

Meeting The First Followers

John 1:35-51

Big idea:

The power of an invitation.

Kingdom growth happens by invitation. It is the responsibility and duty of the Christian to bring another into experiencing Jesus and the knowledge of the gospel. It isn't the duty of the church, the pastor, the event, or the program. It's the duty of each Christian.

Context:

What John does in these 21 chapters is amass evidence that Jesus is the Son of God, the promised Messiah and the Savior. And he amasses all that evidence from every possible source that he can draw it. By the time we're at the end of the gospel of John, he has exhausted all the necessary sources of the proof that Jesus is the Son of God

1) Jesus Receives Those Who Seek Him (v.35-39)

35 The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, **36** and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" **37**

The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. **38** 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?" **39** 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 (4pm).

We're still at this time in the location of verse 28 at a place called Bethany, beyond the Jordan, not the Bethany near Jerusalem, but another one across the Jordan out in the wilderness where there was water, where John had been preaching and baptizing. We're still there. This is day three.

You remember on day one, John had told the people that were there "The Messiah is present. He's come." (v.19-28)

On day two he said, "There He is, behold the Lamb of God!" (29-34)

On day three he says, "Follow Him," and he turns his disciples from him to follow Christ.

John stood with two of his disciples: The Gospel writer tells us that one of these two was Andrew ([John 1:40](#)). The other of the two is not identified, but for several reasons it is reasonable to think it was John the Gospel writer himself, who appears several times in his Gospel, but is never specifically named.

Why do we think it's John the Apostle? (1) that the John *never names himself* in his Gospel, and (2) that this account is so minutely accurate as to specify even the hours of the day, and in all respects *bears marks of an eye-witness*

And looking at Jesus: "*Attentively beholding.*"

Behold, the Lamb of God! John already said this of Jesus in [John 1:29](#). Perhaps by this time – after Jesus had returned from His temptations in the wilderness – John said this every time he saw Jesus. To him, it was the most important thing about Jesus.

To us, it should also be the most important thing about Jesus. John had been preaching that the Jew's religious duties were not enough to make them right with God. This was different news than what the Pharisees taught! John's disciples believed John -

that they needed a spiritual savior - and not just a physical savior. John preached the wrath of God and repentance to God!

Thus, the LAMB OF GOD is the phrase that would grip their attention!

And they followed Jesus: The text does not specifically say, but the implication is that these **two disciples** did this with John's permission and direction. John the Baptist did not care about gathering disciples after himself. He was perfectly satisfied to have these disciples leave his circle and follow Jesus.

It fulfilled his ministry; it did not take away from it. *(this is true for us today: sending/multiplying fulfills our ministry, it doesn't disqualify it)*

What do you seek? ... Come and see: Jesus asked these two disciples an important and logical question – and a question He continues to ask to all humanity today. For the answer, Jesus directed them to *Himself*, to live with *Him*, not to John or anyone else

What do you seek? "It was not an accident that the first words which the Master spoke in His Messianic office were this profoundly significant question, 'What do you seek?'"

"He probed them to find out whether they were motivated by idle curiosity or by a real desire to know him."

Jesus did not refer them back to John the Baptist, even though he knew a lot about Jesus. **To be Jesus' disciple, they must deal with Jesus directly.** So Jesus invited John and Andrew to be a part of His life. Jesus didn't live a secretive, ultra-private life.

Now it was about the tenth hour (4pm): This was such a memorable occasion for the writer that he remembered the exact hour that he met Jesus. *This is a subtle clue that one of the two disciples who came to Jesus from John was the apostle John himself.*

They then spent, most likely, hours talking. Andrew and John have a conversation with their creator and King!

These two disciples tried out Jesus because of a preacher, not because of a personal experience. They stayed as followers of Jesus because of their experience while close to Jesus.

Concluding thoughts:

Too many people go to church, obey Jesus' commands, and seek to know Him more because of their relationship with people, not because they *personally* know Jesus.

Why *did* you follow Jesus?? Why are you *still* following Jesus? Could something happen in your personal relationships that would keep you from following Jesus? If so, perhaps you need to stop seeking fulfillment in Christianity and seek it in Christ.

How?

Spend Time with Him.

2) Jesus Renames His Followers (v.40-42)

40 One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus^[b] was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. **41** He first **found** his own brother Simon and **said** to him, "We have found the Messiah" (*Hebrew word which means Christ in Greek. Means "anointed one"*). **42** He **brought** him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon (heb. - listen/hear) the son of John. You shall be called **Cephas** (*Aramaic - common language they spoke*) (*rock*)" (*the Greek word for rock/stone is Peter*).

We now get told who one of the first two disciples was. **Andrew** is literally called "the brother of Simon Peter" because Simon was well known. Andrew **finds** his brother, Simon (Peter) and **brought** him to Jesus. His words, "We have found the Messiah" are the words every Jew of that day has been waiting to hear!

He first found his own brother: Andrew met Jesus, and then wanted his brother **Simon Peter** to meet Jesus. Each time Andrew is mentioned in the Gospel of John, he is bringing someone to Jesus (also at [John 6:8](#) and [12:22](#)).

Through the centuries, this is how most people come to faith in Jesus Christ.

A "Peter" has an "Andrew" who introduces him to Jesus. This is natural because it is the

nature of the human experience that those who enjoy the experience desire to share their experience with others. (we see this in so many parts of life)

Notice, someone as great in the life of the early church only got that way because someone invited them to see Jesus! The power of an invitation is huge!!

The majority of people who go to church or hear the gospel do so because someone invited them!

“Would you come to church with me?”

“Would you allow me to share the gospel with you?”

“Would it be okay with you if I shared what Jesus has been doing in my life and how He’s changed me?”

An invitation!

To be clear, at this point in time, that is not what Peter understood Jesus to be. The Messiah to them meant a conquering King. It wasn’t until later in Jesus’ ministry that Peter truly understood who Jesus is and what he came to do.

Renaming:

Jesus then sees Simon, and without talking with him or learning about who he is, he gives him a new name.

Jesus doesn’t just see us on the outside, but he sees us on the inside, and he sees who we are going to be and what we are going to do in His Kingdom.

Jesus is in the business of changing names.

- Saul/Paul
- Abram/Abraham
- Sarai/Sarah
- Jacob/Israel

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- Lost/Found
 - Orphan/Adopted
 - Enemy/Friend
 - guilt-ridden/free
 - Debter/Redeemed.

Everyone one of you, as His followers, have been given a new name. Last week, Pastor Les spoke to how we are made clean by the blood of the Lamb.

Concluding thoughts:

What name are you holding on to, or letting others speak over you, that isn't the name that Jesus speaks over you? Who has or is God calling you to be that you're afraid to step into, and thus resisting?

Are you living in the name, the identity, that Jesus has given you? If you don't know, ask Him!

Christ came to give you and I new names - new identities! This is the gospel!

3) The Found Find More (v.43-45)

43 The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee (~ 90 miles - WdIndTOfs) (for an upcoming wedding - chapter 2). He **found** Philip (lover of horses) and said to him, **"Follow me."** **44** Now Philip was from Bethsaida (house of fishermen/fishertown), the city (it's really a little village) of Andrew and Peter. **45** Philip **found** Nathanael and said to him, "We have **found** him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

Philip - apostle of Christ, evangelist, one of the seven deacons in the Jerusalem church,

Acts 8 shows Philip as someone who did miracles, preached Christ, cast out demons, and brought joy to (at least) the city of Samaria.

Philip, also Acts 8, was the one who explained the gospel to the Ethiopian Eunuch (v. 26-40).

His last reference is in Acts 21:8 where he is specifically called 'the evangelist'

We know Philip is from Bethsaida - which is where Andrew and (Simon) Peter are from. We find that they knew each other - as they were all fishermen.

V.45 Found Nathanael

Bartholomew is a Hebrew surname meaning "son of Tolmai." So Nathanael is the son of Tolmai, or Nathanael Bar-Tolmei

It doesn't say that God brought Nathanael to Philip, but rather that Philip found (sought out) Nathanael. Why? They are friends!

This truly is what an evangelist does!

"I've found the One who the OT speaks about" -- And "He's from Galilee!"

The Found Find More - this means finding those who need Jesus and doing the work to introduce them to Jesus.

This is probably the area that most of us Christians are consistently disobedient in. Every one of us pray that we'd be a light, that's we'd share the gospel, that we'd be bold, and that God would use us to reach the lost.

We sing about this.

We preach about this.

We talk about this.

We study this.

We strategize about this.

We teach about this.

We get excited and cheer for this.

We applaud ideas about this.

We write books about this.

We cast vision for it.

We create programs for it.

But...we rarely actually do it.

Football - QB calling the plays, and the others stand there, cheer them on, clap, take notes, discuss the plays, but then go and sit down and wait until the QB calls them back out for another strategic play he's thought up. If you were watching that, you'd be going crazy, because you thought the job of being a football player was to play football, not discuss football.

Likewise, the job of the Christian is to make more Christians, not discuss Christ.

According to a reliable research source, 6% of pastors say that they think their church has been very effective at reaching out to non-Christians.

Another study showed that the majority of Christians believe conversion and outreach is the job of the local church, not the responsibility of individual Christians.

Study after study shows that Christians are selecting 'optional' when it comes time for their life to check the box on "evangelism responsibility".

This was not the way of the first followers, and it should not be the way of you and I.

4) Experiencing Jesus Causes Doubt To Exit (v.46-51)

46 Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "**Come and see.**" **47** Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him

and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" **48** Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." **49** Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" **50** Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." **51** And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you,^[d] you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Nathanael responded to Philip's announcement with prejudice. Hearing that Jesus came from **Nazareth**, Nathanael thought he had no more reason to think that He might be the Messiah or anyone other important person.

This dismissive and unbelieving statement of Nathanael is met with an invitation:

Come and see. Instead of arguing against Nathanael's prejudice towards the people of Galilee, Phillip simply invited him to meet Jesus for himself.

v.47

Before even Jesus could meet him, or Nathanael could get to know him, Jesus says ***Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!***

- **Deceit:** "This last word is used in early Greek writers as a 'bait' (for catching fish). Hence it comes to signify *'any cunning contrivance for deceiving or catching...*It thus has the notion of 'deceit' or 'craft'.

It is used in the Bible of Jacob before his change of heart

- 'an Israelite in whom there is no Jacob!'"

Jesus gave him a wonderful compliment. The sense is that there was nothing tricky or deceptive in Nathanael. **He didn't have a mask.**

Nathanael doesn't wear a mask - he says it how it is. This is a compliment.

Today, we'd say that someone is real, or isn't a fake.

N doesn't disagree, but realizes that Jesus knows something significant about him, and asks him how???

Jesus shows his hand a bit more, and says that he saw him even when he wasn't there! This is quite something!

Here's what Jesus is saying - I not only know you on the inside, but I know you on the outside. I know all about you. There's nothing hidden from me that goes on in your life. God is/Jesus is omniscient.

N identifies 3 trues about Jesus. Three names.

- 1 - Rabbi (teacher)
- 2 - Son of God (deity)
- 3 - King of Israel (power/authority)

The doubt that N had left because he experienced Jesus.

How could N know this? Because he knew the Word and knew what it said about the Messiah.

Jesus then shows that He knows the OT and references that He is now the one on whom the power and presence of God will be revealed to mankind.

"What you just saw, N, is nothing compared to what you're going to see!"

Jesus answered and said to Nathanael, "Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, you believe." Jesus is affirming that the reason you believe is because I've demonstrated My omniscience to you. But N is about to see much more than what he's just witnessed, and what is to come will truly solidify the proof N needs to believe Jesus is God's Son.

Jesus' announcement of **the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man** probably connects with the dream of Jacob in Genesis 28:12, where Jacob saw a ladder from earth to heaven, and the angels ascending and descending upon it. Jesus said that *He* was the ladder, the link, between heaven and earth. When Nathanael came to understand that Jesus is the mediator between God and man, it would be an even greater sign (**you will see greater things than these**).

Conclusion:

This section of John shows four ways of coming to Jesus:

- Andrew came to Jesus because of the preaching of John and the invitation of Jesus.
- Peter came to Jesus because of the invitation of his brother.
- Phillip came to Jesus as a result of the invitation of Jesus.
- Nathaniel came to Jesus because of the invitation of Philip.

The first followers were average people. They weren't trained. They weren't skilled in preaching and teaching. They weren't from prestigious families. They weren't special. They weren't rich. They were insignificant. They had common, boring jobs. They were, though, people who followed Jesus, and invited others to follow Jesus.

Who do you need to invite to follow Jesus?

Ask God for boldness, and seek His power!

##The advance of the gospel cannot be and should not be attributed to the power of the people. It can and should only be attributed to the power of God.

Big idea:

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Kingdom growth happens by invitation. It is the responsibility and duty of the Christian to bring another into experiencing Jesus and the knowledge of the gospel. It isn't the duty of the church, the pastor, the event, or the program. It's the duty of each Christian.

Discussion Questions:

1. What stuck out to you or was new to you from Sunday's sermon/this passage that we discussed on Sunday?
2. Why did you first decided to trust in Jesus as your savior? Why are you still following Jesus?

3. Jesus gives all of his followers a new name. What name do you have now, as a Christian, that means the most to you? Why? (i.e. 'saved' b/c _____ or 'friend of God' b/c _____)
4. Have you ever invited someone to follow Jesus? Talk about that.
5. What did you think about the football analogy that Dooba gave, in the point "The Found Find More" ?
6. Evgangelism is talked about so much in the church, and yet so rarely practiced. Why do you think that is? Why do you think thik this is true for you?
7. Have you had doubts about your faith? Have you
8. Dooba said that the first followers of Jesus weren't well trained, highly educated, prestigious people. Why is this important?
9. Who is someone in your life that God has brought to mind that you could invite to read the Bible with you/back to church/to pray for/etc...