

Week Two: *The Sacred Journey*
Matthew 4:1-22

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. Read Matthew 4:1-22. After last week's focus on fasting, what is your gut reaction to the first two Bible verses?

2. Now continue reading Matthew 4:1-22. How would you describe the portion of Jesus' journey described in these verses?

3. How does this compare to your life? Do the events of your life flow similarly, or does it progress more linearly? Explain your answer.

4. Barbara Brown Taylor, Episcopal priest and professor of religion at Piedmont College, says, "I think we'd like life to be a train... You get on, pick your destination, and get off. Every day, you have to see where the wind is and check the currents and see if there's anybody else on the boat with you who can help out. It's a sailboat ride—the weather changes and the currents change and the wind changes. It's not a train ride. That's the hardest thing I've had to accept in my life. I just thought I had to pick the right train—and I worked hard to pick the right train. And darned if I didn't get off at the end of it and find out that was just a midway station." Do you agree with Taylor's description of your journey? Have you also been focused on "picking the right train"? Why or why not?

5. Are you comfortable with life being more like a sailboat, or would you prefer a train?

6. How does knowing that Jesus' life was also more of a sailboat than a train affect your confidence level in moving forward?

7. As you end your FIFTEEN today, ask God to help you bravely embrace the journey he has in store for you, even if it feels like a sailboat.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. Abraham was a man who had a long and storied journey with God. Read Genesis 12:1-9 and answer the following questions:
 - a. What was God asking Abraham to leave behind?

 - b. What did God promise Abraham?

 - c. How did Abraham respond?

9. Abraham was a man who had a lot going for him; giving up what he already had for the *promise* of something better had to be hard. What would it take for you to make such a move? Maybe you have? Share the details of that "move."

10. Abraham's journey was certainly more of a metaphorical sailboat than a train ride. (See yesterday's study.) Abraham had plenty of storms on his journey! What types of things discourage you on your journey?
11. What types of things encourage you when your journey becomes rocky?
12. Read Galatians 3:29. Spoiler alert! God was faithful to Abraham! According to this verse, who is a testament to God's faithfulness to Abraham?
13. As you end your FIFTEEN, give thanks to God for Abraham and all of the faithful people that went before us as examples of how to live a sacred journey.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

14. Look again at Matthew 4:1-22. Who was mentioned in verse 12? What happened to him?
15. Let's back up a bit and read the beginning of John's story in Mark 1:1-8. What was John's purpose?
16. Read Matthew 3:13-17. What was John privileged to do for Jesus?
17. Now read Matthew 14:3-36 to read the end of John's story.
18. Looking at John's life, would you say his sacred journey was worth his suffering? Why or why not?
19. I am not sure many of us would be brave enough to sign up for the life John lived, but judging by John's reaction when he was in the presence of his Savior, he would not have missed it for the world! As you end your FIFTEEN, ask God to give you the courage to live out your sacred journey with him so that you don't miss the wild ride!

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

20. Today we are going to look at the point where Jesus' journey met some others. Read Matthew 4:18-22. Whom did Jesus meet in these verses?
21. What would have been your reaction to Jesus? Do you think if you were in the same place as these men that you would have been as willing as they were? (Try to imagine that you don't have the knowledge about Jesus that you have.)

22. Just for fun, bring to mind a friend or family member in your life. Now imagine the conversation you would have with them to explain why you followed Jesus. What would you say?
23. Try to imagine you were talking about your faith life now. How would you explain to that same person why you are a follower of Jesus now?
24. There's no doubt that leaving everything and following Jesus took faith. So does following him today. As we see in the life of these men, following Jesus cost them everything, but it was worth everything! Now read John 6:29-40. What is the ultimate reward for those who follow Jesus?
25. As you end your FIFTEEN, ask God to help you stay focused on the reward he has to offer us through Jesus.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

26. Have you ever wanted to do something thrilling but scary? Maybe it was an amusement park ride, or an outdoor adventure, or something really big like a new job or other challenge? Did you overcome your fear and try it? If so, do you regret trying it? If not, do you regret passing up the opportunity?
27. One thing that makes trying new things easier is starting small. It can be the same with faith. When we look at the lives of the faithful in the Bible, many of them grew in bravery and courage over time. How does taking baby steps help you take bigger ones? Use an example to help explain your answer.
28. Look again at Matthew 4:18. What did the disciples do?
29. James and John started off by simply following Jesus; they had no idea what was to come. Read John 14:12. What did Jesus say his followers would do?
30. God has big things planned for us, and there's no better hands in which we can entrust our journeys. Now finish your FIFTEEN in prayer using the words of Psalm 1:36.