

Becoming a Disciple - John 1:35-51 - Jn04

In our last study, we met John the Baptist, and we learned the essentials of a good witness. In this study, we're actually going to finish looking at the incredible example John the Baptist was for us. We were so strongly encouraged by John the Baptist to simply point people to Jesus and to always deflect attention away from ourselves and to Jesus. "I am nothing – He is everything." We're going to see a powerful application of that commitment today in John the Baptist's life.

Remember, our last study culminated in the incredibly powerful statement of John 1:29, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" or in the Latin, *Agnus Dei* (pronounced *an yoos – day ee*), meaning *The Lamb of God* – a very powerful statement.

Today we'll start our study on "Becoming a Disciple" by again watching John the Baptist do exactly what we should do.

John 1:35

"Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples."

This is actually "Day 3" of a 4-day whirlwind of revelation. On DAY 1, a "delegation" interviewed John the Baptist. On DAY 2, John the Baptist introduced the world to Jesus Christ. This is the next day, or DAY 3, and John the Baptist is standing with HIS disciples.

A "disciple," in its broad sense, is *a learner* and *an adherent* – that is, one who adheres to or imitates the instruction of his (or her) teacher. So John the Baptist is standing with 2 of his disciples whom he has poured his life into, teaching them the truths of God. Please notice John the Baptist's final example to us in verse 36:

John 1:36

"And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!""

This is possibly the last time John the Baptist saw Jesus this side of heaven. The Greek word translated "looking at" literally means *to gaze upon or give a penetrating look*. John the Baptist is totally "caught up in" and "focused on" Jesus Christ, and he says to his disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

Then the greatest thing in the world that could ever happen to anyone who has poured his life into a "disciple" happens in the next verse:

John 1:37

"The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus."

The greatest work you could ever do for the Kingdom of Heaven is to disciple a person in the ways of the Lord and then get them to leave you and follow Jesus, which means they have to go where He leads them. That's what "follow" means.

John the Baptist's ultimate example, as we saw in our last study, was to get people to ignore him and follow Jesus – even his own disciples. There's no greater ministry training than that. When John's gospel says they followed Jesus, it means they literally followed Him as He moved out in front of them, which is another great ministry lesson.

Now I believe the next 2 verses are some of the best disciple training verses in all the Bible:

John 1:38

“Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, “What do you seek?” They said to Him, “Rabbi” (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), “where are You staying?” 39 He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).”

Let me point out 2 things before we get to the main teaching here:

- 1) These Disciples were physically following Jesus, even though they had NO IDEA where He was going, and each of us, as disciples, will have to do that; and
- 2) The Apostle John notes at end of verse 39 the very hour this occurs. I believe because this is the day of his salvation, a monumental moment in his life – the moment the Apostle John was born again.

But let me share what I think is the greatest lesson these 2 verses reveal – a lesson that will guide your entire life with Christ. Why do you think, when Jesus asked these first 2 disciples, “What do you seek?,” they responded by saying, “Rabbi, where are You staying?” That was a somewhat strange response to the question, don’t you think? But Jesus knew it was the correct answer, and He responded in verse 39 with the words “Come and see,” which can also be translated “Come, and you will see.” Then verse 39 says:

John 1:39

”They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day.”

When Jesus asked these first 2 disciples, “What do you seek?,” they said, “We want to be where You are, dwelling in Your presence, feasting at Your table, and surrounded by Your glory. In Your presence – that’s where we always want to be.”

These 2 verses reveal how to become a disciple of Jesus Christ:

- 1) Follow Him, even though you don’t know where He’s going; and
- 2) Make it your supreme desire to be dwelling in His presence. “I want to be where you are...”

Jesus makes being a disciple so easy. Man makes it so hard. Let’s move on...

John 1:40

“One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.”

Finally, the first disciple is named. It’s Andrew, the Apostle Peter’s brother. The other disciple is almost positively the Apostle John himself, who never refers to himself by name, except in the book of Revelation. Peter’s brother Andrew was actually the first disciple. Now Andrew and John, the first 2 disciples, each had a brother. Their brothers were Simon Peter and the Apostle

James and, in verse 41, we get an insight into possibly the first friendly competition between the Apostles.

John 1:41

“He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated, the Christ)”

In English, it looks like this says Andrew “found his own brother Simon” before he did anything else, like it was the first thing he did, but in the Greek, the implication is that Andrew found his brother, Simon Peter, first before John found his brother, James. It appears the way this verse is written that when they had opportunity, they both went searching for their brothers to tell them, “We have found the Messiah,” and of course, both brothers came.

In John 1:42 the Apostle Peter meets Jesus for the first time

“And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, “You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas” (which is translated, A Stone)”

Jesus knew all there was to know about Peter. He knew that Peter was impulsive and easily swayed. Yet, at this moment, He renamed Peter “Petros,” meaning *a piece of a rock*, as an indication of what He intended to do with this disciple.

Now very probably, the Apostle John brought his brother James to Jesus this same day. So we have, most probably, Peter, James, and John (the “inner circle”), along with Andrew, all becoming Disciples of Jesus on the same day. And although these four followed Jesus from this day forward, and although they just wanted to be where Jesus was, they still had to return to their jobs. Doesn’t it give us hope that we can whole-heartedly follow Jesus, that our supreme desire can be “just to be in His presence,” and we can still get up every morning and go to work? That’s exactly what these first disciples had to do. Peter, James and John had a fishing business together, and on a later day, Jesus returned to them while they were fishing, and at that time, He called them into full-time ministry. So you can be a full-time Disciple of Jesus Christ and still have a full-time job. That’s good to know. Maybe someday Jesus might call you out of that job, but until then, the steps to becoming a Disciple are the same:

- 1) Follow Him, even when you don’t know where He’s going; and
- 2) Make it your desire just to be in His presence.

Let’s move on to the calling of Philip and Nathanael.

John 1:43

“The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, “Follow Me.”

Now this is Day 4, and it says, “Jesus found Philip.” That’s really how it happens, isn’t it? “I was lost, but now I’m found. I was blind, but now I see.” Jesus found Philip and said to him, “Follow Me.”

John 1:44-45

“⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

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.”

By verse 45, we know that Nathanael is an Old Testament scholar of some sort because Philip only has to describe Jesus as “the one of whom Moses and the prophets wrote.” But then, Nathanael’s higher education kind of gets in the way. We see that happen a lot today.

John 1:46

“And Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.””

Nathanael is saying, “Nazareth is an insignificant little town with heavy Gentile influence, and it’s certainly not the prophesied birthplace of the Messiah. And who is this Joseph guy?” But I love Philip’s response. He simply says, “Come and see.” “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good.”

Later, when Peter makes his confession to Jesus, saying, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,” Jesus responds to him in Matthew 16 by saying, “Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.” Guys, you can’t save anybody, especially with debate and logic. All you can say is, “Behold the Lamb of God” and “Come and see,” and then God will do the rest. So Philip encourages Nathanael to “come and see” Jesus.

John 1:47

“Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!””

Now this statement becomes very important to Nathanael because Jesus is throwing him a bit of a word play. It appears Jesus is referring there to Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes, whose name was changed to “Israel” after he was broken by God at his conversion. His original name “Jacob” meant *deceiver*. So Jesus is saying, “Behold, an *Israelite*, in whom there is no *Jacob*,” and this becomes very important in just a minute.

John 1:48-49

“⁴⁸ Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”

⁴⁹ Nathanael answered and said to Him,” Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!””

Immediately the Holy Spirit reveals to Nathanael who Jesus is, and Nathanael responds by confessing to Jesus, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” But let’s see if we can get an idea of just how huge this revelation was to Nathanael.

John 1:50-51

“⁵⁰ Jesus answered and said to 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, “Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see haven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.””

Watch this. As Jesus responds to Nathanael, He again refers to Jacob’s life in the book of Genesis. This time, Jesus speaks of Jacob’s dream at the place Jacob named “Bethel,” the House of God. In Genesis 28, Jacob saw angels ascending and descending from heaven on a ladder that

had been set on earth. Now I certainly didn't catch this, but most of the scholars I read agree Nathanael was quite possibly sitting under the fig tree studying Jacob's life in Genesis, and that's why Jesus unfolds truths about Jacob's life to Nathanael. That may have been exactly what Nathanael was reading.

What Jesus is saying to Nathanael, He also says to us. "Not only did I see you when you thought you were in private, but I also know what you were reading or looking at while you were there, and I'd like to talk to you about it." Baam! Nathanael's response is, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God!" Now *that* is a true revelation from God! There's one more thing I'd like to bring out. Let's re-read John 1:51.

John 1:51

"And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see haven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

Jesus takes Nathanael back to Jacob's dream in Genesis 28, where Jacob saw angels ascending and descending from earth to heaven on a ladder that linked heaven and earth. Here, Jesus tells Nathanael, "I am that Ladder. Being the Son of God, I touch heaven. Being the King of Israel, I touch earth." It is Jesus Christ who links heaven and earth. He is the Mediator between God and man, and angels ascend and descend because of Him. What an incredible truth for us to know! Jesus is the Bridge, the Ladder between God and man. And because of Jesus, Hebrews 1:14 says:

Hebrews 1:14 NIV

"Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?"

If you are saved today, there are angels ascending and descending from earth to heaven and back on your behalf, and the Ladder that connects you to all the power in heaven is none other than Jesus Christ Himself!

Now in this passage, we've seen six regular men become Disciples of Jesus Christ and, after they became Disciples, Jesus used them to change the world forever. The question is, "Have you decided to be a Disciple of Jesus Christ? You see, in the Great Commission, Jesus commanded us to make Disciples, not just Converts. If you will follow the two steps we've seen here today, you will be on your way to becoming a Disciple, and Jesus will use you to radically change the world around you:

- 1) Follow Him, even when you don't know where He's going; and
- 2) Make it your desire just to be in His presence.