

# Vision for Discipleship

In this week's sermon, Phil set the focus as our Vision for Discipleship. Through today's passage, we see a constant pattern, of leaving behind the familiar and setting out in a new direction. Matthew notes that the arrest of John the Baptist was the catalyst for Jesus making the choice to leave his home town, Nazareth, and moving 32km away, to Capernaum. Literally, he "withdrew into Galilee". Capernaum sat on the northern end of the Sea of Galilee, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali. Although Jews had increasingly moved into the area, it (historically) had a large Gentile population. Because of this, it was seen to be distinct from Judea and Isaiah's prophecy, cited in Matt 4:14-16, hints at the contemporary attitude that it would be disdainful for a prophet to come from 'that' sort of place. Even the accent of a Galilean would have marked them out as different from their southern neighbours.<sup>1</sup>

**GETTING STARTED:** Last year, I was put in a position where I had to change jobs. It wasn't my choice, but I had no other option.

- ☞ What is one change that you've made in recent years, because you made a conscious choice to do that? (eg change of job, retirement, moving house) What is one change that you've made, where you had no option?
- ☞ We've all had to change the way we 'do church' in recent months and have had to be more intentional, if we want to keep in touch with people that we don't see at church from week to week. How has the way you 'do relationships' changed, this year?

## READ: MATTHEW 4:12-25

☞ What did you notice/ what things stood out, as you just read the passage?

☞ What things did you take away from the sermon this week?

☞ What new thoughts did you have about:

- Discipleship?
- Evangelism?
- The role and purpose of church?
- Reasons why the church has declined over the last 70 years?

☞ Phil talked about the 3 directional model of church: the **Up** (relationship with God/ worship), **In** (fellowship/ doing life together as Christians) and **Out** (outreach and sharing our faith). What things are the main impediments or obstacles to you sharing your faith. Is it:

- Fear of sharing your faith, including fear of rejection?
- Lack of understanding about the Bible, including a fear that you might not be able to answer tough questions about the Bible?
- Not really being able to articulate the gospel message?
- Lack of confidence about talking to others about God?
- Not having any friends or people that you spend time with, who aren't Christians?
- That the main people you do life with are antagonistic to 'religion'/ 'god-stuff'?
- Other things?

❗ Phil referred to the idea of a "person of peace". We find this in Luke 10:5-7, where Jesus was sending out the 72 on their mission trip. This is a mission principle. Jesus' teaching to his disciples was that they should focus on people who received them, not on the people who were antagonistic. It is not that antagonistic people do not need Jesus. It is more that, we will have more impact if we focus on those who are open and receptive to us. Consider the following comments:

*"These "people of peace" would be the residents who welcomed the travellers to their homes and extended hospitality for the entirety of their stay in that town. ... In catalytic ministry, think of them in terms of someone who is:*

- Receptive to Christ and the vision of getting His news out ... (not necessarily a believer but receptive to the message and its going out.)
- A person of reputation (good or bad) – they are known by the community ...
- A referencer - they have influence and they can refer others to Christ boldly.

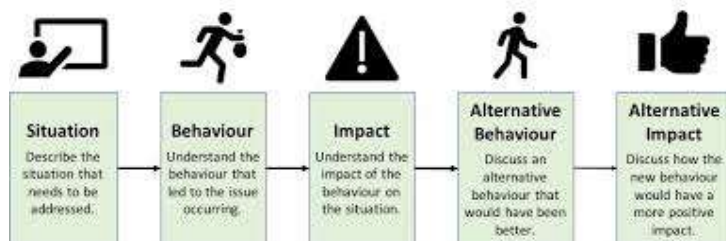
<sup>1</sup> Brown, J. (2015) Matthew, Teach the Text Commentary Series. (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks), 41.

This concept is seen in practice throughout scripture even though it is not explained in detail. There was the woman at the well in John 4. She definitely had a reputation, and God used all of who she was to bring people to Jesus. Lydia was a merchant doing business when she encountered Paul. When “the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message,” she influenced a whole family to come to Christ. For Jonah in the Old Testament, the king was the “person of peace” ...”<sup>2</sup>

Who is someone in your ‘network’ who is not antagonistic to your faith, but is not a Christian? What sort of comments have they made, that would indicate that they might be a ‘person of peace’?

As Jesus started his Galilean ministry, he pronounced: “Repent! for the Kingdom of God is at hand”. In Koine Greek, the word we translate as ‘repent’, is *metanoia*. It is change that comes *after thinking*. It is a conscious, considered decision to change. In the 2018 movie depicting the life of Ruth Bader Ginsberg, the actress stands in a courtroom, slowly and intentionally repeating the words: “Radical ... Social ... Change”. In this scene, there was a fear that a court decision about a tax deduction might somehow change the way we see the roles of women. But as Jesus walked out on the streets of Capernaum, he called for ‘Radical Lifestyle Change’ ... ‘Radical Heart Change’ ... ‘Radical rejection of sin’ ... a radical change in the way people viewed their lives, from being focussed on living for today and resetting their focus onto the Kingdom of God that was “at hand”.

If you have ever led a team at work or taught a class or if you are a parent, you will no doubt have had opportunity to ask a person to change their behaviour. You may even have asked your spouse or a close friend, to change. What are some of the responses that you’ve got, when you have highlighted that someone’s behaviour has been inappropriate and asked that they adopt different behaviour? Does behaviour change (including repentance) normally occur, if you do not ask for it?



Have you ever used an SBI (Situation – Behaviour – Impact) model to communicate feedback, particularly to ask for change in behaviour? Is this something that might be useful in dealing with behaviour issues in your family?

The second ‘change’ that Jesus called for, was in calling two pairs of fishermen to leave their boats, nets and families, and “follow me”. Jesus told them he would make them “fish for people”. Jesus asked Simon, Andrew, James and John, to leave behind their security, their livelihood and ability to provide for/ feed themselves. In our culture, we are probably comfortable with the idea of “following Jesus”, but we might disconnect that call, with the need to “fish for people”. Think for a moment about 1<sup>st</sup> century fishing techniques: it involved a net being thrown over the side of a boat and being trawled through the water. Sometimes they caught nothing. Sometimes they caught a large catch. Day after day, rain, hail or shine, the fishermen went out on their boats and put out their nets. In the same way, in Matt 4:23-25, we read that Jesus kept going, day after day, travelling, teaching, proclaiming, healing – and as he faithfully did that, the number of his followers grew.

Over the years, people have looked at ‘big’ churches and seen ‘numbers’ as some sign of success. However, others would say that one benefit of some smaller churches, is that discipleship is seen less about church attendance and programmes, and more about replicating the ministry model of Jesus, by intentionally seeking to help people, including friends, neighbours and work colleagues, become followers of Jesus. In what way is the current Covid pandemic, an opportunity for us to be more intentional, in reaching out to those around us, rather than being focussed on maintaining church programmes? What do you do, each day, to ‘fish for people’ to follow Jesus?

Phil talked about the need for us to 1/ pray purposefully for the people we do life with; 2/ to have a predictable pattern of friendships, including making time to have coffee, meals, etc together; and 3/ to be conspicuously spiritual. Who have you been praying for this week? Who have you made time to catch up with? In what ways have you shared a little of your faith journey this week?

**FOR REFLECTION:** While studying at Morling, a mission partner visited, who was working with a people group, whose predominant religion was Islam. He made a comment that these people had very firm ideas about Christianity and that it might take 100 conversations, for someone to come to faith in Jesus. That’s persistent prayerful intentional and relational ministry! A 100 prayers. A 100 cups of tea. Are you up for it?

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/leadership-training/starting-a-ministry/launching/finding-help-1-person-of-peace-2.html>