

When she was a kid, Holly heard the story about how Jesus walked on water, and was fascinated by it, and she heard about how Peter tried to walk on water too, he really tried, but sunk to his knees because he allowed fear, not faith, to master his mind, and fill his heart.

Jesus, the master, saved Peter, and continued to teach him, even though Peter wasn't too good at staying afloat on his own.

But Holly always wondered about walking on water. What a cool trick that would be. And she imagined a wavy, slippery feeling beneath her bare feet, a slick surface surging, splashing through her toes, tossing her balance about, riding atop liquid as if it were solid, all the while staying upright, never sinking, and hollering with excitement and joy.

Her fantasy of walking on water, just like Peter's brief attempt, was a rather far-fetched aspiration.

Her next best choice was surfing. So when she was old enough she went out in search of an expert teacher and booked herself into an adult surfing camp. Off she flew to Maui, spending five days building her skills for personal thrills as a novice surfer from expert shredders willing to take her on.

For five full days she was the dutiful apprentice of surfing masters. And from them she learned the skills and felt the thrill of riding a wave. By imitating their moves, by learning their techniques, she did rather well in her own way. And now she's excited and encouraged about all she learned.

Having the right teacher helps. With practice, she might even become a teacher someday, too. She knows that to learn a new skill in the right way, she had to go where the top teachers live.

Now if you want to learn a new skill, like surfing, for instance, you could buy a surfboard, read a surfing how-to-book, watch a surfing instructional video, and then give it a go on the rolling surf of 2-4 footers by yourself.

Trouble is – you're likely be wiping out more often than not.

Eventually you might learn how to surf through trial and error. You'll get the thrill, but miss out on the skill, and if you're not overly careful, you'll probably pick up some bad habits too.

There is a shortcut to learning new skills – find a competent teacher. Find a Master – someone who has the know-how, and then go to that major player to learn.

Andrew the apostle wanted to learn about God, so he started following John the Baptist and became a willing student. Later on, when the real deal showed up in our story today, when the Christ himself came walking by, Andrew ditched John the Baptist, grabbed his brother Peter and

said, “I’ve found the Messiah!” Together the brothers went off on the greatest adventure ever – an adventure about which stories are still told about today.

Peter and Andrew did pretty much the same thing as Holly. They knew what they wanted to learn, so they went to where the master lived.

All the better that Jesus invited them to join him “where he was staying”. It’s a good start for any novice to get an invitation to hang with the greatest teacher of them all, and to have the chance to learn the skills that change lives. And Andrew seizes the opportunity and pulls Peter along for the ride.

It’s clear in the story that those brothers know what they want. They want God. They want the Messiah. They know with whom they wish to apprentice – the Rabbi Jesus, the Messiah. They found the teacher who’ll give them unsurpassed instruction. There’s no point learning from the second best when the best is available.

There’s an old saying, “When the student is ready, the teacher will appear.”

Peter and Andrew were ready. Which raises the question: “Are we ready?” Are we willing to go where Jesus lives and to learn?

Eventually, over time, after years as disciples-in-training, Jesus invites the brothers and the others to become Level 5 leaders, masters like himself. All those years, he was helping them become proficient in the arts and skills of faith so that they too, could teach.

Now Peter never did master that walking on water thing, but he and his brother Andrew were already pretty good at fishing when they met the master. So Jesus built on their fishing skills by giving them a new look at life, and then sent them out fishing for souls for God. They got pretty good at it.

It’s important that we follow Jesus, as a student follows a master. That mentor-disciple relationship will help us become the servants of God we’re intended to be.

The reason we do this is because we know that a disciple learns by watching and repeating what he or she sees. Jesus teaches the brothers to imitate him. That’s what a good rabbi, a good master does. He teaches by example, by explanation, by allowing mistakes, by giving correction and by passing on the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed.

In rabbinical Judaism, the whole purpose of being a particular rabbi’s disciple was to train so well that, when you were working out in public, anyone who was watching might see the hand of your rabbi in your training, or hear his words or his phrasing in your speech, or witness the wisdom or compassion of your rabbi in your actions.

The surfing style Holly developed, as a disciple of a terrific Hawaiian surfer, reflects that of the teacher – that’s natural. The teachers’ skill is passed on to the student, person to person, master to apprentice, on into the next generation, and then to the next.

The surfing master might say, place your feet this way, shift your weight that way, bend your knees, lean more, pull your butt in, do what I am doing, imitate me – that's how a master teaches an apprentice.

Listen, Watch, and imitate.

The apostle Paul positions himself as a student of a master, and at the same time a mentor for others: in his first letter to the Corinthians he writes "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1) and in the letter to the Ephesians he says be "imitators of God, as beloved children" (Ephesians 5:1)

The Bible calls for imitation. If you want God fully in your life, if you want to be as faithful as you can be, if you want expertise in Christian living, imitate Christ.

Furthermore, in Paul's letter to the Philippians he says, "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus" (phil 2:5). To get the mind of Christ, imitate Christ; learn to think like Christ, act with love and compassion like Christ, do what he did, live like he did, trust God like he did.

We do this by accepting the invitation of Christ to come to the place where he is staying.

So how long has it been since we've been to Jesus' house?

Jesus invites us to his house, but we say, "Love to. Can't right now. Places to go and people to see, but count me in."

Jesus invites us to his house, but we say, "You know, we've just got to get together some day. I don't know why we don't seem to connect. Tell you what, I'm going to check my calendar and then I'll get back to you. But we really must make a point of it."

Jesus invites us to his house, but we say, "Hey, great idea. But why don't you come over to our place first? That would really be a bit more convenient. Let us know. We'll need a little lead time to clean up before you arrive."

You get the idea.

Of course, it might be that we just don't know the directions to Jesus house, so that we can learn the skills – so we can get the thrill – of discipleship.

So...Jesus' house...Here's what I've pulled of Google Maps: Jesus lives where the poor are. We need someone who will volunteer to sort and distribute food at the food bank because that's where you'll find Jesus.

Jesus lives with those who have no one to love them.

Jesus lives in the community of faith, right here, where worship and study take place.

Jesus lives in the written words of Scripture.

Jesus lives in the presence of the eternal God and hears our prayers.

Discipleship isn't something prepackaged. We can't learn surfing, mountain climbing, sky diving, spelunking, piano playing, painting – and the like – from books alone.

We can learn ABOUT those things, but we can't learn TO DO those things that way.

We learn by being in the presence of skilled teachers and doing what they show and say.

Jesus has invited us over.

Let's tell him we're coming.

Amen.