

## Jesus: The One to be Followed

John 1:35-42

The Gospel According to John

Series #7

**Introduction:** Take your Bible and join me in John chapter 1, the Gospel of John, chapter 1. Great things often have very humble beginnings. Major corporations often have their first days of business in someone's garage or basement. A world famous pro athlete often traces their origins to a tough situation they were able to rise above. A worldwide chain of restaurants can tell their unique story of their first restaurant in some nostalgic location.

Well, what we come to in the rest of John 1 is the humble beginnings of the Church. We will be introduced to 5 men in verses 35-51 who are the first disciples of Jesus, and they give us a window into the birthing room of the church. These 5 men will rise to become 5 of the 12 apostles of Christ's Church. After our Lord's death, resurrection, and ascension – they will be used by the Lord to lay the foundation of the church upon which the last 2000 years of God's building has been built. But here, in our text, we have their humble beginnings – their first interactions with the Lord Jesus Christ.

We don't really get these details in the other Gospels. We read about how Jesus called them to be his official disciples – to leave all and to follow him. And we read about how Jesus appoints them as his inner 12 – his apostles – his official representatives. But the Synoptic Gospels don't give us these details. So, you have to wonder – why is it that John the Apostle wants us to see these very first encounters between Jesus and 5 of his soon-to-be apostles. Well, part of the answer comes when you realize that John the Baptist has been faithfully testifying about Jesus in the verses previous – and our text starts with John giving testimony once again to Jesus. And then the narrative leaves John the Baptist and won't come back to him until just a small section in chapter 3. But John faithfulness is not fruitless. He did not flash on the scene with little to no effect. And here in our text we read of some of that fruitfulness – two of his own disciples for sure – and likely all five of these men are disciples of John the Baptist – they are all following Jesus by the end of chapter 1. The other factor which helps us understand why John would include these very earliest interactions between Jesus and his first disciples is because the one that is unnamed in the group of five is likely John himself. He is prone to not name himself, and the details given of the time of day and of how it went down are indications that he was there – he was with Andrew in verse 36 when John the Baptist declared – Behold, the Lamb of God!

But John is not just reminiscing for memory's sake here in these verses. There is a lot to be gleaned from this encounter about how people end up following Christ. And so, as we read and study this morning there should be two concerns on your heart and mind – Is this an accurate description of me? In other words, am I a true follower of Christ like these men became, and if I am not, what is preventing me? And the other concern would be for those of us who are true

believers – and that is, what can I learn about how to witness to others about Christ? So, you might say the first concern is personal, and the second concern is relational – or about others. With those thoughts in mind, let's read the text, John 1:35-42.

It is not insignificant that Jesus did not rent out the local amphitheater and call for the largest crowd that could be gathered to come and here of his ministry presentation and of the official launch of his ministry here on earth. His ministry began, and was mostly marked by the personal conversations of relationships. He certainly did preach to large crowds, but it begins here with a faithful witness pointing others to Jesus. This is so much of how God has worked throughout the history of the church. There are certainly people who have first heard of Jesus and his saving work through a massive evangelistic event, finding a random tract lying somewhere and picking up and reading it, or of reading the Bible on their own – that certainly happens – but more often than not, it is the personal witness of someone else who already knows Jesus telling another person about Jesus. So, how do people end up knowing and loving Jesus as Lord and Savior? Well, first notice that there is a clear witness in verses 35-37.

#### I. Clear Witness – 35-37

- a. This is step number one in anyone coming to saving faith in Jesus the Christ. They must first hear about him. There must be a clear witness to the truth about Jesus to lead someone to placing believing faith in him. That is what John the Baptist is in our text – as he was in last week's text – he is a faithful and clear witness. You remember that this was the drumbeat of his band – that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ – the Son of God – the Messiah. He testified of Jesus' preeminence over him because he was before him – he pre-existed him in eternity past because Jesus is divine, and John is not. He testified to the supremacy of Jesus' baptism over John's – that where John baptized with water as an outward sign, Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit which would bring eternal life into the souls of those who believe. He testified that this Jesus of Nazareth was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.
- b. And he told all who would listen that they must repent and be baptized as evidence of their belief that the Messiah was about to appear. He boldly confronted the religious hypocrites – the Pharisees and Sadducees – to bear fruits in keeping with repentance because this was not some religious game. The one he is preparing the way for will come baptizing with the Spirit and with fire and he has his winnowing fork in his hand, clearing the threshing floor to gather his true wheat into the barn before he burns the chaff with unquenchable fire! Luke 3 tells us that there was great expectation in the people as they heard these exhortations of gospel preparation.
- c. Well, in those crowds were these 2 men in our text. They heard over many weeks, if not months, the clear witness of John the Baptist. But now, in verses 35-37 John sees Jesus and gazes at him. This is not the casual look, but the long look of inspection and wonder. This was the same Jesus he had just pointed to the day before. And now, the next day, they cross paths again and John clearly witnesses to them about Jesus once again – Behold! The Lamb of God!

- d. It is as if John the Baptist is saying – why follow me any longer when the very Lamb of God – the one I have been pointing you to, is here among us – go, follow Him! But also notice that John doesn't cajole them or coerce them or hound and badger them to follow Jesus. Rather, he just keeps pointing to Jesus and all the magnificent truths about who he is. And he does this because he is himself enraptured with this Jesus. John the Baptist is himself caught up with the inherent glory and majesty of this God man that he can't help but speak about him. And so often, this is what hinders our clear testimony to others about Christ isn't it? Our own view of Christ is weakened by sin and apathy and is clouded over by idolatrous desires and affections, and this affects our witness for Jesus. Is it possible that we are slow to speak for Christ because we are slumbering in our worship of Christ? Last week we learned that bold witnessing for Christ is a humility issue, and now we see that it is a worship issue as well. Effective witnesses for Christ are delighted worshipers of Christ.
- e. And this is the most compelling aspect to your witness as a Christian, by the way. It is Christ. He is the best thing you have going in trying to point unbelievers to salvation. Strategies are helpful at times, and rules for engagement with the unbelievers around us can be useful, and a better knowledge of the potential challenges you will get and how to answer them will be helpful – but the best tool you have in your evangelism tool bag is a clear testimony about Christ. Make it your aim to know Him and in knowing Him you will not be able to keep your mouth shut – you will have to speak to others about this one who has filled your view.

## II. Searching Questions – 38

- a. This clear testimony points these two disciples of John to follow after Jesus. And so, they leave John and follow Jesus. And Jesus turned and saw them following and asks them a heart-searching question. And this is the next observation about how people generally come to saving faith in Christ – it is based on this clear witness about Jesus, and these truths are applied to the individual heart through searching questions. This is what Jesus does here – “What are you seeking?”
- b. Jesus knew who they were, and he knew why they were there. He knew what they were after. But he asks this searching question to draw out of their hearts their own desires and further them in their process of becoming his disciples.
- c. The searching heart level questions are always for the purpose of encouraging further seeking. That is the heart of the issue for the lost. What is it that you are seeking after? The clear witness can be used by the Holy Spirit to generate interest in getting to know this Jesus, and the heart level questions cause them to search themselves for the answer. What is it that I am after?
- d. These two disciples already had a lot of information about who Jesus was and about why he was on Earth. But this information needed to get past the facts about the Messiah and they needed to have a personal encounter with the Messiah. And that is the purpose of Christ's question – to draw them into this personal encounter with him, which we see in verse 39. The question intends to

draw them down the path to further seeking after him. And this will always end well.

- e. The person who humbly sets out to know God will always find Him. That will not be true of the person who sets out to know the God of their own making, or the God they hope to find, or the God they intend to control once they find – but the one and true and living God.
  - i. But from there you will seek the Lord your God and you will find him if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul. – Dt. 4:29
  - ii. And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever. – 1 Chron. 28:9
  - iii. The Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded, <sup>2</sup>and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, “Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The Lord is with you while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. – 2 Chron. 15:1-2
  - iv. Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; <sup>7</sup>let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. – Isaiah 55:6-7
  - v. If anyone’s will is to do God’s will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. – John 7:17
- f. So, friend – what are you seeking after today? Do you need to know what is true? Do you need life – abundant and eternal life? Do you need to know the way to go – what path to follow? In Jesus you will find everything you need. He is the way. He is the truth, and He is the life. And if you seek him with humility of heart and with earnestness of soul, he has never yet turned one like you away!
- g. Brother or sister – as you think about witnessing to others and pointing them to Christ, you should follow our Lord’s example here and learn how to ask heart searching questions along the way. But if you are going to ask those types of questions then you need to also be willing to employ the next part of the process of how people generally come to Christ, and that is open doors.

### III. Open Doors – 39

- a. That is what we see Jesus do in verse 39. After Jesus asked them what they were seeking the two disciples of John asked him where he was staying. This is not a nervous twitch kind of question to avoid the confrontation. It seems odd to us at first reading, but essentially, they were asking Jesus for some time with him to get to know him. They were seeking to know if he really was the Lamb of God that John the Baptist had declared him to be. This isn’t a casual ice-breaker type question, but rather a request to be invited into Jesus’ life. They were essentially asking him if they could go with him to where he was staying.
- b. And what was Jesus’ response? He swung the door wide open to them. The doors of his life were flung open in that moment to these two disciples. He invited them

to come with him and see where he was staying. And the text goes on to say that they stayed with him for the rest of that day because it was later in the day. It was about the tenth hour, which according to Jewish figuring of the hours of the day, this means it was about 4 o'clock in the afternoon – in other words, it was just before the evening meal and it was before the sun set and all of life essentially settled in for the night. The insinuation in the text is that the two disciples stayed in the same house as Jesus that night. They ate the evening meal with him. They sat and talked with him for hours on end as they asked him every question, they could think of about who he was. Was he the Messiah or not? And the overwhelming answer is seen in what Andrew does next – he goes and gets his brother and declares to him – we have found the Messiah.

- c. This is a small detail in the text, but just put yourself in that moment. And don't miss how ordinary and normal this all is. Jesus is obviously a true and real man and his humanity is beyond doubt here. His life is made up of the same normal, everyday, mundane things as the next 30-year-old man. So, when these two disciples of John's ask him where he is staying, he sees the perfect opportunity to lead them into the next step of discipleship by opening the doors of his life and inviting them in. This is the first of many such instances like this which will take place over the next 3 years or so. Can you imagine how many meals and casual conversations in the course of life Jesus had with his disciples and with seekers? Certainly, the margins of Jesus' life were filled with these relational interactions between him and others. And it was a key ingredient in the development of the faith of these disciples.
- d. And we once again need to learn from Jesus here. Evangelism and discipleship are greatly enhanced by this open-door policy. This is why one of the requirements for an elder in the church is that they are hospitable. It is not just so that they can show that they are nice – but rather it is show that they are willing to take anything they have and leverage it for the furtherance of the gospel in the hearts of others. The opening up of your schedule and your home and your wallet and your stuff is essential to the work of the Gospel. I wonder, when was the last time you opened up some aspect of your life to intentionally engage someone who isn't yet a Christian? When was the last time you gave time or spent money or opened up your home so that you could further a relationship and ask questions in love about someone's heart before the Lord?
- e. Jesus asked these men some searching heart questions, and here he opens up the doors of his life so that they can ask him any question they want as he seeks to always point them to the truth about himself.

#### IV. Individual Pursuit – 40-42

- a. And this interaction between Jesus and these two disciples in this very personal way led to the explosion of excitement in verses 40-42. It's hard to tell if this is the next day, or at some point on the previous day. But either way, it is Andrew who bursts forth from this encounter with Jesus with one thing on his mind – to bring his brother Simon to Jesus. This gives us the next aspect of how most people come to faith in Christ. It is often the result of an individual pursuit. And

this was Andrew's specialty. He was known for bringing people to Jesus. And in this way, he becomes a wonderful model for us of this individual pursuit that the Lord so often uses to bring people to Christ. After Andrew was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, he immediately wanted the person he loved the most in this world to know – and that was Simon his brother. He went to tell him that they had found the Messiah. That word Messiah is a transliteration of the Hebrew Word into Greek and then into English – and it simply means, the anointed one. Andrew definitely didn't understand all of what was meant by that title, but he definitely understood that the one promised by God and sent by God to redeem mankind from their sin and to rescue lost Israel was here. The one John the Baptist had been talking about was now here – and Andrew wanted Peter to know.

- b. Notice that this was Andrew's first priority in verse 41. If this is the next morning, then this was the first thing Andrew did upon leaving the house where Jesus was staying. He went and found Simon and told him the good news! When they thought of the Messiah, they most likely were thinking in terms of Jesus as the coming King. So, their faith isn't fully formed yet in that they don't completely grasp the fullness of Jesus' mission. They would later understand that Jesus came to be the Anointed One par excellence. He came to fulfill all that the Old Testament had prophesied about this Messiah – which was used of the King, of the High Priest, and of the patriarchs as prophets. In other words, the full-orbed picture of the Messiah from the Old Testament is that the Anointed One will be God's chosen King of Israel, his chosen High Priest for his people, and His chosen Prophet to proclaim his truth. Andrew may not have all of that in his mind when he rushes to tell Peter, but he at least is compelled by the truth that Jesus of Nazareth is this one sent by and anointed by God.
- c. And this pushes him to this individual pursuit. Andrew is immediately concerned that others would know what he knows about Jesus. And this is how Andrew is presented throughout John's Gospel. He is always bringing someone to Jesus – that is what he is most concerned to do. We are not given much information about Andrew in the Gospels. As the brother of Simon Peter, he is part of the top tier of disciples as things develop with Jesus. It is Peter, James and John, and Andrew in that first set of 4 disciples who are the closest to Jesus. But we don't know too much about Andrew. We know that John and James are the sons of thunder and that they tend to be bold, courageous, and somewhat impetuous. They were the ones who approached Jesus and asked if they could both be seated nearest to him when he establishes his kingdom – one on his right and one on his left as he rules and reigns. And then there is Simon Peter – who is the unpredictable leader of the apostles. Peter is the one who usually talks first and thinks second. He seems to have a personality that fills a room and naturally takes the lead. But his brother Andrew does not have too much said about him in the Gospels. Usually he is lumped in with Simon Peter and James & John in some interaction with Jesus. But when he does talk, he is always concerned for someone else as he seeks to bring them to Jesus.

- d. For instance, it is Andrew in chapter 6 who will bring the boy to Jesus who has 5 loaves and two fish. Remember that there is that large crowd in the wilderness who has gathered to listen to Jesus as he was teaching, and Jesus asked how they were going to feed so many people. Philip responded by saying they only have 200 denarii and that will not buy enough bread for everyone. But then Andrew steps forward with a boy who has 5 loaves and 2 fish – and he says, but what are they for so many? He is not sure what is going to happen, but he can't help but bring the boy to Jesus. He inherently knows that it is not the size of the gift that matters, but the power of God to whom the gift is given that matters. And so, he brings the boy to Jesus. That is what Andrew does. He knows Jesus and he knows people who don't know Jesus, and he individually pursues them so that he might introduce them to Jesus.
- e. Again in chapter 12, they are in the last week of Jesus' ministry and they are in Jerusalem and there are some Greeks who wish to see Jesus and so they approach one of his disciples who is from Bethsaida – Philip – and they say to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip isn't sure what to do, so he brings them to Andrew. And Andrew always knows what to do in a situation like this. He knows how to bring people to Jesus. And that is exactly what he does.
- f. Beloved, this is so much of how God works in bringing his lost sheep home. He sends us out in individual pursuit to tell them that we know the One who can save them from their sins. This is the most effective evangelism tool available to us as Christians. The pattern of Scripture for reaching the lost is not to have some massive event or to rely upon some super gifted speaker to tell many at one time about Jesus. Those things can be used and can be effective, but the greatest tool the Lord uses to bring lost sheep home is you – the individual Christian telling people you know about Jesus. And this is one of the purest evidences of genuine faith in Jesus. This is one of the first and best steps a new believer takes – they go and individually pursue someone else to tell them the truth about this Jesus they just met.
- g. In his book titled *Twelve Ordinary Men*, John MacArthur tells the story of Edward Kimball. Have you ever heard of him? I hadn't. Kimble was not a bold evangelist, nor was he a fiery preacher. He was a simple man who led a Sunday School in Boston. He had a young man who was attending his Sunday School who was crude and illiterate and obviously in need of Jesus. So, Kimball determined one day to go to this young man's place of work and engage him in a conversation about Christ. He was afraid of what would happen, and he almost backed out because he didn't want to needlessly embarrass the young man in front of his co-workers. But as he happened upon the shoe store where the young man worked, he determined to "make a dash for it and have it over at once." He found the young man in the stock room, wrapping and shelving shoes. Kimball admitted later that he made a "weak appeal" and used "limping words" as he appealed to the young man about Christ. In his own words he said, "I never could remember just what I did say: something about Christ and His love; that was all." But the young man gave his heart to Christ right then and there – and that young, crude,

and illiterate boy was named D.L. Moody. Moody became one of the greatest evangelists in America and England. Thousands came to faith through his ministry – missionaries like C.T. Studd and another great evangelist, Wilbur Chapman, were among those who were won to Christ through Moody’s ministry. And it all started with this individual pursuit by this very nervous and unsure and unsettled, but faithful man – Edward Kimball.<sup>1</sup>

- h. Brother or sister – that is you and me. Kimball and Andrew, here in our text, present us with the wonderful opportunity and privilege we have to individually pursue others and introduce them to Christ. You do realize don’t you that this is one of the weakest areas for us as a church family – reaching out to others to tell them the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? The answer here is not some evangelistic event or campaign – it is each of us individually pursuing those we know with the Gospel. This is what God so often uses to bring lost souls to himself.
- V. **Spiritual Transformation – 42**
- a. Let me quickly give you one more aspect of people coming to Christ – and that is spiritual transformation in verse 42. Simon is introduced to Jesus by Andrew. Simon obviously has some kind of simple faith that Jesus is the Messiah, otherwise he would not have come. And his first interaction with Jesus is filled with the promise of spiritual transformation. The first thing Jesus does is to give Simon a new name. He is Simon, son of John, but he will be called Cephas, in Aramaic, or Peter, in Greek – which both mean “rock.”
  - b. This name change speaks to what Simon will become as he is progressively transformed by Jesus. We will see in the Gospels that he is impetuous and bold and unpredictable – somewhat of a loose cannon – firing first and aiming second. But Jesus once again proves his true nature as the Messiah here by seeing things as they are and as they will be. He sees Simon really and truly and he knows a major change needs to take place – as with any sinner who comes to Jesus. And he sees what Peter will become as he is transformed by grace. And so, he tells him that he will be Cephas – the Rock. He will be transformed into the fearless, strong, resilient, unflappable leader that the Early Church will need. And that change will happen because he will be with Jesus for the next 3 ½ years. There will be a glorious change.
  - c. And this is the harvest of righteousness that comes through the clear proclamation of the truth about Jesus. Simon’s name change is an indicator of a coming heart change. And that is what happens to anyone who truly has personally met Jesus and placed their faith in Him. They will be transformed by His grace and their lives will never be the same.
  - d. Evangelism is never about simply passing along information that people need to know. Nor is it just about convincing people that something you know is really important for them to know – like we might try to do in a political conversation.

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<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, pg. 69-70.

Rather, the goal is always to introduce them to Jesus, so that they might never be the same – saved and transformed by his grace.

- e. Many of you know a lot about Jesus. You know his life story. You know his disciples and what they did. You know what Jesus offers through his sinless life, substitutionary death, and glorious resurrection. You know about Jesus, but you don't actually know him. Friend – look to Jesus today – seek him while he may be found – run to him and find eternal life and joy and peace and truth!

**Conclusion:** Beloved, do these things mark your evangelism – a clear witness, searching heart questions, open doors into your life, individual pursuit of those you know and love, and spiritual transformation that only Jesus can bring? Let's ask God for help as we close.