



# Believe

## JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

## Examining the text & our hearts:

*Bible Reading: John 1:35-51*

### John 1:35-51

**35** The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, **36** and he looked at Jesus ... and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" **37** The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. **38** Jesus turned ... and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" ... "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, ... **40** One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. **41** He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" .... **42** He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" ....

**43** The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." .... **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." **46** Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." **47** Jesus saw Nathanael coming ... 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, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

## I. The Initial Encounter

## A. Hearing and following

1. People's encounter with Jesus begins with hearing
2. After hearing they follow
3. After following they trust/believe
4. This faith then becomes a way of life
  - "The path of discipleship begins when people are called to follow or when they hear something that prompts them to trust Jesus.... They begin following because of something they hear, and this in turn shapes what they see." Craig Koester p, 164
  - "John's account of the first disciples establishes the pattern. These people come to faith through an initial experience of hearing. As the narrative begins. John the Baptist declares that Jesus is "the Lamb of God," and two people who hear this follow Jesus. When Jesus turns and asks them what they are looking for, they respond with a question. "Rabbi... where are you staying." Jesus could have given them an answer...Instead, he offers an invitation. "Come and see" (1:39). This statement creates a new situation for the seekers....They will only learn more by following Jesus. ...When they do "see" ...they come to recognize that he is the Messiah (1:39-41). Craig Koester.... pp. 164-165
  - "To relate to Jesus is to go with him. The call to faith is a call to a way of life." Koester, p. 187
5. John records the first encounter the disciples had with Jesus.
  - "These [encounter] stories [in the 4th Gospel] have no parallels in the Synoptic Gospels. Scholars have compared them with the 'call' stories in Mk. 1:16-20 & Mt. 9:9 & in part this comparison is valid (1:43)...We learn here [in Jn.] how the Gospel can later refer to Jesus' 'disciples' (2:1ff.).? It does not mean that the [4th Gospel] is either ignorant or critical of the Synoptic 'call' stories. He assumed...his readers were familiar with the...tradition [that] Jesus was accompanied by disciples from the beginning & that there were not 5 or 6, but twelve (6:67; 20:24), though this Gospel never lists [the Twelve apostles'] names or tells how most of them were called. Hence the encounters described here...are not to be viewed as 'call' stories competing with Mk. 1:16ff; 3:16 [& parallels], but rather as a report...that goes back behind the 'call' stories known from elsewhere...*Only once does this Gospel mention Jesus calling someone?*(Philip in 1:43)." [Herman Ridderbos,?Gospel according to John,?pp. ]
  - "The differences observed in the account given by the author John & those of Matthew, Mark, & Luke about how Jesus met the first 6 followers can be easily explained. John narrated how Jesus [first] met with Andrew, James, John, Peter, Philip & Nathanael. The Synoptic Gospels narrated the actual calling of the first disciples Jesus selected, but John gave a picture of how Jesus met them for the first time before he called them to himself." [Tony Foster,?Rediscovering Jesus, p. ]
  - In John's Gospel "Andrew leads his brother to Jesus whom he already designates as the Messiah or Christ (1:41). In the Synoptics, Jesus is not revealed as the Christ until Peter's confession, half way through the Gospel's narrative (Mk. 8:27-30 & parallels)." [C. Clifton Black (ed.)?Anatomy of the New Testament,?p. 136]

## B. Different catalysts and different people

- John the Baptist

- The unconventional messenger who is baptizing people
- Declares Jesus is the Lamb of God and the Son of God
- Becomes the catalyst for Andrew and “other disciple”
- Andrew and other unnamed disciple
  - Disciples of John the Baptist; committed, dedicated
  - Hear from John the Baptist
  - Curiosity about where Jesus dwells when Jesus asks what they are looking for
  - Follow Jesus and stay with him, left John the Baptist
- Peter – rash, impulsive, leader
  - Heard from his brother Andrew
  - Brought to Jesus by his brother Andrew
  - Jesus gives him a new name
- Philip – knowledgeable about scripture, anticipating the Messiah
  - Found by Jesus
  - Jesus says “follow me.”
- Nathanael – the sceptic
  - Found by Philip
  - Philip tries to enlighten Nathanael doesn’t argue but says “Come and see”
  - Hears from Philip but is sceptical
  - Philip’s “word to Nathaniel is faith’s witness to Jesus as the promised Messiah. [Nathaniel’s] response is a reasonable one: the credentials of Jesus hardly qualify him as the one promised by Moses & the prophets as the people’s deliverer. [We]...regularly evaluate strangers by place or origin, residence, family, education, & [status]... The invitation to join in faith’s inquiry is extended: ‘*come & see*’?(1:46, [etc.]) Notice that witnessing?*invites*, it *does not argue or coerce*, & it certainly does not...discredit Nathaniel’s initial doubt. Faith sickens & dies in an atmosphere where doubt is laughed at. Nathaniel encounters Jesus’ super-natural knowledge & is persuaded...[Yet,] Nathaniel is never mentioned in the lists of Jesus’ disciples in the other Gospels or Acts...[He] could be the paradigm of believing Israel, those who within Judaism accepted Jesus as Messiah... [This] simple story of a person meeting Jesus is elaborated into a Christian proclamation...[There’s] a shift to the plural form of ‘you’ [Y’all] in 1:51 ‘Truly, truly, I tell? *you?(pl.),?you?(pl.)* all will see’. [What]...began as a private conversation [has expanded] Jesus speaks to all, including [us] the readers...1:50-51?*include the readers?[us]*, living in a time & place distant from Galilee,*?within the circle of Jesus’ followers.*” [Fred B. Craddock,*?Preaching Through the Christian Year,*?pp. 81-82]
- John, the writer
  - A late bloomer, doesn’t seem important
  - Always mentioned at least second (Peter, James and John; or James and John)
  - Not prominent in Acts
- No one size fits all
- Yet all have a one-on-one encounter with Jesus

### C. Two levels of following – literal and symbolic (1:37-39)

- “The verb “to follow” ...v.37) operates on two levels. It has a literal meaning in the story line, but it also serves as a metaphor for discipleship (see 8:12; 10:4, 27; 12:26; 13:36). Words with

meanings that make sense on both a literal and a symbolic level occur frequently in the Fourth Gospel and are a distinctive trait of the Johannine literary style. Gail R. O'Day, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, p. 452

## D. Following is active

- “These stories remind the church that discipleship is **an active engagement with Jesus**....John does not report stories about discipleship but invites the reader to share in the call to discipleship. Moreover, these stories are dominated by verbs: *follow, see, seek, stay, find*. These verbs, too, emphasize that discipleship is active and involves interacting with Jesus.” Gail R. O'Day, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*,

## II. Come and See

### A. Call to Jesus' followers

#### 1. Different ways his disciples first encounter Jesus

##### a. By hearing from others – two disciples of John

- Being asked “What are you looking for?”
- Called to “Come and see”

##### b. Being “found” and directly called to “follow” – Philip

##### c. Being “found” by others and then brought to encounter Jesus

- Peter – given a name change
- Nathaniel – Jesus' word to him:
  - “Behold an Israelite in whom is no deceit”
  - “I saw you under a fig tree”
  - “You will see greater things than these”
  - “The encounter between Jesus & Nathanael unfolds through a subtle interweaving of OT allusions. Philip introduced the theme of scriptural fulfillment when he declared, ‘We’ve found him of whom Moses in the law & also the prophets wrote’ (1.45). The echoes of the Jacob stories have long been recognized, but Zech. 3.8 and 10 also play a pivotal role in the narrative. Zech. 3.10 speaks of the time *when a man would call his neighbor under a vine and a fig tree*. Jesus alluded to this text when he said, ‘Before Philip called you, *when you were under the fig tree*, I saw you’ (1.48). The event described in Zech. 3.10 was appropriate for an ‘Israelite’ like Nathanael because similar OT passages applied the vision to ‘Israel’. More importantly, being called by a friend under a fig tree *marked the advent of a messianic ‘Branch’* who would reign as king according to Zech. 3.10 and 6.12, & be a Davidic figure according to Jer. 23.5 & 33.15.” [Craig R. Koester “*Messianic Exegesis and the Call of Nathanael (John 1:45-51)*.” *Journal for the Study of the NT*, Vol. 39 (June 1990) p. 34]

#### 2. Called to follow not to work

##### a. Encountering Jesus precedes work

## b. Without an encounter, you are not changed, and work will not last

- “In 1:40-42 the designation of Simon as ‘Cephas,’ ‘Peter’ corresponds to his acknowledgment of Jesus as Messiah. Both cases are to do with *the person, not the work*... This perspective corresponds to that of 1:35-39: *to be with Jesus & to see where he lives [abides] precedes every assignment to his service.*” [Johannes Beutler, *John*, p. 67] ?

**B. A call to the readers**

- “The opening to the Gospel [of John] ... comes to us in 2 sections: the Prologue (1:1-18)... & the calling narrative (1:19-51), where disciples receive the invitation to *‘come & see’—extending the invitation also to the reader*... This sets the tone for the rest of the narrative to follow.” [Paul N. Anderson, *Riddles of the 4th Gospel: An Introduction to John*, p. 20]
- “That summons ‘come & see’ (1:46) *functions* also as *an invitation to the reader of the 4th Gospel*, an invitation to discern, among other things, whether the Jesus they will meet in this story is in fact prefigured by Moses & the prophets. John has set astonishingly high expectations in chapter 1 of his narrative... [In 1:46] we are given to understand that Philip has somehow intuited a revelatory insight. If so, *readers of the text are summoned by Philip’s words to ‘come & see’* how this Jesus of Nazareth can be understood as the one about whom Moses & the prophets wrote.” [Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, pp. 281-2]

**C. How Different People “See” Jesus**

## 1. Initial Setting

- John the Baptist – the Lamb of God, The Son of God
- Andrew and disciple – Rabbi – teacher
- Andrew says they found the Messiah
- Philip – him of whom Moses and the prophets wrote; Jesus of Nazareth  
John’s narrative begins with “the *disciples’ incomplete recognition* of who Jesus is & [there are] *successive expansions of [their] understanding [of Christ] that unfold* as each disciple enters the company of Jesus in the call narrative (note the series of titles applied to [Jesus])... The conclusion of the call narrative with Jesus’ words that ‘greater things’ will be seen [1:50b] surely hints to the partiality of the disciples’... understanding [of Christ] in John 1:35-51 in spite of their impressive use of these loaded titles.” [Andrew J. Byers, *Ecclesiology & Theosis in the Gospel of John*, p. 88]
- Nathanael – Rabbi; the Son of God; the King of Israel

## a. Initially we may see Jesus differently

## b. It is never a full understanding at the beginning

- “Why are there so many names for Jesus? Each disciple sees something different in Jesus and bears witness in his own way.... The disciples’ testimonies are only the beginning: they will see “greater things.” Gail R. O’Day, *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*, p. 455
- “The rich variety of testimonies in chap. 1 is both cautionary and celebratory. It cautions the reader not to limit Jesus to preconceived categories and expectations but to keep one’s eyes open for a surprising revelation of God.” Gail R. O’Day, *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*, p. 455

## 2. Progressive Seeing/Revelation – 1:50-51

*“You will see greater things than these.”?51?And he said to him,?“Truly, truly, I say to you[pl.],? you will see?heaven opened, and?the angels of God ascending and descending on?the Son of Man.”*

- John’s narrative begins with “the?disciples’ incomplete recognition?of who Jesus is & [there are]?successive expansions of?[their]?understanding?[of Christ]?that unfold?as each disciple enters the company of Jesus in the call narrative (note the series of titles applied to [Jesus])... The conclusion of the call narrative with Jesus’ words that ‘greater things’ will be seen [1:50b] surely hints to the partiality of the disciples’...understanding [of Christ] in John 1:35-51 in spite of their impressive use of these loaded titles.” [Andrew J. Byers, *Ecclesiology & Theosis in the Gospel of John*, p. 88]
- “Evidence of revelation in the Gospel of John is evident in John 1:51. Jesus declares that Nathanael & the disciples will see heaven opened & the angels of God ascending & descending on the Son of Man. The opening of heaven suggests that what will be seen includes heavenly revelation. *Jesus the Son of Man*, as the one connecting heaven & earth, & thus God & humanity, *is the revealer of the Father.*” [Benjamin E. Reynolds, *John among the Apocalypses*,?p. 11]
- Jesus “does not merely orate [talk] about heaven & earth...but actually bestrides them... [hence] John’s...paradox: ‘even when on earth (the Son of Man) is in heaven.’ Jesus? *speaks?as Jesus?is: in the flesh, while [in its essential form or nature] (Jn. 3:13, 34...).* This paradox is vividly articulated in Jn. 3:13-14: of the Son of Man’s descent & ascent...*In the Johannine Jesus time & space intersect,*?precisely because the Son of Man is the ladder, the avenue of intercourse between earth & heaven (1:51).” [C. Clifton Black, *Rhetoric of the Gospel*,?p. 93]
- A word to those followers and to us
- As John’s account goes forward, they will see more, heaven will be opened more and more

## III. The testimony of Jesus’ followers – Come and See

- Andrew to Peter – “We have found the Messiah”
- Philip to Nathanael – “We have found him of whom?Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus?of Nazareth,?the son of Joseph.”?

## IV. How do we “see Jesus” today?

### A. Through and in the Word

- John writes so readers can “see” Jesus
- e.g. Philip Yancy

### B. Through and in the Believers – the church

- “The first lesson that ‘*come & see*’?should teach Christians about reading John in the 21st century: the church must possess a welcoming & open posture to the world...A community that takes seriously Jesus’ actions in the “*come & see*” passages maintains a posture of openness

to those that would enter. This is not a posture of assimilation—the church is still to be the church...—but it is a posture of curiosity & strategy about drawing in people from the world.” [Michael T. McDowell, “*An Insider’s Church for Outsiders*,” Religions, Vol. 13, p. 865]

- ?“The church is more than an open door—that door must lead somewhere, & John shows where it might lead. In 1:46, Philip tries to recruit Nathaniel, using similar messianic language...“we have found he about whom Moses wrote in the Law & the prophets: Jesus of Nazareth, from Galilee”. But Nathaniel remains unimpressed, retorting, “Is it possible for anything good to come from Nazareth?”...However, rather than argue the intricacies of messianic theory with Nathaniel, Philip simply says the same words as Jesus to Philip: ‘*come & see*’. Nathaniel does, and just one dialogue later, he has fallen to his knees and declared Jesus “the Son of God, the King of Israel.” [Michael T. McDowell, “*An Insider’s Church for Outsiders*,” Religions, V. 13, p. 865]
- “The open doors of the church do not lead back to the self: they lead to Jesus. No matter how open the church is to its surrounding communities, no matter the creativity it employs to open its doors and make its space a welcoming place for outsiders, it, nonetheless, must maintain a distinctive character from the rest of the world because its aims are ultimately different from those of the world: to lead, train, & teach people to know, love, & become like Christ.” [Michael T. McDowell, “*An Insider’s Church for Outsiders*,” Religions, V. 13, p. 865]

### C. Requires a curiosity

- “where do you stay?”
- healthy scepticism/good questions- Nathaniel