

# Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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## Choosing the Path of Disruption

by Dan Trygg

“Summoning the crowd along with His disciples, He said to them, ‘If anyone wants to be My follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. <sup>35</sup> For whoever wants to save his life (preserve, keep from risk or loss, keep safe and comfortable), will lose it (‘put aside’, ruin, render useless, destroy), but whoever loses his life because of Me and the gospel will save it.’” Mark 8:34,35

**God has a way of disrupting your life. In fact, that is the essence of what it means to “follow Him”.** It means that instead of doing things *your* way, ...or doing what *you* were going to do without Him..., you choose to do as *He* is calling you to do. **God came to Abram and said, “Go for yourself out of your country, and from your relatives, and from the house of your father to the land which I will cause you to see” (Gen. 12:1). Talk about disruption! That is very drastic!**

For me, it was 54 years ago that God spoke to me (the first time that I was so plainly aware of). He told me, “Write a letter to your uncle, and ask if you could work on his farm this summer.” What!?! *That* was disruptive! I had *other plans*. I had a girlfriend. We were “in love”. I sure did not want to spend my summer *apart from her!*

I don’t know what it was like for Abram. The word from the Lord was a much “bigger ask” than what He was telling me. **He was to leave everything!** The text does not tell us if he struggled, or what he went through. It just reports that “Abram went forth, according to the word of Yahweh.”

As for me, ...I protested and argued at first, but in the end, I too acted upon “the word of the Lord”. I got up, and wrote the letter, and put it in the mailbox.

**I don’t know if you noticed the phrase “for yourself” in God’s word to Abram.** It is not even translated in most English versions, but it is there in the Hebrew. As you read the larger quote, you can see the significance of this phrase. “Go for yourself out from your country, your relatives, and your father’s house to the land I will cause you to see, and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name significant, and you will be a blessing.” **God was giving Abram a choice:** A choice to live the life he wanted, according to the pattern of his family and his community, to become what he and others expected him to become, ...*or*, ...he could choose to step away from those dynamics, plans and expectations in order to follow God. **God disrupted Abram’s life to offer him an entirely different future, ...a future with His oversight, His leading, His provision and purpose, ...a life that will cause him to be a blessing to others, ...and, because of that, his name would become significant.**

Interestingly enough, God’s word to me involved *helping someone else*, as well. I didn’t see how, ...what could an 18 year old possibly do to “help” someone on that farm? I had no idea. In fact, that wasn’t even what I was thinking about when I wrote the letter. Like Moses, in Exodus 3, I was resistant. I protested and had excuses, but God was not letting me off the hook. He was very insistent. In the end, **I just was doing what I was told. I made the choice to follow the disruptive path God was telling me to go down.** As it turned out, the day before I came, my uncle had ulcers that started bleeding in his stomach. He was hospitalized and had to have surgery. I showed up at a dairy farm with 70 cows *the very next day!* Dairy cows need to be milked twice a day. I had no experience, no special skills, but I was an extra pair of hands that were desperately needed *at that time*. I was there for a month, and my uncle was able to resume his chores just days before I left. **But, the key to observe is that I had chosen to obey God’s leading. I chose to “put aside” or “lose” my self-life, and as a result, God had made me a blessing.**

**This is what Jesus was talking about in Mark 8:34,35.** To those who frequent churches and religious venues, these words are very familiar, ...but I don’t think we truly grasp what Jesus was saying, at least not in a practical way. Note that Jesus summoned both the larger crowd together with His close disciples. **This is a word for everyone! This is a “kingdom principle”.** This is true for everyone, in every place and time, who desires to follow Jesus.

**Jesus said, “If anyone desires to follow after Me, let him deny himself...”** Often we hear that in terms of denying *something* from ourselves, but that is not what Jesus was saying. He was saying that we must “refuse, disregard, not consent to, disown, or even repudiate” our own selves. The word used here is used 11 times in the NT, and it is only used of denying ourselves, or of denying Jesus. **Here, it means to “forget one’s self, or lose sight of one’s own self-interest.”** Jesus went on, “...and take up his cross...”. The cross was not a religious symbol at that time. It was a symbol of death, ...here, death to self. “...and follow Me.”

**Bottom line, what Jesus was saying is that if you want to follow Him, you need to say “No” to yourself.** If you want to follow Jesus, then *You must let Him lead.* You must repudiate your self-interests in order to follow His interests. **You will need to put aside your plans and expectations in order to discover what He wants to make of your life.** But even that is not enough. You must consciously, purposefully invest your focus and energy toward getting to know

Him so that you can learn to go where He leads, and do as He is telling you to do. **You need to be able to say, “Here I am, Lord. YOU write the story of my life. YOU make me whatever it is that You desire. I repudiate my own limited self-understanding, and I choose to follow You wherever You may lead.”**

**That has happened many times in my life.** The first, and most definitive experience was about two weeks after leaving that dairy farm. That time at the farm was significant. It got me away from my normal routines and distractions. My aunt, uncle and the others there were people who knew God in a way that I had not seen before. They spent time in the scriptures, and in prayer. They went to church, ...and the people there had a joy and zeal for God I had not been exposed to previously. During that month, I had begun to more purposefully seek God for myself. **After leaving the farm, I went to work at a Bible camp. It was there that God came to me again, ...with an Abram-like call. He said, “Dan, I want you to give Me your future.”** I knew this meant to deny myself, my plans, and my agenda for my life, in order to discover what HE wanted to make of me. It was a very clear, conscious decision. I embraced it.

**Jesus’ teaching in Mark 8 did not simply stop with a crisis decision.** What He spoke of next helps to “put some meat on the bones” to enable us to understand more clearly what is entailed in “following Him.” **Verse 35 says, “For whoever wants to save his life, will lose it, but whoever will lose his life on account of Me and the gospel will save it.”** Again, the language may seem familiar, and easy enough to understand, ...but there is more under the surface than what we might first think. Some of these words have a variety of definitions that can expand our perception. For example:

**The word for “life”** is not talking about physical, biological life. **It is referring to self-life, or identity.** This is about who you are and what you will become in this natural world. **The word for “save”** can mean not only to “rescue”, but also to **“preserve, keep from risk or loss, keep safe and comfortable”**. To **“lose”** means not to “misplace” but to **“put aside’, ruin, render useless, or destroy.”**

**Jesus the Master Teacher put these words together in a catchy antithetical parallelism.** Note the significant operative word in the first part of the sentence, “wants”. It is a Greek word meaning “desire, wish, or will”. To help put this all together, let me ask you a question: **What do you “want”? What do you desire for your life?** Well, the natural thing is to do what seems safe, convenient, pleasant, and brings positivity into my experience. Jesus is saying that if you only choose to live out of your own natural desires, understanding and self-will, you will lose, ruin, and render useless the self-life He has intended you to be. **BUT, if you are willing to let go, release, and disown that self-centered life, and follow Jesus, you will “save”, rescue, discover, develop and fulfill the self-life that God created you to be.**

**The next major “disruption” in my life came about a month after I came home from my decision for Christ.** I had been going to a different church, where the teaching and worship were feeding my soul. **I began to feel an “agitation” inside of me. I began to sense that I needed to go back to my childhood church, and see if we could get the youth together to “share our experiences of Christ”.** *This was not me! I would not come up with such an idea!* I was shy, withdrawn, avoiding engagement with people, ...especially older people, like my pastor. I made the choice to follow what was stirring inside of me. **To my surprise, he was delighted with the idea. He set a time and place, and got the word out.** Several of us shared, who had truly had a life-changing encounter with God, but most of the kids had no idea what we were talking about. **It got late, so the pastor suggested that we close our meeting. Suddenly, there was that “agitation” again! It grew until I almost burst! I blurted out, “We can’t end here! Maybe we should start a Bible study.”** People were interested in that. **So, then the question was, “Who is going to lead the study?”** After looking around the room, and asking questions, it turned out that **I was the only one of the older youth who would be there during the school year, ...so I became the Bible study leader by default.**

**I had no idea how to even begin! But, God had set all of this up, just like the events at the farm.** The next week, I started school at Bethel College. **What was the first class I had every morning? Bible Survey.** Then, after a few months, an intern came who helped with the youth, and taught me about discipleship. **In 7 month’s time, and 3 crucial decisions,** ...where I chose to do what God was prompting me to do, instead of what I would have preferred to do on my own..., **the whole trajectory of my life was changed.** God had already used me to bless others, ...and I was discovering that I had an ability as a Bible teacher that I did not even know that I possessed. As I continued following Jesus, He has used me to benefit others, and they began to reach out to others, as well. Today, some of them are pastors. Others are counselors. Many became leaders in college Bible studies, and in their churches.

**The point is, if you want to follow Jesus, you need to open yourself up to Him. You must expect Him to disrupt your life.** In our flesh, we want a safe, predictable, pleasant life, with few inconveniences. **Trust me, God will stretch you and lead you to places where you never thought you would go, ...but it will be exciting and delightful!** The self that God sees, ...the potential that He has placed in you..., is not something you can develop or manage on your own. **As you let go of your self-identity,** ...who you *think* you are, and even what you might *prefer* in your flesh..., **and you embrace God’s call in the disruption, He will lead you into deeper places with Him, as well as greater blessing and fruitful impact on others.**