

## **FIRE IN THE BELLY—Simon the Zealot**

(Mark 3:16-19; 6:7)

***Following Jesus always involves transformation,  
but looks different for different people***

- **Following Jesus always involves transformation**
  - **Simon was a Zealot**
    - Zealots were one of four Jewish sects (Primary source: Josephus)
      - Pharisees—
      - Sadducees—
      - Essenes—
      - Zealots—
  - **How was Simon transformed?**
    - Burning anger became redirected passion
 

Against Rome → for Christ
    - Blind patriotism became fierce loyalty
 

From committed to a cause → to committed to a person
- **Following Jesus looks different for different people**

*What does God want following Jesus to look like for you?*

## QUOTES OF NOTE

The desire for transformation lies deep in every human heart.... The possibility of transformation is the essence of hope. Psychologist Aaron Beck says that the single belief most toxic to a relationship is the belief that the other person cannot change. (John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted*)

Christianity can only succeed as a guide for current humanity if it does two things. First, it must take the need for human transformation as seriously as do modern revolutionary movements. Second, it needs to clarify and exemplify realistic methods of human transformation. (Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*)

I don't have to watch the evening news to see that the world is bad; I only have to look at myself. I am not browbeating myself here; I am only saying that true change, true life-giving, God-honoring change would have to start with the individual. I was the very problem I had been protesting. I wanted to make a sign that read, "I AM THE PROBLEM!" (Donald Miller, *Blue Like Jazz*)

Living a spiritual life requires a change of heart, a conversion. Such a conversion may be marked by a sudden inner change, or it can take place through a long, quiet process of transformation. (Henri Nouwen, *Making All Things New*)

Here is the secret of becoming much like God: remaining long alone with God. If you won't stay long with Him, you won't become much like Him. (R.A. Torrey)

For prostitutes, the call of Jesus was to leave their story of men who pay money for love, and to enter the story of God, who in love pays for us with his own life. For Pharisees, it was to leave their story of religiosity and superiority and rigidity and judgmentalism, their story that was exclusively focused on their own narrow little sect, and instead to enter God's broader and deeper and better story of grace and compassion and mercy and love for all people.

For Zealots like Simon, it was to leave the political story of violence, to stop slitting Roman throats, as if that would bring the story to its desired end, and instead to enter God's spiritual story of peace for all people, to risk persecution for justice and to prefer suffering over causing others to suffer. For tax collectors like Zacchaeus or Matthew, it was to stop collaborating with the Roman Empire, and profiting in the process, and instead to collaborate with the kingdom of God, and sacrifice in the process.

For the rich—like that young ruler Jesus met—it was to abandon the hollow story of acquisition, and instead to enter God's better story of generosity. For farmers and shepherds, it was to realize that there's more to life than just planting seeds of wheat or tending flocks of sheep; instead, Jesus invited them to enter into the bigger story of planting seeds of truth and seeking lost men and women, every one of whom is loved and counted and missed by God.

For fishermen like Peter and Andrew and James and John, it was to trade in their story of catching fish for a bigger story of fishing for men and women, inviting them into God's story of ongoing creation and redemption. For the middle class, who want nothing more than to create a little social aquarium so that their biological families can experience something they call "family values," it's a call to care about the families of their neighbors too, especially the poor, to see them as family too, as children of Adam and children of God. (Brian McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves In*)