



## Dear Friends,

This week at our growth group, we were looking at Matthew 8:18-27. The passage was about discipleship. Jesus teaches that discipleship is costly. He also says that discipleship is to take top priority because following Jesus may bring us into conflict with family or family obligations. Jesus also stresses that his followers must have faith so that we fully entrust ourselves to him rather than thinking that we are in control.

The study ended with questions about growing your faith in Jesus. I had a few reflections.

My first reflection was about how to grow faith in Jesus. Two weeks ago, I was asked to do a ministry task outside of church. I felt tired and unmotivated. I responded to the request by saying that I did not want to decide then what to do because my decision would be driven by my exhaustion. Instead, I needed time to think and pray about it.

I was hesitant about taking on this ministry task because there were a couple of aspects to it that were challenging. The first challenge was that I would be assuming a more responsible role than I normally had in the past. The second challenge was that the ministry task was more complex and difficult than I had experienced previously.

Did I really want to move beyond the comfortable and familiar to do a task that will stretch me and leave me feeling anxious because it is harder and different to my previous experiences?

I sensed God was calling on me to say, "yes." It wasn't because I wanted to. The opposite was true. I was convinced to do it for a few reasons. First, there was a need. Second, there were fewer people available to serve. Thirdly, I already had prior experience in this ministry area. I was also convicted by what I was learning from Matthew's gospel about discipleship. Discipleship is costly. Following Jesus is to take priority. And it requires faith. God was calling me to practice what I preach.

If there is one thing that God has taught me over the years, it is that my faith grows whenever He takes me beyond my comfort zone. I remember a football commentator saying about a grand final winning team that they had learnt to be comfortable with being uncomfortable. That is the zone in which I am to live as a follower of Jesus. I need to get comfortable with being uncomfortable. That's because I more fully trust God when I take on new challenges and tasks.

My second reflection centred on the question from the Bible study about how God uses fellow Christians in your growth group to grow your faith.

When I shared my first reflection with fellow group members about taking on a ministry task that I really didn't want to do, it struck me that I was surrounded by people in my group who had done just that at RPC. Some of those people have recently stepped up to lead and teach at kids' church. Another leads at kids' club and only this year, began teaching special religious education at Randwick Primary School. Yet another now serves as an elder and a growth group leader. The person leading the study was doing it for the first time, while someone else had done just that only a matter of weeks before. Their examples inspired and encouraged me to remain open to taking on new and difficult ministry tasks.

My final reflection was that one of the great benefits of being in a growth group is to hear others share their experience of God in their lives. I enjoy learning from the insights of others into what the biblical text means. I also treasure people sharing their experience of God because it assures me that Christ's powerful presence by his Spirit is real and it encourages me to pray for God to be powerfully at work in my life and in our church.

God Bless,  
Mark Adams