

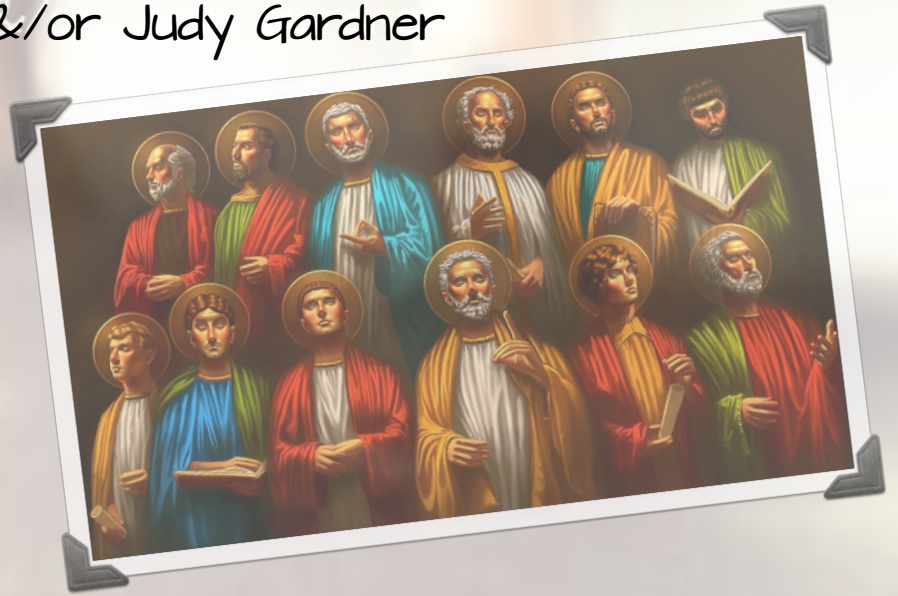
July 3-7, 2023 Edition

Following The Year^(s) Of ^Jesus Part 79

Lessons From Job-
Disciples & Apostles

By: Ed &/or Judy Gardner

July 1/2, 2023



When you read the Bible ask yourself if there's anything you're reading where God is speaking to you personally... anything that you need to start applying in your own life. Then try to reflect on what you read... what you heard from God throughout the day and we know you'll be blessed.

*** These are EXTREMELY rough drafts so if you see typos... well yuo knew the rest ;0) These are essentially the ramblings of thoughts running through Ed or Judy's mind the week before Ed teaches a lesson on these concepts. They are pretty much how Ed gets ready for the weekends. They are not necessarily coherent so if they don't make much sense... sorry about that.

**** Also these devotionals are the product of both Judy & Ed's experiences and education. Figuring out which are from Judy and which are from Ed (sometimes both are contained in a single day) is half the fun.

You can also get these devotionals on Riverside's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/EagleRiverside). You don't have to have a FB account to read them but if you do have an account if you "like" the Riverside page and click the box to get updates the devos will show up on your wall every weekday (along with other news and event updates).

Monday:

Later on, after John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God's Good News. "The time promised by God has come at last!" he announced. "The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!" One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" And they left their nets at once and followed him. A little farther up the shore Jesus saw Zebedee's sons, James and John, in a boat repairing their nets. He called them at once, and they also followed him, leaving their father, Zebedee, in the boat with the hired men. Mark 1:14-20 (NLT)

Reflection: I know we have a lot going on in our lives but have you ever just stopped after reading something like you just read and thought: those words of Jesus' changed the world.

He called and these guys answered. He invited and they followed.

But what were they agreeing to? As His call goes out even to this day, what is it that we are agreeing to when we answer. When we follow Him? It's a legitimate question but more than that I think it's incredibly important to understand what it is that Jesus invites us to.

First of all... this call is unheard of. Sure, there were tons of traveling Rabbis in Israel in the first century. They all had disciples who followed them. But a Rabbi NEVER chose his disciples. It was considered bad form for a Rabbi to recruit disciples. There is not one instance in historical records of any Rabbi asking someone to follow them. Well, that's not entirely true. There is one record. This one.

Rabbis were like the Ivy League schools. Only the very best who apply get in. Request to follow me and then I'll decide if you're good enough. But Jesus changed things up, didn't He?

I'm sure He shocked everyone when He'd look at someone that He had run across and said, "follow me". But Jesus couldn't have cared less what people thought of His methods. He asked people to follow Him 2,000 years ago and that call still rings out across the centuries.

Will you follow Me?

If you're like me you say, I'm not even sure I know what that means. Well then this week is for you. We are going to dive into the call/invitation of Jesus and see how it impacts us today.

Prayer: Father, teach me what it means to be a disciple. What it means to follow You. In Jesus Name, amen.

Tuesday:

Later on, after John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God's Good News. Mark 1:4 (NLT)

Reflection: The first thing that Mark tells us Jesus does after His baptism is spread the good news. But what is this good news that Jesus is spreading and what's so good about it?

Well first of all, it's not just good news... it's **BIG** news! This word was already used quite a bit in the first century but it didn't really relate to religion as much as history.

The story of the life of emperor Augustus Caesar was called the "gospel" of Augustus. The word "gospel" and the phrase "good news" are interchangeable. In fact, they both come from the same greek word. Gospel means good news.

But good doesn't really cut it here. This word was reserved for HUGE news. Earth shattering news. The life of Augustus Caesar qualified because He was the greatest Roman emperor. He brought "peace on earth" (the pax Romana), he was called the "savior" of the empire, he was called the "son of god" (because he was adopted by Julius Caesar who was called a god by the Senate of Rome). That's the kind of news this word was reserved for.

Another time this word was used was when Greece defeated Persia at the battle of Marathon and the battle of Selamis. After Greece won runners were sent to the Greek city states to share the "good news" or "gospel" that they were no longer slaves to Persia... they were free.

Do you know what they called the runners? Evangelists. You wouldn't notice it in English but the word gospel and evangelist are from the same Greek root word. One is the good news itself... the other is the one who shares or proclaims the good news.

So Jesus comes proclaiming that there is HUGE news coming... earth shattering news... life altering news. That's what makes His call so important. Tomorrow we'll learn more about this but for today spend some time thinking about why this news that Jesus brings is so

BIG!

Prayer: Father, open my eyes to what You were up to in the life of Jesus. Show me why the news He proclaimed was so big. In Jesus' Name, amen.

Wednesday:

"The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!" Mark 1:15 (NLT)

Reflection: We've talked quite a bit in the past about the Kingdom of God and today we revisit it because it's this concept of Kingdom that makes the news Jesus brought so huge.

Basically, a Kingdom is the realm where a king's will is done. If the king says something should happen a certain way, then that's the way it happens in his kingdom. The same thing is true for God's Kingdom.

God's Kingdom is wherever God is allowed to be King. He won't force His will on us... instead He invites us to make Him King in our hearts voluntarily. That's what Jesus' invitation is all about. Asking God, "let Your Kingdom come and let it begin with me".

This concept is all wrapped up in the word, disciple. A disciple is different from a student. A student just wants to know what the teacher knows. A student wants the knowledge that the teacher can pass on.

A disciple on the other hand wants more than that. A disciple doesn't just want to know what the teacher knows... a disciple wants to become like the teacher. In this case that's what making God King in your heart is all about. Letting Him set the pace and direction for my life. Trusting His timing and His plan. That's what Jesus comes to show the disciples how to do. How to trust the Father so completely that over time they would become like Him. Bear the Family resemblance. Carry on the Family tradition.

The invitation is the same today. Will you make God the King of your heart. Will you trust Him to set the pace and direction for your life? Trust His timing and His plan?

Sounds pretty radical, right? What would happen if I tried it? What would my life look like? That's what Jesus wants to show you. Tomorrow we'll look at what your life might look like if you answer His call, but for today spend some time thinking about what it might look like if God was allowed to be King in your heart.

Prayer: Father, may Your Kingdom come, and what You want be done in my life as it is in Heaven. In Jesus Name I pray, amen.

Thursday:

*Jesus said to them, "Come with me. I'll make a new kind of fisherman out of you."
Mark 1:15 (MES)*

Reflection: So what might it look like for me to follow Jesus? Let's look at his first disciples, Peter & Andrew. He tells them, I'll make you into a new kind of fisherman. What would they have thought of when He told them that?

Well, the Jewish people thought that the sea was a place of darkness, evil and chaos. They were terrified of the sea of Galilee. They believed that the spirits of the dead went into the sea. They thought there were demons in the sea. The only reason they'd go anywhere near the sea is to fish and that scared them too.

The way they'd fish is by going out at night (not too far from shore though... bad things could happen out there) and holding candles out over the water where their nets were. As the fish would come to the surface (drawn by the light) the fishermen would "rescue" the fish from the place of darkness and evil and chaos. They rescued the fish from being eaten and terrorized by ghosts and demons.

So what are Peter & Andrew thinking when they hear Jesus say He'll teach them to fish for people? Well let's be honest... they're probably confused. But think about it. What is Jesus saying? Maybe that people are lost in a world of darkness and evil and chaos. Maybe that the only thing that will draw them out of that world is... wait for it... light. Jesus' invitation is to learn how to be the light:

You are the light of the world-like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden.... In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. Matthew 5:14-16 (NLT)

His offer is to make our lights shine in such a way that people will be drawn to God because of our light (just like the fish are drawn to the nets by the candles). But how does He make us shine? That's what discipleship is all about. Hanging out with Jesus. Doing the things He did. Treating people the way He treated people. Seeing God the way He saw His Father. As we do that we find ourselves engaged in a process where over time our light shines brighter and brighter:

And all of us... can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him and reflect his glory even more. 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 (NLT)

So what do you say? Want to shine more and more brightly as you move forward in this life? Jesus' way is the only way I know of to do that.

Prayer: Father, teach me how to fish for people. Teach me to become more and more like Your Son. I want to follow Him. In Jesus' Name, amen.

Friday:

When Jesus was leaving, he saw a man named Matthew sitting in the tax collector's booth. Jesus said to him, "Follow me," and he stood up and followed Jesus. Matthew 9:9 (NLT)

Reflection: Ok... so let's say I choose to follow Jesus. What will that really look like? What will that mean? Great question. One that I can't really answer.

Think about it this way... what would you read if you asked a 7 year old to write an essay describing what a loving marriage relationship would look like for them in 20 years... 30 years... 40 years...

Can you imagine what you'd be reading? They couldn't possibly give you a good answer because at that age they couldn't possibly understand all the nuances of love and relationships.

You and I are at least that far away from understanding what life as a disciple of Jesus is going to look like. How could we possibly understand all the nuances of how Jesus' way of life is going to change ours as we try to live the way He lived. Try to treat people the way He treated people. Try to see God the way He saw His Father.

I have to be honest... my life with God looks NOTHING like I thought it would look. Even after all these years doing my best (some days more successfully than others) to follow Him I am constantly mystified and confused by my relationship with God just as much if not more than I am in my relationship with my wonderfully complex wife, Judy.

But as I keep moving forward with Him (and with her) I find new vistas opened to me that I never even knew existed. When it comes to discipleship and what it looks like to me maybe it's best if I just leave you with a story... this is a short explanation of a book by George MacDonald written 150 years ago called The Princess & The Goblin.

Once upon a time there was a young princess named Irene. She lived in a wonderful house not far from a cave where some very nasty goblins lived. She tried not to worry about the goblins and this was easier on the days she got to spend with her wonderfully wise grandmother who sometimes she found in her attic. Over the years her grandmother taught her many things about how to be a very wise little girl.

One day Irene's grandmother gave her a present. It was a ring. She told Irene that there was a thread tied to the ring... a thread that ran from the ring to a ball of thread that grandmother herself would always have with her. "If you ever find yourself in trouble, or scared, or not knowing what to do, Irene, just follow the thread".

Irene knew that if she followed the thread she would find grandmother. That night she heard the goblins in her house. She took off the ring and put it under her pillow and followed the

thread to get to grandmother. But the thread didn't take her up in the attic like she expected... it took her out of her house and into some very nasty, scary, dangerous places.

She hesitated but decided that she trusted grandmother so she would trust the thread and follow it. But she was surprised once again when the thread led her to the goblin cave. "Surely grandmother doesn't want me to go in the cave of the goblins," Irene thought. But since that is where the thread was leading Irene decided to trust it. Into the cave she went. The thread disappeared at an apparent dead end. It went right into a huge pile of rocks that blocked the entire back part of the cave.

So Irene started pulling at the rocks. Grandmother must have a reason for me to go through the rocks she reasoned. As she worked her fingers bled and dust got in her eyes and she was very afraid the goblins would return and find her. But she kept following the thread.

As the rocks started opening up to reveal a passage she saw something familiar... her friend, Curdie, who had disappeared a week earlier. "This is why grandmother wanted me to go this way" Irene realized...

Once she had freed him, Curdie was ready to get out of that cave. The only problem was... grandmother's thread was leading Irene deeper into the cave. Irene told Curdie, "I know you want to leave... and so do I. But if I had doubted grandmother's thread before this I never would have found you and you'd still be tied up. We must trust the thread".

And so further into the cave they went...

Want to know how it ends? Buy the book ;o) If you're a parent read the book to your kids. When they ask what following Jesus will look like you'll have a common language and you'll be able to answer very simply. Following Jesus means trusting and following the thread.

So trust the thread.

Prayer: Father, teach me to see and feel Your thread in my life. I want to follow You... show me how to do that. In Jesus' Name, amen.