

“Come and See”¹
John 1:43-51

Before the lesson: Print out a “You’re Invited (to invite)” card for each student for the Transformational Exercise.

Fellowship Question: (Use *one* of these to break the ice, to begin discussion, and lead into the study)

What is the most recent party you have been invited to, or invited others to?

(for those who are or have been married) Tell us your “proposal story”. [Note to the teacher: because this is a story rather than a sentence answer, you may only have time for 2-3 of these.]

Information

An invitation to a party may or may not be a big deal to us. After a few hours, the party has come and gone. An invitation to a lifetime of marriage is a much bigger deal. As Jesus began his public ministry, he invited certain persons to become his disciples. To be offered such an invitation was an honor. To accept such an invitation was a serious commitment.

In our last lesson, we noted the importance of “witness” or “testimony” in the Gospel of John. John the Baptist was the first witness. Compared to the Synoptic Gospels, the Gospel of John downplays the baptism that John offered. Indeed, we do not even have the story of Jesus being baptized in John’s Gospel! This leads one commentator to remark, “In this Gospel it would be more fitting to call him John the Witness.”²

We know that John had his own disciples, one of whom was Andrew.

- Have a class member read John 1:35-42.

“The Gospel proper begins with the testimony of John the Baptist given on three days (1:29, 35), days which have symbolic rather than strictly chronological import. On the first day, John the Baptist’s testimony about his own role is largely negative; on the second John the Baptist testifies positively to what Jesus is; on the third John the Baptist sends his own disciples to follow Jesus. . . . This threefold progression is simply spelling out the pattern defined in advance in 1:6-8: first, John the Baptist himself was not the

¹ This lesson is copyrighted by Dr. Rick Jordan, Great Bible Teachers, Inc, 2023. More lessons may be found at greatbibleteachers.com.

² David F. Ford, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), 52.

light; second, he was to testify to the light (= Jesus); third, through him all men might believe.”³

We have a growing chain of witnesses. First, John the Baptist/Witness. Then two disciples, Andrew and an unnamed disciple.

There has been a lot of speculation about who the unnamed disciple was and/or why he was unnamed. We do not have a clear answer from the writer of John’s Gospel.

Do you have any theories? Here are three:

1. Negatively, this was a disciple who later fell away, therefore he was not honored by being named in the Gospel.
2. Positively, this is a person who represents all future disciples, an Everyman disciple.
3. It may be John, a son of Zebedee, who may be the “beloved disciple,” who may be the author of this Gospel.

Jesus asks, “What are you looking for?” These are the first recorded words of Jesus in John’s Gospel. Why is this significant? (Jesus taught by asking questions. This is a question designed to lead to deeply personal pondering. As God asks, “Where are you?” and “Why did you hide?” to Adam and Eve, God searches for us. Etc.)

How do the followers of John (Andrew and the other disciple) answer Jesus’ question? (They do not.) What does this say about our own faith journeys?

What Andrew and the other disciple do say is, “Where are you staying?” The word “stay” is a key word in John’s Gospel. It is *menein*. In John’s vision of Jesus’ baptism, he says that a dove (representing the Holy Spirit) would *menein* on Jesus. Jesus uses this word throughout the Gospel, particularly in chapter 15 when he uses it twelve times in twelve verses. In English, it is translated “stay, remain, abide.”

Jesus is not fickle. He does not “come and go” and he does not want us to “come and go” as fair-weathered admirers. He plans to remain with us. He urges us to remain with him.

Jesus says to John’s disciples, “Come and see.” It was a literal response to their question. What does this second sentence from Jesus mean to us on a deeper level?

³ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel of John*. The Anchor Bible, Volume 29 (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 44.

Jesus is building a faith community. This is a group of men who will question, challenge, and eventually obey what Jesus teaches. From this experience, they will be able to serve as witnesses when Jesus is no longer with them.

“The first words of Jesus are a question that underlines the learning that is essential to discipleship. This is a community of inquiry, searching, and reflection.”⁴

Next in the chain of witnesses, we have Simon who Jesus re-branded as Peter.

We know that eventually Simon Peter will become “the Rock” that Jesus predicted. But in this “conversion story” what does Peter confess about Jesus? (This is a bit of a trick question because Peter says nothing.)

“It may have taken Andrew a day and a night to become Jesus’ disciple. It only takes Peter a brief moment, one encounter with Jesus and he is ‘converted.’ Or is he?... We know that Simon didn’t become Peter overnight. Indeed, it could be said that while it took Andrew only three verses to become a disciple of Jesus, Simon’s conversion took [the rest of the Gospel].”⁵

Each of us has our own testimony of our personal walk with Jesus. For some, there was a miraculous and powerful conversion. For others of us, there is a gradual growth into discipleship. Andrew seems to have been of the first sort, Peter the second. Many years later, Peter wrote a letter to followers of Jesus who were young in the faith.

- Have a class member read 1 Peter 2:2-3.

Four witnesses are given so far - John the Baptist, Andrew, an unnamed disciple of John’s, and Simon Peter, The community of witnesses grows by two more in our next passage.

- Have a class member read John 1:43-46.

Jesus “found” Philip. What does that suggest?

When Jesus said to Philip, “Follow me,” he meant more than “Hang around me.” Jesus was offering Philip the opportunity to be an apprentice of Jesus. This was a life-long, life-changing commitment. The Church sometimes invites or persuades persons to become Christians with an invitation of what German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer

⁴ Ford, 54.

⁵ Rodney Reeves, *Spirituality According to John: Abiding in Christ in the Johannine Writings* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021), 16.

famously called “cheap grace.” What do you think he meant by the phrase, “cheap grace?”

Accepting a proposal of lifetime commitment involves risk and loss as well as fulfillment. What things should a person consider before making a lifetime, life-changing commitment to follow Jesus Christ?

“Philip’s identification of Jesus as the one about whom Moses and the prophets had written would have created the further expectation that someone had appeared who was of high or even royal birth. When Philip adds that Jesus is the son of Joseph from Nazareth, Nathanael is rightly incredulous. Since people in antiquity were expected unflinchingly to act in accord with their birth status, Jesus’ messianic credentials were nonexistent. As a tiny, obscure village, Nazareth would hardly be expected to produce anyone of messianic structure.”⁶

- Have a class member read John 1:47-51.

How are Philip’s and Nathanael’s decision-to-follow-Jesus stories similar? Different? What does this tell us about ways persons are invited to follow Jesus?

Who would share your personal decision-to-follow-Jesus story? Was it a sudden conversion or a slow process?

[Allow several or all to share their story. Possibly, most members have never heard other class members’ testimonies.]

Philip invited his friend, Nathanael, to “come and see” Jesus. Do you have a story of a time you invited someone to come and see Jesus? Can you imagine a situation in which you would invite someone to follow Jesus? What would that look like?

Based on Philip’s invitation to Nathanael, how much talking needs to be done? Once Philip connected Nathanael to Jesus, how did Jesus take over the conversation? What might this suggest about our methods of evangelism? What barriers prevent us from doing this?

In verse 40, Nathanael makes a dramatic conversion. What was it that initially convinced Nathanael to follow Jesus?

Is there a place for signs or miracles in drawing people to faith?

In neither of these two stories does Jesus threaten eternal damnation if these men do not follow him. Does this threat help or hinder our evangelistic efforts?

⁶ Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 55.

Nathanael seems impressed that Jesus knew things about him before Jesus met him. This is a basic premise in missional ministry. We should learn about the target community before we take our message to it. Missionaries learn the language and the culture to understand how the good news of Jesus can be “translated” into that culture.

What responsibility do we as “lay missionaries” have in understanding our culture and in creating ways to translate the good news to our non-Christian neighbors? What examples have you seen of this?

Transformational Exercise

- Hand out the “You’re Invited (to invite)” cards.

Most of us know persons who are not followers of Jesus. The reasons may be as simple as they have never heard about Jesus and God’s love for them or as complicated as they have experienced abuse or scorn from some who claimed to be Jesus’ followers. As simple or as complex as their issues may be, Jesus does want all persons to have the opportunity to experience and accept God’s love.

In John 20:21, Jesus says, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” Jesus was sent as an invitation, in a sense. Jesus invited us to invite others to experience and accept God’s love for them.

In the next few silent minutes, think about persons you know who need to know Jesus. Jot their names or initials on the inside of this card. Then, in silence, ask God to provide an opportunity for you to invite them to “come and see.”

[Close in a prayer something like this:] *God, we are so blessed to know that you love us. We are so blessed to know that you live with us and in us daily. We are so blessed to know we have eternal life. Help us to share these blessings with those who are not yet following you. Amen.*

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