



Come and See

Jesus wants people to follow Him in faith and truth.

JOHN 1:40-51

Most of us are a little skeptical when it comes to promises made to us, with our experiences getting in the way. We want to trust the one making the promise or their product, but we've been let down too many times. We just can't do it. Some people approach spiritual matters with this same hopeful skepticism, keeping their distance due to past experiences. The best response we can make may very well be to come and see, which is what the early followers of Jesus told others as well.

How does a person's past experiences get in the way of them following Jesus?

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

JOHN 1:19-51

Jesus's encounter with His earliest disciples occurred during the ministry of John the Baptist. John was the forerunner of the Messiah. Many people wondered if he was the Christ, but John never aspired to an office that was not his. Representatives from the Jewish leaders confronted John over his authority to baptize (John 1:19-25).

John baptized with water, but the Messiah would baptize with the Holy Spirit. In humility, John acknowledged he was not even worthy to untie the Messiah's sandals. Consequently, when Jesus asked to be baptized, John initially refused but then consented (Matt. 3:13-17). John testified that he witnessed the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus as the voice of God declared Him to be God's Son. Afterward, John pointed his followers to Jesus as the Lamb of God; the Messiah (John 1:29).

Two of these disciples immediately left John and followed Jesus. One of them was Andrew. After spending the day with Jesus, Andrew became convinced Jesus was indeed the Christ. He took this good news to his brother and brought Simon to Jesus. This encounter was the first of several meetings that culminated in a change in Simon's identity and purpose as the fisherman became Peter, the fisher of men (1:35-42).

Leaving the Jordan where John baptized, Jesus traveled northward to Galilee, probably accompanied by Peter and Andrew. They lived in Bethsaida on the northern side of the Sea of Galilee. Arriving in their hometown, Jesus invited Philip, who also lived in Bethsaida, to follow him. Like Andrew, Philip's first reaction was to find another friend—Nathaniel—and to introduce him to Jesus. At first, Nathaniel was skeptical, but upon meeting Jesus, he quickly became a believer that Jesus was Christ (1:43-51).

As you read John 1:40-51 in your Bible, underline the names and titles that people apply to Jesus. What do these titles and names reveal about the person who attributed them to Jesus?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

ANDREW AND PETER (JOHN 1:40-42)

⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed him. ⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah", (which is translated "the Christ"), ⁴² and he brought Simon to Jesus. When Jesus saw him, he said, "You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which is translated "Peter").

VERSE 40

When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he proclaimed Him to be "the Lamb of God" (v. 36). Two of John's disciples heard what he said and began to follow Jesus. One who followed Jesus was *Andrew, Simon Peter's brother*. Most biblical scholars believe the other was John, the one who wrote this Gospel. This possibility is bolstered by the fact that John referred to himself elsewhere in the Gospel—but not by name (18:15; 19:26-27). Sometimes he called himself "the disciple Jesus loved" (13:23; 21:7,20).

The two *followed* Jesus. This verb was commonly used in the teacher/student or rabbi/disciple relationship. Rabbis typically walked while they taught; thus their disciples were considered "followers." To be a follower meant the student had made a commitment to his teacher and his teacher's doctrine.

VERSES 41-42

After spending time with Jesus, Andrew's *first* priority was to find his *brother Simon* and tell him they had found the Messiah. Jews of the first century longed for the Messiah. This meant they were looking for someone to destroy their enemies—the Romans—and to restore David's royal kingdom. Jews based this on God's promise to David (2 Sam. 7:16) and other Old Testament prophecies (Gen. 49:10; Num. 24:17; Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-5). Andrew's statement was certainly a triumphant proclamation: *We have found the Messiah*.

Andrew was not content to tell Simon what he had learned from Jesus; rather, he *brought* him. The term *brought* carries the idea of leading, as in leading an animal. We can imagine Andrew excitedly talking and encouraging Simon every step of the way.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Evangelism and Missions*

It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle. [See Isaiah 6:8; Acts 1:8.]

Evangelism involves introducing people to Jesus. Telling family members about Jesus can be challenging. We may be afraid they will reject not only the message but also the messenger. Andrew's action serves as a model and motivator for us to introduce family members to Christ.

Jesus proclaimed that Simon would be called •*Cephas*, the Aramaic word "Rock," which in Greek is *Petros* and Anglicized as "Peter." *Simon* was a common first-century name; six other men in the Gospels have it. No other man in the New Testament, though, is named "Peter." This was not a proper name but a nickname—one this disciple would eventually live up to as he boldly proclaimed, lived for, and ultimately died for the resurrected Christ.

How does meeting Jesus give a person a new identity?

PHILIP (JOHN 1:43-46)

⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. He found Philip and told him, "Follow me." ⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law (and so did the prophets): Jesus the son of Joseph, from Nazareth." ⁴⁶ "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Nathanael asked him. "Come and see," Philip answered.

VERSES 43-46

Jesus left the area where John had been baptizing and headed to Galilee. Once there, He *found* Philip, which meant He went

looking for Philip. *Follow me* carries with it the understanding of an ongoing commitment to follow Jesus as a disciple.

Although Simon and Andrew lived in Capernaum at the time Jesus began His ministry (Mark 1:21-30), they grew up in •*Bethsaida* and considered it their hometown. Bethsaida overlooks the northern shores of the Sea of Galilee. Its name translates “House of Fish,” an indication it was a fishing village.

Philip could not wait to tell his friend •*Nathanael* about Jesus. In using the plural pronoun, *we have found*, Philip was including himself among Jesus’s followers.

DID YOU KNOW?

The other Gospels refer to Nathanael as Bartholomew; only in John is he called Nathanael. Bartholomew translates as “Son of Tolmai,” which would have been his surname. Nathanael means “God has given.” The only other information John gave about Nathanael was that he was from Cana of Galilee (21:2).

Philip linked Jesus’s identity with what *Moses wrote about in the law*. He may have been referring to Moses’s prophecy that God would “raise up for you a prophet like me [Moses] from among your own brothers. . . . I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him” (Deut. 18:15-18). Or Philip may have been speaking more generally about Jesus as the fulfillment of the law and *the prophets*, meaning the fulfillment of all the Old Testament had said about the coming Messiah. Regardless, in connecting Jesus with Moses and the prophets, Philip was declaring Jesus to be the Messiah, a theme in John’s Gospel.

Philip also referred to Jesus as *the son of Joseph, from •Nazareth*. Nazareth was a small village that lacked culture and may have been morally lax. Nathanael’s question about whether *anything good* could come from Nazareth likely had nothing to do with the village’s reputation. It was probably based on the fact that Nazareth was an insignificant village that was not mentioned in the Old Testament or in any other Jewish writings that foretold the coming Messiah. Surely the Messiah could not come from such an obscure place!

In response to Nathanael's question, Philip said simply: *Come and see*. Philip was confident that if Nathanael could just meet Jesus, he too would be convinced Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah.

What keeps people from believing that Jesus is the promised Messiah?

How might a person's preconceived notions about Jesus affect his or her willingness to follow Him?

NATHANAEL (JOHN 1:47-51)

⁴⁷ Then Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said about him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit." ⁴⁸ "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you," Jesus answered. ⁴⁹ "Rabbi," Nathanael replied, "You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel!" ⁵⁰ Jesus responded to him, "Do you believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this." ⁵¹ Then he said, "Truly I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

VERSES 47-49

Seeing the two men approach, Jesus revealed that He knew the purity of Nathanael's heart, in which there was *no deceit*. The earliest Greek writers used the word translated *deceit* to refer to bait. In time, it referred to anything that was cunning. Additionally, by detailing that Nathanael *truly is an Israelite*, Jesus affirmed he was a man of genuine faith, not a man who was content merely to observe Jewish rules and rituals.

Jesus's response astonished Nathanael. His question—*How do you know me?*—was more than "Have we met before?" Jesus had seen into Nathanael's very core. *Under the fig tree* was an idiom.

Since people couldn't gather a crop from a fig tree or a grapevine for some years after it was planted, being able to sit under it indicated a prolonged period of peace. It meant the plants had not been destroyed by war. The Old Testament described an era of peace by saying, "Throughout Solomon's reign, Judah and Israel lived in safety from Dan to Beer-sheba, each person under his own vine and his own fig tree" (1 Kings 4:25). By the New Testament era, the phrase had come to refer to the place where men of faith, especially rabbis, could study the law in tranquility and in the relative comfort that the fig tree's shade provided. To say that He had seen Nathanael *under the fig tree* was Jesus's way of acknowledging that Nathanael was a dedicated student of the Word.

Nathanael, who had been skeptical that anything good could come from Nazareth, made a great declaration of faith about Jesus's true identity. Nathanael proclaimed that standing before him was none other than the *Son of God*, and the long-anticipated *King of Israel*. In this one exclamation, Nathanael encapsulated what John had been building to in this entire first chapter—Jesus was undeniably the long-awaited Messiah.

What role does fulfilled prophecy play in a person's willingness to trust Jesus?

VERSES 50-51

What Philip had trusted would happen indeed happened—Jesus and Nathanael had connected on a deep level. Jesus, though, was about to take it to a deeper level. As He had spoken about Nathanael's past, He was about to speak about his future—and the rest of His disciples' future as well.

Jesus promised Nathanael he would see even *greater things*. Indeed, just a few sentences later, John in his Gospel began to tell of Jesus and His disciples going to Cana, where Jesus would conduct His first miracle. Jesus's promise to Nathanael of greater things was about to begin.

In verse 51, Jesus shifted from talking to Nathanael and began addressing the group. The pronoun *you* changes in verse 51 to plural; Jesus began speaking to all of His followers.

He spoke of *heaven* opening and *angels of God ascending and descending* on Him, *the Son of Man*. In speaking of angels ascending and descending, Jesus was referencing a scene from the life of Jacob. In Genesis, Jacob had a dream in which angels were going up and down a stairway between heaven and the earth. Jacob was confident that he was standing at the very gates of heaven that day (Gen. 28:16-17). He was so moved by his dream that he changed the name of the place where he had the dream from Luz to Bethel, which means “House of God.”

Jesus was telling His disciples that God would no longer reveal Himself in a certain location; He was going to reveal Himself in Jesus, the Son of Man. Jesus came to connect heaven and earth.

At the end of the chapter, John’s first readers were left with the conclusion that the opening verses declared: the eternal Word had become flesh (John 1:14). After Jesus called these men, their lives were never the same. He may have called the least likely, but these men would turn “the world upside down” with the gospel (Acts 17:6). The good news is that Jesus still calls us to follow Him.

How does Jesus offer His followers assurance that He is the Son of God?

BIBLE SKILL: *Connect Old Testament prophecy to New Testament fulfillment*

Study the following passages and relate each to an aspect of fulfillment in Jesus’s life: Genesis 3:15; 12:3; Deuteronomy 18:15; Numbers 24:17; Micah 5:2; Isaiah 7:14; 9:7; 53:3; and Jeremiah 31:15. What aspects of Jesus are identified that prove He is the Christ, the Son of God? How do these verses make a case that Jesus was the Messiah?

APPLY THE TEXT

- Our true identity is found in following Jesus.
- Believers must lovingly challenge others' false beliefs about Jesus.
- Believers can be assured of the truth of Jesus's identity.

Discuss with your Bible study group some of the misconceptions people have about the identity of Jesus. What actions might your group take in light of these misconceptions and concerns?

Each of the men in these verses became followers of Jesus. Have you also become one of His followers? If so, who else do you need to invite to follow Him? If not, what is your biggest hindrance from doing so? What actions do you need to take that demonstrate you are following Jesus?

PRAYER NEEDS
