

**Subject: *Christ's First Followers***

**Scripture: *John 1:35-51***

The Gospel of John tells us how the ministry of Jesus began with a handful of followers. It's really amazing when you consider that Jesus' ministry started with just a few ordinary men, common fishermen for the most part. The Bible reminds us in ***1 Corinthians 1:26*** *For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.* These men believed in Him and followed Him for three years. That's how it all began, a very simple plan. And it's the same plan today. One person at a time believes in Christ and follows Him, then in turn tells someone else who believes and follows. The plan is to believe in Him and follow. If you are a true believer, you will be a follower. Jesus later in this Gospel says, ***John 10:27*** *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.* That's what happens here in John 1 and throughout the Gospel.

### **THE FIRST THREE FOLLOWERS: John, Andrew, and Peter**

John (the unnamed follower) and Andrew had been followers of John the Baptist, but now they became followers of Jesus.

- John the Baptist's declaration (vs. 36)

John said this on the previous day (vs. 29) and he would say it again. Truth should be repeated. Truth never changes and it is always the power of God's truth that changes lives.

- Christ's invitation (vs. 39)

In verse 38, Jesus asked them, "What do you want?" These are the first words of Jesus recorded in John's Gospel. He did not ask that question for His own benefit. He knows everything and He knew what they wanted. They called Him, "Rabbi" (Master, Teacher). They wanted to learn more and so they asked Him where He lived. He invited them to come and see and they stayed with him that day. John was an eyewitness and remembered the exact time. It was the tenth hour or about 10 a.m.

- Andrew's confirmation (vs. 41)

After hearing Jesus speak, Andrew was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah (Christ), the anointed One. This is the theme of John's Gospel. Jesus is God's anointed prophet, priest, and king. He is the one sent by God to save us from our sins. Andrew is identified as Simon Peter's brother. He always lived in the shadow of his brother.

- Peter's transformation (vs. 42)

Andrew found his brother and brought him to Jesus. These were the first words Jesus ever said to Peter. When Jesus looked at Simon Peter, he saw two things. He saw who Simon was at that moment and He saw what Simon would become. Jesus sees you today and He sees not only who you are, but who you will become. He would be called Cephas (Aramaic) or Peter (Greek), a stone. Jesus gave him a new name and a new character.

**Matthew 16:15-18** <sup>15</sup> *He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?* <sup>16</sup> *And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* <sup>17</sup> *And Jesus answered and*

said unto him, *Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*<sup>18</sup> *And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

### **THE NEXT TWO FOLLOWERS: Philip and Nathanael**

- Christ's invitation (vs. 43)

Jesus went to Galilee in the north and invited Philip to follow Him. Philip was from the little town of Bethsaida ("house of fishing"), which was also the home town of Andrew and Peter. This was the same invitation He gave to John and Andrew: "Follow me." It was the invitation He gave throughout His ministry and the same one He gives now. It is a gracious invitation to follow Christ. What a privilege. It is a serious invitation to follow Christ. It is life-changing. It is a challenging invitation to follow Christ. It is demanding and involves self-sacrifice.

- Philip's confirmation (vs. 45)

This verse is one of the most important statements in the Bible. The law and the prophets was the way of referring to the Old Testament Scriptures. Obviously Philip and Nathanael knew and loved the Scriptures. Jesus is the theme of the whole Bible. Consider what Jesus said later in **John 5:39** *Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.* **John 5:45-47**<sup>45</sup> *Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust.*<sup>46</sup> *For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.*<sup>47</sup> *But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?* When Jesus walked on the road to Emmaus with two of His disciples after the resurrection, He showed them how He had fulfilled all the Old Testament scripture: **Luke 24:27** *And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.* If you know and believe Scripture, you will know and believe in Jesus Christ. If you don't know and believe Scripture, you will not know and believe in Christ. That's the way it works.

- Nathanael's transformation (vs. 46-49)

Nathanael is called Bartholomew in the other three Gospels and in all the lists of the apostles. Bartholomew means "Son of Tolmai," so Nathanael was his proper name and he was the son of Tolmai. When Philip told Nathanael about Jesus of Nazareth, he questioned whether anything good could come out of Nazareth. It was an out-of-the-way place and was often looked down upon by others. The people of Judea looked down on the people of Galilee and the people of Galilee looked down on Nazareth. Nathanael was from Cana (Jn. 21:2), a dinky little town itself, where Jesus did His first miracle (John 2). Philip's response is great: "Come and see." See for yourself. That's what we should be telling people. Come and find out about Jesus for yourself.

When Jesus saw Nathanael, He made an amazing statement. He called him "an Israelite indeed," that means a real, genuine, Israelite. Jesus knew he had an honest and sincere heart (no deceit). He was a true Jew. This is Paul's point in **Romans 2:28-29**<sup>28</sup> *For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:*<sup>29</sup> *But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.* Jesus saw Nathanael before Nathanael

saw him. Nathanael wondered: “How do you know me?” In other words, “I don’t know you, so how do you know me?”

All this caused Nathanael to realize Jesus was the Son of God and the King of Israel. This is his confession of faith, and yet another witness that John gives of Jesus. This is John’s purpose in writing the Gospel: ***John 20:30-31***<sup>30</sup> *And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:*<sup>31</sup> *But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*

- Christ’s revelation (vs. 50-51)

Jesus tells Nathanael that he will see greater things. These greater things include all the miracles he would see and the truths he would hear throughout his years with Christ. The first of Jesus’ 37 recorded miracles would soon take place in Cana, Nathanael’s home town. He tells Nathanael that he would understand that He is the only way to heaven, just like Jacob’s ladder. He referred to the well known story of Jacob and his ladder dream in ***Genesis 28:12*** *And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.* Nathanael and the other followers would understand that Jesus is the link between heaven and earth. He is the one Mediator between God and men.

In verse 51, Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of Man. This is the ninth title of Jesus found in this opening chapter of John. He is the Word, the Light, the only begotten Son, the Lamb of God, the Son of God, the Master, the Christ, the King of Israel, and the Son of Man.

### **APPLYING THIS MESSAGE TO OUR LIVES:**

- ✓ Every person is following somebody, so be careful who you follow.  
John and Andrew followed John the Baptist until they started following Jesus. Before you follow somebody, make sure they are following Christ.
- ✓ Once you understand who Jesus is, you will want to believe in Him and follow Him.  
When Paul met Jesus on the Damascus Road he asked Him two questions: Who are you Lord? What do you want me to do?
- ✓ Following Christ is solid proof that we know Him and believe in Him.  
***John 10:27*** *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*
- ✓ Whether we find Christ or He finds us, He always leads the search.  
John and Andrew were seeking Jesus. Andrew was found Simon, then Philip found Nathanael. In every situation, Jesus was at work. Jesus is not lost. We are.  
***John 6:44*** *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him...*  
***John 15:16*** *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you...*
- ✓ It is the highest privilege to follow Christ and lead others to follow Him.
- ✓ Following Christ is both a one-time decision and a lifelong process.
- ✓ Following Christ will change your life now and forever.