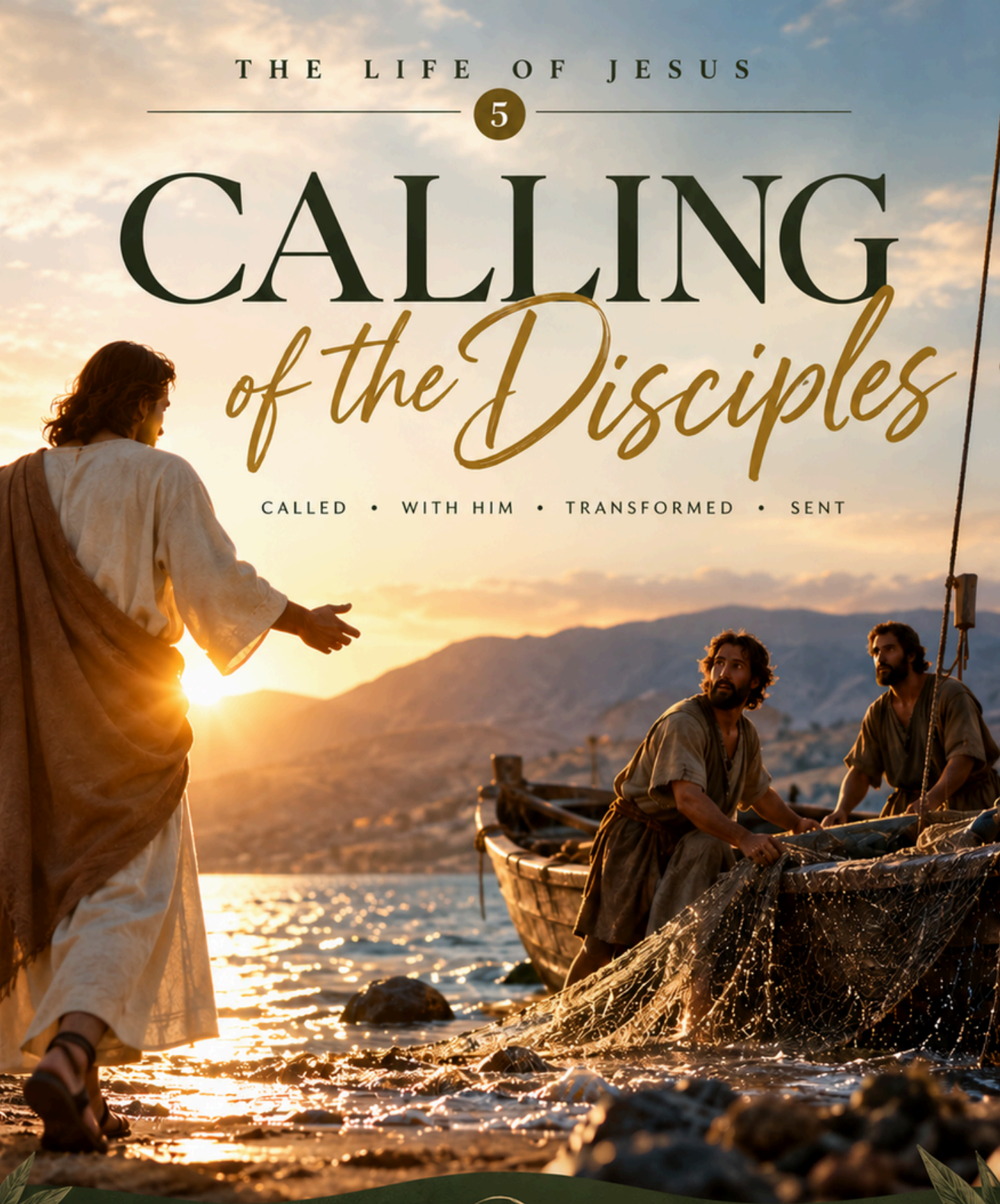
THE LIFE OF JESUS

5

CALLING of the Disciples

CALLED • WITH HIM • TRANSFORMED • SENT



SCRIPTURE & SOIL

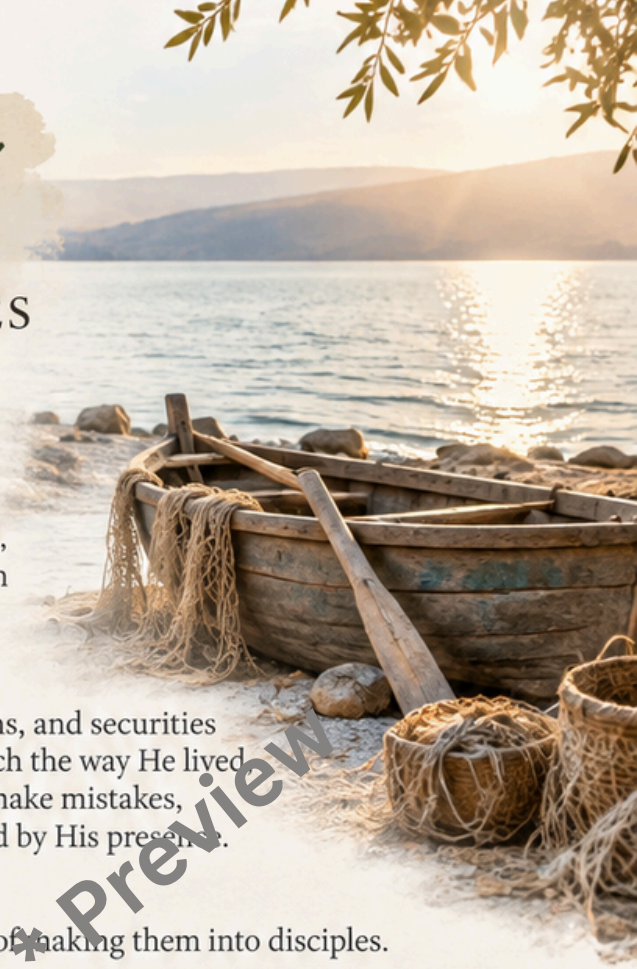
DEEP ROOTS • REAL LIFE

CINDY ENSLIN

Welcome

TO

CALLING OF THE DISCIPLES



You are invited to follow.

When Jesus walked along the shores of Galilee and said, "***Follow Me,***" He was not simply inviting a group of men to walk behind Him.

He was calling them into a completely new way of life.

They would leave familiar places, routines, expectations, and securities to be with Him. They would listen to His teaching, watch the way He lived, witness His compassion and authority, ask questions, make mistakes, misunderstand Him, be corrected, and slowly be formed by His presence.

Jesus did not call finished people.
He called ordinary people and began the patient work of making them into disciples.

That same pattern runs throughout the Gospels: Jesus calls, draws His disciples near, teaches them to abide in Him, forms them into His likeness, teaches them obedience, empowers them by His Spirit, and eventually sends them to continue His mission.

In this study, we will look beyond the familiar stories of fishermen leaving their nets and explore what Jesus was actually doing when He called His disciples.

We will discover that discipleship is not simply learning information about Jesus.

It is learning to live with Him, become like Him, and participate in His mission.

Scripture & Soil • Preview

As you work through these pages, take your time. Read the passages slowly. Notice the historical and cultural details. Follow the connections throughout Scripture. And above all, keep asking one important question:

What was Jesus forming in them?

Because the One who said, "Follow Me," was already preparing ordinary people to carry His message to the ends of the earth.

Welcome to

Calling of the Disciples.

LET'S FOLLOW THE JOURNEY FROM CALLED ... TO SENT.

Introduction

CALLING OF THE DISCIPLES



More than a call to follow, a call to be formed.

The calling of the disciples is one of the most familiar stories in the Gospels. We often picture a dramatic moment where fishermen immediately leave their nets and start following Jesus. While that moment is significant, it is only the beginning of a much bigger story.

Jesus did not merely call a group of men to go somewhere. He called them to **be with Him**, to **learn from Him**, to be **changed by Him**, and to **participate in His mission**.

In the Gospels, we see that discipleship is a journey. It begins with a call, but it continues through a process of teaching, relationship, testing, growth, and empowerment. These ordinary men would spend years walking with Jesus, watching how He lived, listening to His teaching, experiencing His compassion, witnessing His authority, and learning what it means to live as part of God's Kingdom.

Who is a Disciple?

The New Testament uses the word **disciple** (Greek: *mathētēs*) to describe a learner, a follower, and a student. A disciple is someone who deliberately places himself or herself under the authority and teaching of a rabbi with the goal of becoming like that rabbi.

In the context of Jesus' day, disciples were not just people who agreed with a teacher's ideas. They **lived with** their rabbi, **learned** his way of life, **adopted** his values, and were **trained** to represent him.

When Jesus called His disciples, He was inviting them into a life of deep relationship, transformation and mission.

> *"Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."*
>
> MATTHEW 4:19

Key Themes in this Study

CALLED
Jesus initiates the call.

PRESENCE
He calls us to be with Him.

FORMATION
He teaches and shapes us into His likeness.

OBEDIENCE
We learn to live His ways.

EMPOWERMENT
He equips us by His Spirit.

MISSION
He sends us to participate in His work.

MULTIPLICATION
He builds a people who make more disciples.

"They were with Jesus ... and He sent them out."

MARK 3:14, 14:20

Scripture & Soil * Preview

THE WORLD BEHIND THE *Nets*

FISHING, FAMILY & LIVELIHOOD ON THE SEA OF GALILEE

When they left their nets, they were leaving more than fishing equipment. They were placing their livelihood, security and future beneath the call of Jesus.

THE SEA OF GALILEE

The Sea of Galilee (also called the Lake of Gennesaret, Tiberias or Chinnereth) is a large freshwater lake, about 21 km long and 13 km wide. It was a vital source of water, food and trade for the region. Several towns, including Capernaum, Bethsaida and Magdala, were located along its shores, and many people depended on fishing for their income.



Why was the lake so important?

- Rich in fish, with different species (e.g. tilapia, barbel).
- Supported local communities and trade.
- Connected to major routes through the region.
- Provided food and income for many Jewish families.

FISHING METHODS

Galilean fishermen used different methods, depending on the season and type of fish. These included:



DRAG NETS

Large nets pulled in from the shore with the help of other fishermen (Luke 5:6).



CIRCULAR NETS

Thrown from a boat and then pulled in (Matthew 4:18; Mark 1:16).



FISH TRAPS

Made of woven branches, used in shallow waters (Matthew 4:18).

THE FISHERMEN'S BOATS

The boats on the Sea of Galilee were wooden fishing boats, usually 7–8 metres long, with a flat bottom. They were sturdy and designed for the lake's waters. These boats could hold several men, nets, and a good catch of fish.



FAMILY BUSINESS

Fishing was often a family business. We see brothers working together – Simon (Peter) and Andrew, James and John – likely alongside their father, Zebedee (Mark 1:19–20). This was not just a job, but a generational livelihood, with skills, equipment and networks passed down through families.

A DEMANDING PROFESSION

Fishing was hard work and could be unpredictable. Weather, fish migration and competition all affected the catch. Fishermen often worked at night (Luke 5:5), and it required strength, skill, teamwork and perseverance.

ECONOMIC REALITIES

The fishing industry was subject to taxes and regulations under Herodian and later Roman rule (Matthew 17:24–27). Fishermen had to pay taxes (such as the 'two-drachma temple tax'), and large catches could also be taxed. This meant they worked within a complex economic system and depended on their catch for their families' survival.

Scripture & Soil • Preview

RABBIS, DISCIPLES AND THE CALL TO *Follow*

UNDERSTANDING DISCIPLESHIP IN JESUS' DAY



THE ROLE OF A RABBI

In first-century Jewish culture, a rabbi was a teacher who interpreted the Scriptures and trained disciples in the ways of God. Rabbis did not merely teach information; they modeled a way of life.

- Disciples usually chose their rabbi and formally asked to be his student.
- Disciples followed their rabbi, listened to his teaching, asked questions and learned by observing how he lived.
- They often traveled with him and participated in his daily life.
- The goal was not only knowledge, but transformation – to become like their rabbi.

JESUS TURNED THE PATTERN AROUND

Unlike many rabbis, Jesus took the initiative. He called the disciples. They did not first approach Him; He approached them.

"Come, follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

MATTHEW 4:19

This was more than an invitation to attend His teaching. It was **a call to** a lifelong relationship, transformation and participation in His mission.

FOLLOWING IN THAT CULTURE MEANT:

- Leaving your current occupation.
- Spending extended time with the rabbi.
- Learning his teachings and values.
- Adopting his lifestyle.
- Becoming a representative of his message.
- Continuing his work.



WHAT DID DISCIPLES LEARN?

Disciples learned by:

- Listening to the rabbi's teaching from the Scriptures.
- Asking questions and engaging in discussion.
- Observing how the rabbi applied the Scriptures in everyday life.
- Participating in service and ministry.
- Memorizing and internalizing key teachings.

DISCIPLESHIP WAS A RELATIONAL PROCESS

In Jewish culture, learning was deeply relational. Disciples spent time with their rabbi, sharing meals, traveling together and witnessing how he responded to people, challenges and opposition. This close relationship shaped their character and worldview.



THE COST OF FOLLOWING

For the first disciples, following Jesus meant real sacrifice:

- Leaving their nets and boats.
- Walking away from a stable income.
- Letting go of family expectations.
- Giving up social status and security.
- Stepping into an uncertain future.

This cost highlights the seriousness of Jesus' call and the value of the relationship they were being invited into.



MORE THAN A PROFESSION

Jesus' call, "I will make you fishers of men," shows that He was not simply giving them a new job description. He was taking their existing skills, character and experience, and redirecting them toward a greater purpose — participating in His Kingdom work by bringing people to Himself.

He did not discard who they were; He transformed and redeemed it for His mission.

KEY INSIGHTS

1. A disciple was a learner who followed a rabbi closely.
2. Jesus called the disciples – they did not first approach Him.
3. Discipleship involved relationship, transformation and mission.
4. The first disciples left significant things behind to follow Jesus.

"They left their nets immediately and followed Him."

MARK 1:18

Scripture & Soil + Preview