

## **Immediately**

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

Mark 1:14-20

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### *1 Corinthians 7:29-31*

I mean, brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

### *Mark 1:14-20*

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

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Are you a plotter or a pantsers?

This question followed introductions and the usual comments when meeting new people at the Southern CA Writer’s Conference I attended last September.

Are you a plotter or a pantsers?

What the question is asking is are you a writer who carefully crafts an outline and detailed notes of what you are writing so that by the time your creative fingers hit the keyboard or pick up a pen it is essentially all in your head and now is ready to be written and edited. The beginning, the suspense, the main points, the facts, the twists and turns, the end, are all carefully mapped out before the true writing begins. This is a plotter. Slow, careful, meticulous planning and plotting.

A pantsers is the complete opposite. A pantsers is a writer who literally writes by the seat-of-their-pants. The words on the computer screen or paper can be as new and revealing to the author as they will one day be to the readers. A vague idea, perhaps an image or a phrase, and what it evokes in the writer reveals itself as the writer writes. The writer will be the first one to react with a ‘o wow’, or ‘yes!’, or ‘oh no,’ as the words flow from them.

Most writers as you would imagine are a bit of both, so the question, ‘are you a plotter or a pantsers’ is asking which are you most often, which is your dominant writing style.

Being a plotter or a pantsers is also a way of describing how someone, anyone, is in the world.

Are you a plotter who carefully thinks things through before you make a decision? Do you take time, do research, look at reviews, explore options, pray and think about something for quite a while before you act with all due diligence?

Are you more of a pantsner, open to new ideas and possibilities and jumping right in so that you learn along the way? The discovery, the newness, the revelations, are all an adventure for you.

How you answer the plotter pantsner question can be helpful in understanding the actions of Simon, Andrew, James and John—two sets of brothers who dropped their fishing nets, their work, and their family when Jesus said, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” All four immediately left their nets and followed him.

Some read this as a faithful response to Jesus’ calling, hoping and expecting that if they had been one of them, they too would have followed Jesus immediately. For others, this is a difficult passage as the new disciples simply abandon their families and their work, irresponsibly leaving their older fathers to manage without them, and their community short-handed of fishermen to feed the people, to instead follow this new unproven, itinerant teacher.

Pastor Chrissy Cataldo spoke to this by saying that “many sermons on these passages highlight the unexpectedness and strangeness of the disciples dropping everything to follow Jesus. It does seem pretty mysterious. It does seem like he just wanders in out of the blue, says, “follow me” and everybody says, “Ok.” It’s almost like they are hypnotized, like he does some kind of magic that gets them to find his invitation to be so compelling that they are willing to drop everything, to follow him. They left behind jobs, familial responsibilities, everything. What is perhaps most surprising is that Jesus didn’t even give them any specifics. He just said, “Follow me.” And they did.”<sup>i</sup>

All four of the beginning of Jesus’ inner circle seem to be pantsners running off immediately to this strange new invitation, abandoning everything for this mysterious stranger.

Yet scholars put context around Mark’s Gospel’s sense of urgency.<sup>ii</sup> It is most likely that they had heard John the Baptist preaching, and in fact may have even been his followers waiting for, preparing for, plotting for, the day when the anticipated kingdom would come near. Most likely they had been going about their daily lives waiting for the One John the Baptist had promised was on the way. Their actions were immediate, their following was not.

Throughout the Gospels, the good news, many people were called, most by Jesus, to come and follow, to respond with immediate actions, as they would then follow deliberately, attentively, focused, prepared, aware and awoke.

Mary was a young woman, soon to be a young bride, expecting to live a life of marriage and motherhood as others of her time and place did, until the annunciation from the angel Gabriel turned her life upside down as the mother-to-be of God.<sup>iii</sup>

Ten lepers banished from society by their skin condition immediately acted upon Jesus’ words to go and show themselves to the priests, and they were healed.<sup>iv</sup>

A woman caught in adultery was immediately saved from being stoned to death by Jesus’ calling out the stoners’ hypocrisy.<sup>v</sup> “Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.”

The young daughter of a synagogue ruler in Capernaum was near death until Jesus’ healing words, “Do not fear, only believe,” and she was immediately made well.<sup>vi</sup>

Zacchaeus, the rich chief tax collector, immediately repented and repaid his corrupt ways when Jesus told him he would stay at his house that day.<sup>vii</sup>

How do you hear Jesus’ invitation as he calls you by name and says, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” Follow me and I will change your life. Do you hear Jesus calling you to drop everything, to follow him and be changed immediately, or do you hear Jesus calling you to live deeply, intently, intentionally, in the ways he opens up for you?

I believe this either/or question is answered with a single ‘yes.’ Yes to responding to the immediate and urgent needs and concerns of others, an immediate yes to changing behaviors and attitudes that do not align with what we believe as followers of Jesus as we act in his ways of faith, care, compassion, welcome, healing, and lovingkindness. Yes also to responding to times of prayer, learning, worship and quiet solitude with God.

Mark’s gospel was an urgent agenda of quickly getting the good news out. Paul’s ministry, begun just two years after Jesus’ life, was also hurried, urgent, immediate as Jesus’ return, the “appointed time” was believed to be imminent.<sup>viii</sup>

2000 years later we still have immediate calls to action and slower, deliberate calls to discipleship as God’s transformative work is still on the horizon. Our actions will many times be immediate, our following is not as it is ever growing and evolving and deepening. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.wccucc.org/sermon-blog/sermon-on-january-25-2015-lets-go-fishing-mark-114-20>

<sup>ii</sup> Karoline Lewis, "The Immediately of Epiphany": <https://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=3500>

<sup>iii</sup> Luke 1: 26-38

<sup>iv</sup> Luke 17: 11-19

<sup>v</sup> John 8:1-11

<sup>vi</sup> Mark 5: 21-43

<sup>vii</sup> Luke 19:1-10

<sup>viii</sup> Edward Pillar, <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/third-sunday-after-epiphany-2/commentary-on-1-corinthians-729-31-6>