

The Summons That Created the Community

Follow Me into Community Series, September 14 & 15, 2025 | Mark 1:16-20

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Do you know that we are starving for community?

The rise of superfans should prove that we are starving for community.

You may know Deadheads; now there are Swifties. And Trekkies. And Disney loyalists.

They're called "superfans"—extremely enthusiastic or dedicated fans.

You've probably seen football superfans; they own all the merchandise, have season tickets, never miss a game (even on the road), and frequently come painted and dressed up for games. No matter the weather. No matter how the team is doing.

Two superfans met over their love for Star Wars. They watched the movies together, owned twelve light sabers, and had friends who were all Star Wars superfans. So, when they got married, it made sense to get married on May the Fourth in a "Star Wars" themed wedding. That's a superfan joke. If you get it, you get it.

Superfans are starving for community, and they get it through a shared hobby.¹

Researchers have found that we aren't imagining that we are starving for community.

Ryan Burge has done a deep dive into the American Communities Survey by the Census Bureau. They do deep surveying work on broad audiences.

Looking deeper than ever, Burge proves that we are starving for community.

Burge found that we are not joining clubs and organizations.

We are more and more lonely.

And we are less and less likely to feel that we need support.

We are starving for community!²

To be alone is "not good" by design!

In Genesis chapter one we read that God created the world.

God created the heavens and the earth, light and darkness, day and night.

God created the oceans and the dry land. **Genesis 1:10:**

... And God saw that it was good.

God created vegetation. **Genesis 1:12:**

... And God saw that it was good.

God created human beings. Then we read in **Genesis 1:31:**

And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. ...

¹ <https://www.wsj.com/lifestyle/are-superfans-happier-than-the-rest-of-us-4fa0023d>

² <https://substack.com/@ryanburge/p-147782959>

Do you see a pattern?

But in Genesis 2 when we get a deeper dive into the creating of humanity, we learn that God made the man first. Then we read a shocking sentence in **Genesis 2:18**:

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; ...

We think of this as a statement about men, women, and marriage, and it is.

It is also a statement about who we are as human beings and how God created us. It is not good for us to be alone. We were created to be in community.

So, Jesus calls us into community.

When Jesus calls disciples in Mark chapter one, He calls multiple disciples in quick succession and puts them into community.

Mark is showing us who Jesus is, who Jesus' disciples are, and how Jesus makes disciples.

Right here, Mark is showing us how Jesus makes disciples; Jesus puts disciples in community.

And Mark is showing us who we are as disciples; we are followers of Jesus in community.

Community with other disciples of Jesus is key to who we are and how Jesus makes disciples.

Jesus met his disciples where they were.

Jesus was walking alongside the Sea of Galilee one day.

The Sea of Galilee is a freshwater lake, roughly seven miles wide and thirteen miles long. It was full of fish, and the fishermen on the Sea of Galilee provided food for themselves and for the region and, and the fish were exported throughout the Mediterranean world.)

The fishermen of Galilee were not simple day laborers. Their fish were valuable, many of them had large businesses, and they were sophisticated businessmen, frequently fluent in Greek.

Simon and Andrew (two brothers) were fishing with a net from shore.

James and John were in boats. Their father, Zebedee, owned multiple boats and had hired hands to help. Theirs was a larger business.

Jesus went to these brothers and met them on their own turf.

That's surprising in many ways; it wasn't like the rabbis people would have known. The rabbis of that day would not go up to potential students or disciples and call them. Instead, students would go to rabbis and ask to be taken as students.

Jesus went to these two sets of brothers. Where they were. At their workplace.

Jesus did not require that His disciples be "pre-qualified".

Rabbis would only take students who had already done quite a bit of work.

And before any other rabbi would take a student, that student had to prove his command of the material, his worthiness to study, and his potential to use what he had learned.

Jesus didn't require anything in advance of Simon, Andrew, James, or John. They had little to no formal training. They weren't outwardly qualified to be disciples of Jesus in any particular way. They had done nothing (that we know of) to prove their future potential.

Jesus didn't require that His disciples be "pre-qualified". Instead, Jesus had a plan to make His disciples qualified for what He wanted them to do. There's an important lesson here!

Jesus meets us where we are.

That's the nature of the Incarnation. The doctrine of the Incarnation tells us that the eternal God—God the Son—took on human flesh, became one of us, and came to be with us.

That's important news to us today. Jesus meets us in the everyday spaces of our lives.

Jesus doesn't wait until we come to church to meet us. Nor does Jesus come to us and speak to us only when we are engaged in spiritual practices, like praying.

Instead, Jesus meets us where we are. He doesn't demand that we come to where He is.

Jesus is here today as we worship together to meet with us—with you. But that doesn't end when you leave here today. Jesus is coming with you to your home. He will be with you when you go to work. He meets you where you are and offers Himself to you.

In the Revelation Jesus describes it as like Him constantly standing at the door of your heart or of your life, knocking. **Revelation 3:20** reads:

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. ..."

Jesus meets His disciples where we are.

Jesus called disciples to, "Follow me!"

Jesus called disciples to, "FOLLOW me!"

Jesus said to Simon and Andrew, "Follow me ...". So, a disciple has decided to follow Jesus. There's a sense of surrender to Jesus as Savior and Lord or ruler of our lives. We accept Jesus as our authority and choose to spend time with Him. That's a "head" change.

Jesus also said, "... and I will make you ...". The way Jesus phrases that statement highlights the fact that we don't change ourselves. Jesus changes us. As we spend time with Him, He changes who we are from the inside out. That's a "heart" change.

Finally, Jesus said that He would make us "... become fishers of men." Jesus saves us for a reason, so that we can multiply disciples. That's what disciples do. It's a "hands" change.

And we get our definition of a disciple: *A disciple is someone who has decided to follow Jesus, is being changed by Jesus, and is multiplying disciples of Jesus.*

Let's not miss, though, how important the loyalty piece is here.

Jesus called disciples to "Follow ME!"

Again, Jesus is not like the rabbis of his day.

When a student would choose a rabbi, he was still clear that his loyalty ultimately was to God's Law and not to the rabbi. Jesus calls disciples in a very different way.

Jesus calls disciples in an authoritative way. It's not just a calling; it's a summons.

And Jesus calls disciples in a personal way. Jesus calls us to come to Him. We don't come to a program, to an organization, or to a set of propositional beliefs. We come to Him!

Not all invitations are the same.

Our mailbox is frequently filled with junk mail, just like yours.

There are flyers about getting my driveway blacktopped. There are advertisements for shoes. They're all cheap, preprinted, and so easy to throw away.

You know that something is different when there is a hand-written envelope in the mailbox, particularly when the envelope is a little bit thicker.

When you get a thicker, hand-written piece of mail, it's usually a personal note or there's an invitation inside. Sometimes it's a thank-you note. Sometimes it's a wedding invitation. Sometimes it's an invitation to dinner. That's a very personalized and special way to invite someone to dinner. It feels special to get that kind of envelope.

Jesus is issuing a call to you that is like a hand-written invitation to dinner.

In fact, thinking of yourself as holding a hand-written invitation to dinner is not so different from what is actually happening. Let's pick up **Revelation 3:20** again:

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."

Jesus is speaking to you personally. He is calling you to follow Him.

Answering that call means that He wants to spend time with you; it's no accident that Jesus describes it like coming into the house that is your life and eating a meal together. Imagine having the opportunity to spend time with Jesus around a dinner table!

But what He's really inviting you to do is spend your life with Him. He's offering to spend His life with YOU! That's what it's like to have a personal RELATIONSHIP with Jesus. Do YOU have a personal relationship with Jesus? That's what He's offering. That's what He's calling you into.

It's like Jesus is offering you a hand-written invitation to join Him.

Jesus called disciples into community with one another.

Jesus called not one but four disciples in quick succession.

Jesus called Simon (we know him as Peter) and his brother, Andrew, first.

Then Jesus called James and John, the sons of Zebedee.

What is Mark showing us? Mark is showing us that Jesus—who could have called disciples any way He chose to and any way He found helpful—intentionally chose to call four at one time.

That shows us that calling more than one at a time is part of Jesus' method of making disciples. And Jesus is the expert in making disciples!

Apparently, the disciples could not learn Jesus' way of life alone.

Yes, they were spending time with Jesus—in community with the Savior and Son of God.

Yes, they were learning from Jesus. They paid careful attention to His actions and probably memorized the words of His key teachings as any disciple would with any rabbi.

Yes, they were being shaped by God the Holy Spirit already. Jesus clearly taught His disciples how to pray, and they would have seen Jesus drawing spiritual life from God through prayer.

All of that is certainly part of Jesus' method of making disciples.

But then, Jesus knew that these disciples would need each other.

They would need each other because it's part of being human; it's not good for us to be alone.

They needed each other as disciples because it's only in community that we really understand and learn how to be a disciple.

As disciples learning the ways and words of Jesus, they needed each other.

They needed to see other disciples practicing the ways and words of Jesus.

They needed encouragement from other disciples to practice the ways of Jesus themselves.

And they needed feedback when they got it wrong.

It is critically important that we be in community if we are going to be disciples of Jesus.

In the days leading up to World War II, Dietrich Bonhoeffer sensed the importance of community.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was one of the greatest theologians and Christian leaders of the first half of the twentieth century. He was German.

In the early 1930s, the world was not yet aware of what Germany was becoming, but some inside Germany could already see a dictator in Hitler, who had the country headed toward war, genocide, and national suicide. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was one of those people.

Regrettably, the Nazis were able to dominate the largest church in Germany. They hand-picked leaders, changed doctrine, and changed worship practices.

Bonhoeffer was part of what was being called the Confessing Church. The Confessing Church opposed the Nazis and called Bonhoeffer to start a new seminary to raise up Confessing Church pastors for the future.

Bonhoeffer saw that what was needed was a revival of true Christianity. What was needed was a true discipleship to the words and ways of Jesus. This would have to start with the pastors of the future. So, he accepted the call to start and lead the new seminary.

He knew that in order to learn the words of Jesus and live the ways of Jesus, they would need to be a close-knit community with one another.

Bonhoeffer wrote to his brother, "The restoration of the church must surely depend on a new kind of monasticism, which has nothing in common with the old but a life of uncompromising discipleship, following Christ according to the Sermon on the Mount. I believe the time has come to gather people together to do this." It had to be life together! That's the only way!

Bonhoeffer and the seminarians studied the Bible together, prayed together, ate and played together, and confessed sin to one another. They truly did life together, and that is where they found the kind of strength to be faithful, even in the face of the growing Nazi war machine.³

Bonhoeffer was right about this. The only way we can learn to follow Jesus is together. That's why Jesus called disciples into community with one another.

Jesus calls you and me into community.

We are made for community in the image of God.

Think for just a minute today about the nature of God. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—three persons yet one being. It's the doctrine of the Trinity.

There is one God. At the same time, God is never alone. God HAS NEVER BEEN alone either.

³ Eric Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2010), pp. 246-277.

Even before creation, God the Father always had God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. God is not only one being in three persons as He relates to us. God is always—eternally—in community.

We are made in God's image for community with God and with one another.

Bonhoeffer wrote in *Life Together* that we are made for community.

Life Together is a book Bonhoeffer wrote about his experience leading that seminary. It was a brief season before the Nazi's hold over the country was cemented, war started, the seminary was shut, and Bonhoeffer was arrested. In *Life Together* he described how and why he did what he did at that seminary.

We are made for community; it's who we are: "Christian brotherhood is not an ideal which we must realize; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate." (30)

We are created for community, but sin ruins that community—which is why we find community frightening at times—and right community must be and is renewed by Jesus: "Without Christ there is discord between God and man and between man and man. Christ became the Mediator and made peace with God and among men." (23) I love you because God first loved me. And if I love God, how can I not love you and be in community with you.

It's only in community with other disciples that we learn what we need to know and become who we are meant to be: "God has willed that we should seek and find His living Word in the witness of a brother, in the mouth of man. Therefore, the Christian needs another Christian who speaks God's Word to him." (23)

Community is a gift to be cherished, Bonhoeffer wrote: "It is grace, nothing but grace, that we are allowed to live in community with Christian brethren." (20)

That's the offer we get in Jesus and the call I'm giving to you.

Jesus calls us to follow Him.

He calls us into community with God and community with each other.

That's the call I'm giving to you today. Come to God. Come to each other.

The disciples responded "immediately" and left everything for Jesus.

They dropped their nets and went with Jesus. For whatever that would mean.

They stepped into community with each other, too. Immediately. For all that would mean.

That's the right response.

That's what we need to do, too.