

“Follow Me”
Matthew 4:18-22

What I want to share with you this morning is what Valerie and I will be doing in the future, and how we came to that decision. I hope that our process can be encouraging to you.

So last fall, Valerie and I attended the Sing conference with a handful of others from our church family. Many of the songs we sing, many of the ways we do worship here have come from the influence of the Sing conference. Pastor Stan said afterward that it was the best conference he had ever been to. I felt the same way... perhaps for different reasons. During the last night of the conference, Pastor David Platt spoke on Psalm 67, which we will look at in a moment, and implored those of us in the room to pray for the persecuted and unreached people in the world. I was very moved by what he shared. During his sharing time, I began crying. I felt so moved and convicted by the Spirit for those who never heard the gospel – for those who did not know what I knew, who had not experienced the love that I had experienced, for those who were dying for lack of a savior. I started crying and really couldn't stop. Stan didn't take me aside for counseling at that moment, but he probably was a bit concerned... Following his talk, we prayed for churches in several countries that were highlighted because of persecution and the suffering that they were experiencing. I was left with a sense of longing and conviction. What David Platt read was this,

- 67** May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us, *Selah*
² that your way may be known on earth,
your saving power among all nations.
³ Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you!
⁴ Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth. *Selah*
⁵ Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you!
⁶ The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, shall bless us.
⁷ God shall bless us;
let all the ends of the earth fear him!

Platt explained the heart of this prayer – God would you use us to show you to the rest of the world. You desire and deserve worship from every people, every nation – let us be the people who make your name great who make your name known among all people. I want that. I hope that you want that.

Valerie and I began thinking and praying about what God was doing. We truly didn't know. But with that in mind we pressed on.

Then, in October, I had to put a call in to the YWAM base in Maui that we had been a part of in 2013-14 to ask for transcripts for my completion of the DTS that I had done so that I could put those credits towards my degree. Before I ended the conversation, I just asked how we might be praying for the base. She began to outline the types of needs that they had – need for married couples to come and provide stability, need for worship leaders who could train and raise up the students who were coming through, and need for people who could come and build relationships with and disciple the staff.

I knew that Valerie and I could do those things, I knew that Valerie especially was uniquely gifted and qualified to fill those roles, and so we again prayed more specifically – God is this what you have for us. Over the course of several months, and all of this complicated by Valerie's pregnancy, we prayed and prayed and sought

counsel from Pastor Stan, Pastor Brad, and others as well. And we determined that this was indeed what God had for us. We talked about timeline, we talked about finances, we talked about the baby, we talked about our families, we talked about school... we talked about everything, but we knew in our hearts and confirmed through His word and through counsel, that this was His will for us.

One of the things I struggled most with was my work here. I felt sadness and even guilt about leaving the High School Ministry here. I believed that Jesus had something new for us, but that didn't totally fix the feeling that I had, and in some ways still have. But, while I was in class talking through Matthew 4 with a couple of my classmates, the Holy Spirit convicted my heart and gave me new resolve and I want to share that with you.

Matthew 4:18-22

What is Jesus doing? He's walking along the Sea of Galilee, presumably meeting people and teaching the good news of the kingdom. Jesus was walking along the Sea. And *He saw*. Don't forget that. Jesus *saw them first*. He saw two brothers casting a net into the sea – for they were fishermen. He said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. *Immediately*. That's amazing isn't it? Let's keep reading. And going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John His brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and He called them. Immediately, they left the boat and their father and followed Him.

I want to focus in on one thing that really struck me and impacted me during this process...

- They left everything – they left immediately. These are two things that you and I must grapple with. We must be willing, we must be ready. Ask yourself, what areas of your life are you not willing to let go of? What areas of your life are you holding on to more than you are holding on to Christ? He may not ask you to do what He asked the disciples to do, but if He does, what will hold you back?
- But the thing I want to focus on is this statement that Matthew records - While they were mending their nets.
 - I had and I received a lot of questions about doing this whole process... I was afraid. I am afraid.
 - One of the main questions had to do with my role here – am I abandoning them? Am I quitting on them? I love these high schoolers so much. I love this ministry so much. They have given me grace and loved me and my family, they have been amazing students, amazing friends, and I believe with my whole heart that God is calling me and Valerie to leave!
 - And the truth is, the work is never done. The nets are never fully mended. When Jesus calls it isn't 'convenient' in our wisdom, it isn't easy in our ways, but that's why he's in charge. These guys left their dad with broken nets. We have to follow Jesus no matter what we leave behind.
 - I'm not here to brag, I'm not here to glorify myself or Valerie – I just want to tell our story and tell you, just like Stan said last week, we should not glorify what we leave behind. We lose nothing when we choose to follow Christ. What we gain in pursuing Christ far outweighs what we leave behind. These men left behind their families and their livelihood to follow Christ. They left their father with broken nets because they had to follow their master.
- Discipleship, following and becoming like Jesus is not just about leaving and it's not just about following. Let me explain both of those.
 - It's not just leaving things behind because if you leave comfort, wealth, privilege behind you can still live for yourself and forget about Jesus. Or you can use those things you've left behind as leverage to try to get something from God. Getting rid of your belongings, or saying no to relationships is not enough, you must leave and follow.
 - But 'following' is not enough either. You cannot take everything with you in your pursuit of Christ. You can't just live your life the same way that you always have when you encounter Jesus. Sin must be left behind, some relationships may need to be left behind, some priorities

may need to be left behind, or Jesus may ask you to leave wealth and privilege behind. I don't know what He will ask of you, but following is not enough. This is why Hebrews 12:1-2 says that before you run the race you must lay aside every weight and the sin which clings so closely. You must lay aside before you follow.

- And, as I said, Jesus may not call you when it's convenient for you, it might make sense to man's wisdom, it might not make sense at all. And I've heard the argument that, "well, yeah, but God gave us a brain." And I'm not saying that that argument is always invalid, but what I'm saying is that if and when Jesus calls, we must follow. There is no sense in telling the king of the universe to wait. That's not what God gave you a brain for.
- These disciples, these men who would betray Jesus and love Him. These men who would personify childlike faith and also shake with fear and doubt. These men who would change the world with the message of the gospel and also argue about who they could eat with. These men who would perform miracles of healing and threaten to bring down the fire of heaven on an unrepentant Samaritan city – these men got this moment right.
- Jesus saw them; Jesus called them; they got up and immediately left their nets. I want to respond to God's call this way. I want to follow Jesus this way.
- This is why Valerie and I have to leave, this is why we have to leave a perfect church family, jobs that we love, friends that we have shared our lives with. Because Jesus is calling.

So here we go:

Where

- Maui – as we said, we are going to YWAM Maui. The main areas of the world that the base focuses on are Southeast Asia – Nepal, SE China, Thailand, etc.

When

- August 12
- We are leaving because of the calendar of the base – staff training and retreat, school starting.

Who

- YWAM Maui – mostly college aged people
- We will be full-time staff members
 - Teaching
 - Worship
 - Small group leadership
 - Hospitality
 - Maintenance and day-to-day normal stuff.

Context

- Baby – she is just a month old.
- School – completing master's degree

What we need

- Prayer – this isn't a cliché. We need it. We have felt since the beginning that we did not want to go anywhere if we weren't *sent*. We desire your spiritual support.
- Financial support.