

The Interview | Matthew 4:18-22

So we left off yesterday with me going...that no matter how awesome and morally upright we think we are...we're still sinners because 1) we have made God's stuff primary rather than God, 2) we have said that our way is better than God's and 3) we have the guts to ignore God altogether in our lives. And because of that we were in a lot of trouble because God is a just God that had to punish sin...and I just left it. Today we're going to talk about what happens. But we'll talk about it as one of your favorite subjects to talk about – school.

The Jewish system of education was a bit different than it is today. And I'm not even sure how they do it here...I tried to understand it, but maybe one of ya'll can help me with it later. For us we go from Kindergarten to Elementary school and from there Middle school and then to High school. Afterwards you had a choice whether or not to continue with school and go to college or start working. But on a whole, this is what most Americans are dealt with. And like many societies, the higher up you go in the education world the more respected and wealthy you become. I'm not saying that always happens but that tends to be the pattern of thinking.

Bet Safar | But when we're reading scripture you have to be aware of a few things – one is context and two is being able to immerse yourself in the text. Why is context so big? Well it's like if you were to watch a movie in the middle and fast forward to the parts you only like...you miss out on everything that might help with the story. Well to understand the passage you have to understand the context of the Jewish school system. You see, in those days girls were only allowed to stay at home and watch over the house. So from an early age, they were taught how to cook, raise the children, and manage the home. It was more about a cultural thing rather than a "who is better thing." Honestly, I bet the women then were stronger than the men were. But that's neither here nor there. The boys were all enrolled in a general system of education from the ages of 0-10 called "Bet Safar". And what happened was that they would go to the synagogue to study the Torah – our first 5 books. And by the end of this training they would have memorized word-for-word the first 5 books of the Old Testament. And at the end...the rabbi (teacher) would look out among the boys and go "good job and well done, you have made your families proud...now go and learn your father's trade." And they would go home and learn whatever it is the father did – so whether the father was a fisherman, they'd go and learn how to fish; if he were a blacksmith, they'd go learn how to wield metals and stuff; if the dad was a carpenter, the son would learn how to build. But the rabbi would take a certain group of boys from Bet Safar and only they would be able to continue to the next level.

Bet Talmud | This next level was called Bet Talmud and from the ages of 10-14 the boys would study all of the Hebrew Scriptures as well as learning the art of question and answer. Imagine memorizing the entire old testament. And each boy would study and study and learn and learn and at the end of Bet Talmud the rabbi would again tell 99% of them, "You did well and you made your families proud...but go and learn your fathers trade." But to the remaining 1% he would tell them that they have moved on to Bet Midrash.

Bet Midrash | was almost like getting to the final level. So by now they knew the Old Testament and they knew general teaching skills. But the Rabbi didn't want just anyone out there who was only smart...they had to be well-rounded and liked. Why? Because what the Rabbi was doing was pretty much interviewing with these young men so that one day they might take his place as Rabbi. And being a rabbi was pretty much to be in power and prestige. That's why everyone would want to follow after a rabbi. So Bet Midrash would be these series of interview questions and they would test each student so

that they whether he was ready or not. He would ask them questions like, "So...what is the main idea of Ezra? Quote to me Isaiah 3-11 and relate that to Job 4" And at the end of this whole ordeal (and remember, these guys have been studying and learning ever since they were young) the rabbi would go, "It is obvious that you are brilliant, it is obvious that you love the Lord, it is clear that you have made your family proud...but go and learn your father's trade" I mean imagine what's going on here...you study and study and work and work 15 something years of your life all to hear your master your rabbi say "sorry, you're not good enough". And mind you there were guys all along the way that couldn't even make it to this level. And so yeah...they had to turn away and walk home but to that last guy standing, the 1% of the 1% the rabbi said "You are ready to take my yoke...you are ready to be a rabbi" And the master would take this boy in with him and would train him for the next 15 years until he became a man and was ready to be the next rabbi.

Background | So turn real quick to John 1. 35 says, "The next day again John was standing with the two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter). The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee...

Follow Me | Turn with me to Matthew 4. Verse 18 goes "While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed him. 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." Let me ask you a question...who were they fishing with? Yeah...their father. Which means what? They were one of the ones that didn't make it in the Jewish system. They dropped out and were told that they couldn't cut it. And I can only imagine how many of us feel this way too. Like for some reason following Jesus or Christianity is a thing only reserved for "good people" not people like me. Because like we said yesterday, if I were to be honest...I know what I struggle with and I know how far I've gone with my sin. And if there is a God and he's real then there's no way he could ever love someone as wicked as me! You don't know my past...you don't know what I deal with...you don't know my wicked heart. It's for other people! But I promised you good news yesterday and here it is. The apostle Paul reminds us in 1 Timothy 15 "The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life." And Paul would ask you, "Have you made it a habit of killing innocent Christians? Because I have. That's why I love this Jesus because He died for people like me...people that are wicked as can be but also for people that try to act good but fail".

And that's the greatest news in the world...not that we're good people, but we're not. And in one act God himself became the ultimate sacrifice and absorbs the wrath that was meant for you and I onto himself and now makes a way to life everlasting. Now what was broken in the universe is now restored in the person of Jesus Christ.

The Offer | And so the offer still stands today. Are you willing to follow him? And don't fool yourself by thinking that you have to clean yourself up before you follow him. Don't fool yourself to think that you have to be perfect. He knows and you know that you can't...and he never requires you to ever get there, just that you come at his feet and confess that you can't. What other option do you have? You can continue to try and try in this life to make it...you can continue to think that your way is better...or you can finally be tired enough to fall at his feet and admit that you desperately need him. So what will it be?