

Leveling Up from the Inside Out

Mark 1:16-20 (NLT)

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.

Anybody like the Smurfs? Recently, I went to see the new Smurfs movie (with my grandkids). It had been a long time since I’d watched the Smurfs. I remember when they came out in mid ‘80s—even my mother got up early on Saturday mornings to watch them. In the ‘hood we had a Smurfs dance & a couple Smurf songs. The Smurfs movie was mainly about the only Smurf who didn’t have a name (No-Name Smurf) & his journey to get a name of his own. In the Smurfs’ world their name isn’t just a name, it’s the essence of their character & being. Their name is indicative of who they actually are as Smurfs on the inside. In our world, it’s our nicknames that can speak more to our identities: Big Earl, T-Bone, Little John, Pretty Ricky, Tony-Rone, Short Dog, G-Money, Sweet-T, Slick-D. But here’s the thing about the names you & I are given: When PEOPLE put a name or a label on you, especially one that you don’t like, it doesn’t have to stick. You can change that name. It’s what God calls you that matters. The name that He gives us is the only one that we should answer to! What has God named you? ***What I learned from watching this movie is this: Authenticity of self comes from the inside of us, not from names people give us or from external things.***

- A. **God Sees You (v.16 & v.19):** Today, everybody wants to pop out, everybody wants to feel like we are seen by others. I think that we so desperately want to be seen by the world because we mistakenly believe that we are not seen by God. Don’t believe the lie somebody told you that God doesn’t see you i.e., God doesn’t care about you. God loves you! Jesus saw both sets of brothers from where He was—on the shore. It doesn’t matter how far away you & I think we are from Jesus, He sees everything that’s going on in our lives. Jesus was on the shore, on the edge of their situation, & He was still able to see enough to know that 2 brothers were out there struggling to do their jobs & 2 other brothers had totally failed at their jobs because their nets were broken. ***Jesus sees exactly where you are & what you’re going through.***
- B. **God Calls You (v.17 & v.20):** Whenever we hear the word “call”, especially in the church setting, we get spooked. We have this image in our minds of some kind of scene from TV or the movies where the sky cracks open, the sun starts beaming down on us & a great voice

from the sky calls us by name with the specific instructions on this thing we're supposed to do for God for the rest of our lives. Y'all it don't work like that! ***When Jesus calls you & I it's simple: the first call He makes of us is to BE, not to DO. BE first, DO later.*** Jesus called Andrew, Simon, James, & John to just follow Him (or be with Him) first. Jesus wants real relationship from us more than He wants ministry results (Mark 3). From being with Jesus, we receive our inner passion, purpose & power. THEN Jesus will show us specific people, places, & things for us to apply that passion, purpose, & power to. But we tend to put the cart before the horse, wanting results from Jesus before we have relationship. "God what am I called to DO?" Instead we should ask Jesus, "Who am I called to BE?" For many years in my growth with God, I was more concerned about doing than being. That made me a human doughnut & it made believe that I had to wear a mask & fake the funk acting like I was someone that I was not. The spiritual disciplines that we externally practice: prayer, Bible reading/study, fasting, meditation, silence, etc. are all to develop our internal being. As we develop who we are on the inside, it will automatically begin to show on the outside-you don't have to force it or fake it. Jesus called the 4 brothers to follow him so that they could BE something different, not because they were already DOING something different. Jesus took them from fishing for fish to fishing for people-different, but not different. When you & I follow Jesus, He will take us from working to make a living, to working to make a difference!

- C. **God Works With You:** Bible scholars aren't sure how many times Jesus had to call these brothers to follow Him. But I do know this: it was more than once! On two other occasions Jesus called this same group of 4; Luke 5:1-11 & John 1:35-42. Each time their response to His call was immediate. So why did Jesus have to call the same 4 people 3 different times??? Don't trip...the same reason Jesus has to keep calling you & me today. Jesus called them...They started following Jesus...They were all in...Then they went back to their old way doing things, back to their old way of life. They went back to their old relationships. They went back to their old way of thinking. They went back to using nets, instead of just following Jesus. The nets were the tools of their old identity, who they used to be-the source of their living, their security, & their purpose. When they left their nets behind to follow Jesus, this symbolized that they had changed on the inside. But here's what I love about Jesus-He didn't care that He called them, they came, then they left-at least 3 times. ***A true relationship with Jesus grows over time. It's uneven. It's uncertain at times. It starts & stops. It's messy. It's not perfect.*** Each step with Jesus calls us to be willing to grow from the inside out. J.Cole had it right in his song "Change":

- ***"The only real change come from inside"-when we change on the inside, our outside actions take care of themselves.***
- ***"I give up, I give in, I move back a little/I live up, I look up, now I'm back for more"-inside change doesn't happen easily or evenly. It's a PROCESS. You & I have to be RESILIENT.***