

The Vineyard – Choosing and Following

You have not chosen Me, **I have chosen you.**
I have set you apart for the work of bringing in fruit. Your
fruit should last.

John 15:16

Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee.
He saw Simon and his brother Andrew putting a net into the
sea. They were fishermen.

Jesus said to them, **“Follow Me.** I will make you fish for
men!”

At once they left their nets and **followed Him.**

Mark 1:16-17

As Jesus went from there, He saw a man called Matthew.
Matthew was sitting at his work gathering taxes.
Jesus said to him, **“Follow Me.”** Matthew got up and **followed
Jesus.**

Matthew 9:9

“Whoever serves me must follow me.

*My servants must be with me everywhere I am.
My Father will give honor to anyone who serves me.”*

John 12:26



“You have not chosen Me, I have chosen you.” In theological circles this is called “the Doctrine of Election.” It has been hotly debated since the Reformation. However, because it’s

beyond my "pay grade" I shall only focus on the words above.

Mark this! The **first words** Jesus spoke to his disciples x were "**Follow me!**" Jesus' "**choosing**" meant "**following**", two sides of the same coin. The singular purpose of the coin is: "*I will make you **fish for men!***" and "*I have set you apart for the work of **bringing in fruit.***" Furthermore, "*Whoever **serves me must follow me.***" Note the **MUST!** One can't serve Jesus without following. To use Jack Nicholson's noted words in *A Few Good Men*, I think this is "*Crystal Clear!*"

This is critical for the Kingdom in the western world so I shall be repetitious. Given the primary action of the church today, one would have guessed that Jesus said something like this. The "**choosing**" is for the sake of "**coming.**" And the primary purpose is **worship**. Interestingly, Jesus never said to worship him. People indeed did worship him (Matthew 14:32-33); nonetheless, he never gave that as a primary command! What he did say is this: "*True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. The Father is looking for people like that to worship him.*" (John 4:23-24) Is this picking at gnats? Observe these words: "*You are Peter, and I can guarantee that on this rock I will **BUILD** my church.*" (Matthew 16:18) Jesus was about gathering living stones for his building project. "*You are to be **as living stones in the building** God is making.*" (1 Peter 2:5) Note the similarity between **what Jesus said** to Peter and **what Peter later said** to the church! Obviously, Peter never forgot to "make the main thing the main thing!"

x

Dietrich Bonhoeffer matured in Hitler's Germany. He was a premier pastor/theologian. He was a Lutheran and a pacifist. As Hitler advanced Bonhoeffer saw that he was like a drug, selling a little addiction at a time. In light of the fact that the Lutheran Church swallowed Hitler's lure "*hook, line and sinker*", Bonhoeffer was painfully forced to evaluate his

mother church. Mind you, Bonhoeffer was a committed churchman of highest repute.

However, above all he was committed to the scriptures. And so, reading the Gospels afresh, he was confronted by the stark difference between “*following Jesus*” and being a “*coming to church*” member. You may think this trite; however, I assure for Bonhoeffer it was a matter of life and death. He participated in the failed assassination attempt of Hitler (see the movie *Valkyrie*). For his participation he was hanged in 1945 at Flossenburg, only days before the American liberation of the POW camp.

☒ *The Cost of Discipleship* was Bonhoeffer’s response amidst this tumultuous time. This is not the reflection of a theologian, sitting in the hallowed walls of a seminary. Quite the contrary, Bonhoeffer was *knee deep* in the quest for freedom from the monster. Most of all, it was a call to the Lutheran Church to follow Jesus rather than Hitler. This is what he wrote. “*Grace is costly because it **calls us to follow**, and it is grace because it **calls us to follow Jesus Christ**. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life.*” On the other hand, “*Cheap grace is **grace without discipleship!***” In other words, Bonhoeffer saw that, in the midst of the fray, what is most important is “*following Jesus*” rather than merely “*going to church*”!

You may think this superficially simplistic! I guarantee: neither for Jesus nor Bonhoeffer was that the case!