



Come and See

The Gospel of John

John 1:35–51

Jeremy Anderson | September 12, 2021

As of this year, it's astounding. There are 4.2 billion people who use social media. That's crazy! The wild thing is that the average user of social media right now is online for at least two and half hours a day. I'm not saying that to guilt trip anybody, because if that's the average, I know there are some of us who are on the north side of that average and some who are on the south side of it. I'm sharing this because I want to prove a point here.

We live in a day and age in which it's common to say, "Come and see." On our social media accounts—be it Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, Tik Tok for you people on the edge—whatever it may be, we're used to saying, "Come and see." We like to go online and see what's going on in other people's lives and to stay in touch with our loved ones. We like to be entertained. We'll share videos and pictures with other people to let them know what's going on in our lives. It is normal for us to say, "Come and see."

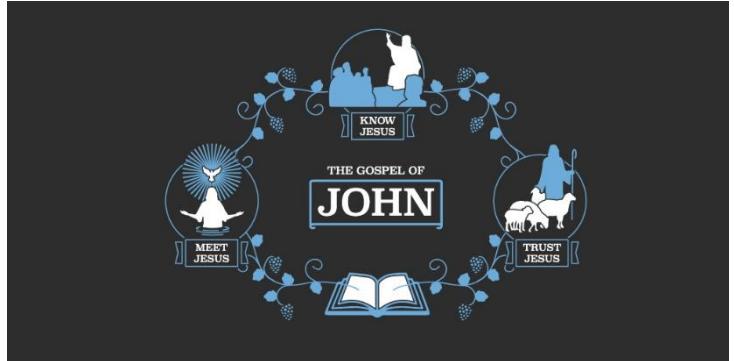
The plan of discipleship

Our passage today is really all about that: "Come and see. Come and see Who Jesus is." That's what John is introducing us to here, as we begin to look at Jesus' public ministry and the calling of His first disciples. So as we see these first few men begin to follow Jesus and His interaction with them, even how He's dealing with them and calling them, we see right away Jesus starting to reveal His plan of discipleship. At the very beginning, he's already instilling some core beliefs about what it is to be a follower of Jesus Christ. John, the Gospel writer, is going to introduce some themes for us today, but he's going to build on and expound them throughout the rest of the Gospel. We see them just being introduced here. We're just getting a taste of them today.

At the beginning of our passage, we see John the Baptist once again affirming that Jesus is the Lamb of God. This time the interesting thing is he has two of his disciples with him. These two disciples leave John to follow Jesus. We're not dealing with the whole "sheep swapping" idea we might see in churches today, where a believer may go from one church to another to follow a more prestigious pastor or teacher. What I think we're seeing here is the fulfillment of John the Baptist's ministry.

You'll recall from last week that John the Baptist did not come to witness of himself. He didn't come with the goal of elevating his own ministry. He came with the singular goal of pointing to the Christ, the One Who was promised to come after him, the One Who would be greater than he is. He didn't take the credit and honor for himself.

So here, as John says, "Look, the Lamb of God" his disciples follow that Lamb of God, being true to John's teachings that it's not about him, it's about Jesus. Right away we see this idea of discipleship and what it means to literally follow Christ. John uses this term "follow" throughout his Gospel. Most of the time he uses it to refer to someone following someone else as a disciple. However, in our passage today, it seems that these two men—Andrew and the unnamed disciple—were following Jesus in the most literal sense of the word. Jesus turned around and asked them, "What are you seeking?"



I like to put ourselves in the context a little. In our modern day, if you were to have two guys following you, you might ask them something other than "What are you seeking?" But Jesus kindly turned to these two men and asked, "What are you looking for?" It was as if He wanted to get to the heart of what these guys were really after. Their response was kind of strange. They didn't say, "Well, John the Baptist said You are the Lamb of God." They didn't say, "We want to see if You're the Messiah." Instead, they answered him by saying, "*Rabbi*,"—which John translates for us as Teacher—"where are you staying?"

As if two guys following someone wasn't creepy enough, now they asked where He was going to stay overnight. Jesus, obviously with full knowledge of what's going on and what's ahead, kindly and graciously said, "*Come and see.*" So the young men followed Jesus.

They asked Him, "Where are you staying?" I think there was a lot packed into this question that they didn't even realize. They had the desire to be with Jesus and wanted to see what He was all about.

That term "staying" is also one of the themes John is going to unpack and continue to put before us throughout this whole Gospel. It's the same term in John 15 where Jesus said we must "abide" in Him. I think these young men had no clue what they were asking Jesus.

This reminds me of when I started playing basketball as a little kid. I grew up watching the varsity guys play all the time. I loved it and was eager to get on the court and play for myself. So when fifth grade came around and the team opened up, I was so excited to play basketball. I just wanted to get on the court and play. I wanted to make a bucket. I wanted to be the person everyone clapped for. Little did I know as a fifth grader all that basketball would come to mean over the next eight years of my life. I had no clue at that point all that the game of basketball would teach me about life. I had no idea the great joys, and difficulties, that would come my way from playing basketball. I was just eager to get started.

I think that's what we're seeing here with these young men, Andrew and this unnamed disciple. They didn't know what was in store for them. They had no clue. When we read this passage, we're coming at it from the perspective of knowing the rest of the Gospel of John. But they didn't; this was brand new to them. A new guy—the Lamb of God—they were curious. Little did they know all that would be in store, all Jesus would teach them, all the things they would experience while walking with Him. They didn't know all the difficulties and joys that would come. All this was yet to come with being a disciple of Jesus Christ; they had no idea yet, but Jesus did, so He said, "*Come and see.*"

I believe we're being posed that same question today. What are you seeking as you come to the Lord? What are you seeking in a Messiah, a Savior? What are you seeking in Jesus Christ? Get to the heart of the issue. Get to the heart of it and come and see Who Jesus truly is—the Lamb of God, the Messiah Who was promised in the Old Testament. His invitation to come and see is an open invitation to you today and one that can still be extended to other people. Notice in our passage that Andrew's first response to Jesus' call to come and follow was to go find his brother Simon. Later, Jesus called Philip to follow Him. What was Philip's response? He went to get Nathaniel. He said, "*Come on. We've found the Messiah.*" Philip said, "*We've found the one that Moses in the law and all the prophets talked about. You've got to come and check this out.*"

That's an opportunity we have today, as His disciples in the modern world. We can invite other people to come and see Who Jesus is. The beautiful thing about our faith that sets it apart from the other world religions is that we are not inviting people to come and change their worldview or ideology. Those things will come. We're inviting people to come and meet Someone, not something. We are able to say, "Come and meet Jesus. Come and see Who He is. We've found the Messiah." That's not a threatening thing; that's an open invitation. "*Come and see the Lord.*"

What opportunities do we have to extend this invitation to the world around us—to our loved ones, friends, co-workers, neighbors? We don't have to overcomplicate this. Just say, "*Come and see.*" Let Jesus do all the hard work in changing their hearts and minds. That's His job; ours is to invite. What an opportunity we have. How could we not invite others in view of Who He is?

Now Andrew invited his brother Simon, saying, "*We've found the Messiah.*" Simon's like, "All right. Let's go check this out." Andrew brings Simon to Jesus, and Jesus right away changes his name to Peter. That name holds special meaning in my heart right now because my son's name is Peter. For us, a name is part of our identity, isn't it? My name is Jeremy. That's as much a part of my identity as it is that you call me Jeremy. But for them, a name meant something about who they were.

So for Simon to come up to this stranger he's never met before, then for Jesus to say, "You're Simon, but we'll call you Peter," you could almost imagine him thinking, "Okay. I don't get the nicknames here. Do I look like a rock to You or what?"

Certainly Peter didn't have a clue about all that would come from that change in his identity. It wouldn't be until later in Jesus' ministry, later in Jesus' relationship with Peter, that He would say, "This is Peter and on this rock I will build My church." He didn't tell him that up front. He gave Peter time to walk with Him, to grow. Jesus knew all He had in store, but Peter didn't. All he had was the invitation to "Come and see"—an invitation to come and walk with Christ.

Isn't that true for us? When we come to the Lord, place our trust in Him and follow Him as His disciple, we change. I don't think anybody in this room or anybody participating online has changed your name as a result of following Jesus. But certainly you have changed because Jesus has changed who you are.

Right away in this Gospel, John says, *"But to all who did receive him, who believed in His name, he gave the right to become children of God"* (John 1:12). Your familial status with God has changed because of following Him. It changes who we are down to the core of our beings. Jesus is a Savior Who transforms.

Not only was Peter's identity changed, but Nathaniel's perspective was also changed. Philip comes and says, "We've found the One." Not someone, but the One—the Messiah. Then Nathaniel's response was, *"Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"* (John 1:46).

Just as a side comment, this doesn't really have much to do with the passage, but it's my own speculation because I like Old Testament put myself in the context a little. I wonder, as time went on and after Jesus performed a few miracles, if one of the guys might have said, "Nothing good from Nazareth, huh?" I know I'd probably do that with my friends. Or maybe Jesus did something amazing, then looked at Nathaniel with that look, implying, "Nothing good?" So Nathaniel was thinking, "Man, little did I know."

So back to our story. Nathaniel comes toward Jesus, Who sees him approaching and says, *"Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!"* (John 1:47). Now somebody said that of us today, we might be a little bashful, replying, "Oh, I don't know, whatever. Don't play it up too much." But Nathaniel says, "Yup. Now, how do You know me?" It's like, "Yeah, You're right." Jesus gets just straight to the point and says, *"Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you"* (John 1:48). Now, we don't know where that fig tree was. We don't know what Nathaniel was doing under that tree. We don't know what he was thinking. Was he praying? We don't know. But what we do know is that Jesus' statement was enough to show Nathaniel, "I am the Son of God." He realized Jesus knew him in a way that no other could. "How could He have known? He must be God."

Some of us have had similar experiences. Perhaps we had our doubts before coming to faith in Jesus Christ. Perhaps we have doubts today. But God at some point spoke into our lives in such a way that we realize, "It must be Him." Nathaniel's whole perspective changed. He went right from there, and he declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" (John 1:49).

The profession of discipleship

It's in Nathaniel's response to Jesus that we really see what will become the profession of discipleship. What does it mean to follow Jesus? There is actually a profession to following Him. Now, all these guys had a profession of their faith in Jesus Christ, although little at the beginning. Andrew went to Simon, "We've found the Messiah." Simon went to Jesus and followed Him. Philip went and said, "He checks all the boxes. He's the One the Old Testament has spoken of. He's legit." Nathaniel went and professed this to be true. They all made a profession of faith in Christ.

We don't just follow willy-nilly. We follow Jesus because of Who He is. There's a recognition of that. So as you look at Nathaniel's profession and what he has said, such is our profession of faith, or it ought to be. "Jesus, You are my Rabbi. Jesus, You're my Teacher. I'm Your student. I'm Your pupil." That means, "I submit to You. What You say, I will follow. Where you go, I will come with. I'm submitting to You to live as You would live. Jesus, You're the Son of God." Although we may not always fully understand Who Jesus is or what He is up to, we submit to the fact that we know He is God. "Because You are God, I will follow You. You alone have supreme authority. You're my King, and as my King, I live for Your glory, for Your Kingdom, not my own. I live for Your

recognition, under Your terms, because You are the King. You are the One Who is sovereign. You are the One Who has glory." We follow Him, and such is the profession of faith, the profession of discipleship. With Jesus as our King, we recognize that we've entered into a Kingdom unlike any kingdom of this earth. It's a Kingdom that doesn't belong to this earth. Rather, it's a heavenly one.

Later in Matthew 13:44, Jesus tells us, "*The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*" So to find this Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of heaven, is to find a treasure that cannot be compared with anything in this world. It's a treasure so much more valuable that we would give everything to be there. So when Jesus says, "Come and see. Follow Me," is there something that stands in your way? Is there some part of your life you're holding on to that is part of your kingdom? Or do you recognize the invitation as being so valuable, you'd give everything to follow Jesus?

These guys have just met the Messiah. They don't have any level of expertise in all this, because they've just met Jesus. I'm sure they didn't understand fully all the things they were saying. But in their budding relationship with Jesus, they had experienced and had come to know something that was true of Jesus Christ, so they followed. Jesus had so much to teach them.

I love how this passage concludes for us today. Jesus asked Nathaniel, "Just because I told you about the whole fig tree thing, that's what caused you to believe?" In effect He was saying at the end of verse 50, "You ain't seen nothin' yet. Follow Me and you will see so much more."

The promise of discipleship

In verse 51, Jesus gives us the promise of discipleship. Jesus says to them, "*Truly, truly, I say to you...*" These words certify the validity of what He is about. He's saying, "Listen up. What I'm about to say is important."

Your Bible might have a footnote that mentions the "you" in this verse is plural, not singular. That means Jesus has shifted this conversation from one with Nathaniel only to the whole group of gentlemen who are with Him—and to us today. He says, "*You will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.*"

Wow!. For any true Israelite—which Jesus just affirmed in Nathaniel—that certainly would have started to ring some bells.

Turn with me to Genesis 28. This is certainly where their minds would have gone, as they heard Jesus make these claims of Himself. So

I think we need to look at it too in order to understand what Jesus is really saying here. In Genesis 28 we're introduced to Jacob's dream. Let me give you a little context here.

Jacob had an older brother, Esau, who cheated him twice. He stole his birthright and stole the blessing from their father, Isaac. Esau, rightfully, is pretty ticked off. Jacob's mom says, "You'd better get out of here for a little while. Your brother might kill you. So go up to Haran (which is really far away) and wait for your brother's fury to die out."

So Jacob leaves and while he was on this long journey, he stopped overnight. While he was sleeping, it says he had a dream. That's where we're going to pick in Genesis 28, starting in verse 12: *"And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!"*

Does that start to sound familiar?

¹³ And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. ¹⁴ Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

What is Jesus claiming? Look at verse 13 with me again: "*The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring.*" In Jacob's dream, God was revealing to him the Promised Land for the people of Israel.

Now with these disciples, what Jesus is saying is in turn is not that He is the Promised Land, but the promised Messiah. He is saying He will deliver God's people, not just to the land, but to heaven itself. He's the One Who will bless all the nations of the

earth through the seed of Jacob (verse 14). Jesus is saying, in effect, "Guys, follow Me and you are going to see heaven itself affirm that I am the Son of Man, that I am the Messiah, the Promised One. You will see these things attested to in what's to come."

Throughout the rest of his Gospel, John is going to share signs. He's going to share the teachings of Jesus Christ with one purpose in mind: so that we might believe and have life in Him. That is the purpose of this Gospel.

You've got to wonder about the curiosity that is piqued in these young men who are listening. "Say what, Jesus?" But one of the beautiful things, I think, is the open-end Jesus leaves here. If you follow Genesis 28 a little further, in verse 16 Jacob wakes up from his dream and says, "*Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.*" Perhaps that's the tragedy of Jacob's life before this moment. "The Lord is here, but I didn't know it." I wonder at times if this could ever be said of the church and/or of Christians today. God is in our midst, but we didn't even know it.

You go to work and God's there, but do you know it? You go to school and God's there, but do you know it? You engage in activities in your communities and God's there, but do you know it? God is with us. I pray that doesn't creep into times when we gather as His people. Rather, when we are together here, I pray that we would recognize the presence of our God with us, because He is here in our midst.

Verse 17 goes on to tell us that Jacob was afraid: "*How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.*" I wonder if Jesus didn't leave that statement open-ended with His disciples, so they might think back to how Jacob responded. Will they, like Jacob, realize that God is in their midst? Will they, like Jacob, respond in worship as they bask in the presence of God and the person of Christ Jesus? Will they, like Jacob, realize that the Son of Man, Jesus Himself, is the true gate to heaven, by which there is no other way to the Father but through Jesus Christ? Will they understand this? Brothers and sisters, will we understand this? Will we grasp these things to be true? Jesus tells us there is something great to see as we follow Him. We're invited to see these very same things.

As we continue in our study through the whole Gospel of John, some of Jesus' teachings and stories are going to be familiar to us, but we must not become dull to them. There's nothing mundane or dull about seeing God Himself at work in His creation. These things are written for us, that we might have wonder, that we might worship Jesus for Who He truly is, that we too might see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man, that we might know that Jesus is the Messiah, that we might worship Him, that we might follow Him.

So today, you are invited to engage in Jesus' plan of discipleship—to come and see, to follow Him, walk with Him, listen to Him and learn from Him. Today you are invited to make your own profession of discipleship. Who is Jesus? How do you see Jesus? Will you follow Him for Who He truly is? Today you are invited to enjoy the promise of discipleship, to have your mind blown at the greatness of our Savior. To be caught up in His wonder, to be caught up in His glory, to be enamored by just how merciful and kind and welcoming He is, yet how strong and mighty and powerful He is. You are invited to walk with Him—the fullness of God in Man.

My prayer is that as we continue in this study through John, that we might not brush things off, but that we would look at this with open hearts and open minds. My prayer is that God would bless us richly in the knowledge of His Son and our fellowship with Him, that we would walk in the light as He is in the light. Because, as a matter of fact, He is the light. To Him be the glory and the honor forever and ever.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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