

## Discipleship-a Divine Call

What makes the disciples of Jesus different from others and what makes Christianity distinct from any other religion? It is God's **grace**. God calls, consecrates and commissions one to His mission on earth. Discipleship is not something we take upon ourselves. We are called to it. Some people are very conscious of this call. They are aware of it in their aspirations, dreams and recognize it in the events of their lives. They hear the call as clearly as Simon, Andrew, James and John (twelve disciples) who heard the voice of Jesus. For others, the call to discipleship is not clear. They may experience an undefined restlessness, a dissatisfaction with their lives and struggle with it for a long time. People can respond to the call in one of two ways. They consider the mere suggestion of a discipleship an intrusion into their plans, or they drop what they are doing, leave their former concerns behind, and follow Jesus. In either case, the call to discipleship originates with God.

**What are we called from?** There seems to be a misunderstanding about being called and leaving everything behind as the twelve disciples did. This kind of leaving behind was not and still is not required of us for salvation. More significantly, disciples of Jesus are called to leave behind certain ways of living as they follow him. They are called away from sin and wickedness that breaks relationships with God and each other. They are called away from divisive ideas and disunity that weakens families and breaks communities. They are called away from pride, harsh judgments, prejudices and gossips, etc. that are deadly. They are called to leave behind the old self, selfishness and 'me' attitudes that hinders personal growth and excludes others.

**What are we called to?** Whether in public ministry or everyday life, disciples of Jesus are called to proclaim the Gospel message ("The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news" Mk 1:15). So, the **message** is important. They are called to a life of servanthood after the example of Jesus himself ("The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" Mt: 20:28). They are called to "cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons" (Mt:10:8). They are called to heal diseases of mind, body and spirit by being present and attentive to them. They are called to reinvigorate life in those who have lost the sense and purpose of living and constantly live in hopelessness. So, the **service** is important. They are called to work for unity and peace in the midst of diversity and discrimination. They are called to smash the yoke that burdens others and help them carry the load. So, the **life living** is important. They are called to **be the salt of the earth and light the world** through their **way of living**. The disciples of Jesus are called to continue in their time and place the mission of the Son of God.

*"If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." (Mt 16:24)*