



God's Good News: making disciples II

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JOHN 1. 35-51

Read John 1. 29-51.

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ ³¹ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.”

³² Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. ³³ And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴ I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One.”

³⁵ The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. ³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” ³⁷ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?” They said, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?” ³⁹ “Come,” he replied, “and you will see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. ⁴¹ The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). ⁴² And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter).

⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, “Follow me.” ⁴⁴ Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” ⁴⁶ “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked. “Come and see,” said Philip.

⁴⁷ When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.” ⁴⁸ “How do you know me?” Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.” ⁴⁹ Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.”

⁵⁰ Jesus said, “You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that.” ⁵¹ He then added, “Very truly I tell you, you will see ‘heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on’ the Son of Man.”

ACTIVITY

The aim here is to get the group to think themselves into the characters of four disciples: Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip and Nathanael.



Divide into pairs: one pair will be made up of Andrew and Simon, another pair will be Philip and Nathanael. Each person should think about how their character feels about the situation described in these verses and discuss this with their partner. For example, Andrew may feel a bit miffed that although he was the one to bring Simon to Jesus, Simon gets special treatment (and don't forget that Andrew appears to have been one of John's disciples); equally Simon might feel embarrassed by this.

Encourage people to be really imaginative: let the character develop out of and beyond what the text tells us. Then bring the group together to discuss what they have learnt about the first disciples from this exercise.

EXPLORING THE BIBLICAL TEXT TOGETHER

- Verses 35-36 are effectively the beginning of the end of the ministry of John the Baptist.

What is John's role in verses 29-36 (recognising Jesus, acknowledging his own inferiority, and so on)?

- Faith is not about credulity (like the White Queen in Alice in Wonderland who could believe up to six impossible things before breakfast). Faith is about belief in a person - in Jesus, the Son of God.

In these verses, in what different ways do people make a response of faith to Jesus (verses 36, 37, 41, 45, 49-50)?

- How does Jesus draw people to him (verses 38-39, 43, 48, 50-51)?

How does this compare with the way in which John the Baptist (v.36), Andrew (verses 41-42) and Philip (verses 45-46) bring the others to Jesus?

- Nathanael is described as a 'true Israelite', that is, a Jew whose understanding leads him to Jesus. (The fig tree may refer to Nathanael studying there.)

How does Jesus phrase his promise to Nathanael (v.51 seems to refer back to Jacob's dream in Genesis 28.12)?

LIVING FAITH QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Andrew and Philip are the first people on record to bring others to Jesus with the simple invitation 'come and see'. What are we inviting people to come and see today?
2. Befriending and understanding people is an important part of making them disciples. What strategies does your church have for simply getting to know one another? How can these be improved?
3. What do you think are the most helpful ways of enabling people to grow in their faith? How will you do this during, say, the next six months?
4. How can we better support people in our congregations with particularly demanding or high profile jobs?



FOR PRAYER



GROUP PRAYER

Have some Bible verses about discipleship printed on pieces of paper.

Invite group members to take one and read it out. Follow each reading with a short time of silence for reflection and silent prayer.

Verses could include: Matthew 10. 16 (mission of the twelve); Luke 10.41-2 (Mary and Martha); Luke 10. 27 (loving God and our neighbour); John 21. 17 (Jesus and Peter); Romans 15. 14 (instructing one another); 2 Corinthians 6. 11-13 (opening our hearts); various verses from Ephesians 4; James 2. 17-18 (faith and works); Revelation 2. 3-4 (patient endurance and love) and other verses from Revelation 2 and 3.

Some further topics for prayer, either in the group or in the week ahead

Give thanks for ...

- The people who first showed you Jesus
- The very many courses and published materials available to help us understand our faith better.

Pray for ...

- One another in our lives at work and at home.
- Those in the local church with particular responsibility for mission and outreach
- Our friendships with people who are not Christians
- Special services or events that are an opportunity to invite people to come and see
- The Holy Spirit's guidance in planning for the future.