

Making the Four E's Easy Series: Come and See (John 1:38-39)

By
Andy Davis

At A Glance:

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These sermon study notes are designed to be a tool used after listening to the sermon. This resource is a guide to help deepen understanding regarding the Scriptures and ideas presented in the sermon. Those who use these study notes are encouraged to look up, read through, and think about Scripture references in this guide. There is more information in these notes than what is presented in the sermon. These study notes are designed to be used as an independent study tool to help the formation of Biblical convictions, character, and conduct.

Come and See

I. Introduction

A. Illustration: Going for a Bike Ride

1. An activity the kids and I like to do on occasion is going for a bike ride. When we think about a bike, we see the bike as an integrated system that works together to function toward an end. The bike is one object, and we use it to travel in a way that is faster than walking. At the same time, a bike is made up of a collection of clearly identifiable parts. Each part functions in a way that makes up the whole.
2. We can see the tires, body, peddles, chain, handlebars, grips, brakes, wires, gear switches, etc. All these various parts work together so the bike can function the way it's supposed to. The bike functions as unified system that system is built from individual parts performing unique roles.
3. Each part can be detached from the whole to be fixed or examined. Most of us have probably taken a bike tire off when it's flat. Perhaps we've purchased a new seat. Brake pads wear out. Chains break. While the bike is designed to function as a whole system, the individual parts can be removed and separated as needed.

B. In a similar way to a bike, the life and ministry of Jesus functions as an integrated system. Jesus spent His life spiritually investing in the lives of others, and all the various parts of Jesus' method of making disciples appear on the pages of Scripture as a combined whole. Each part of Jesus' ministry happens in real time concurrently. At the same time, when we pay careful attention to the details, the various parts of the way Jesus made disciples can be identified. Jesus used different disciple making strategies with different people at different stages of the discipleship process.

C. In this sermon series, we are going to pull apart Jesus' kingdom activities and ministry so we can look at each element of the disciple making process to help us understand what we should be doing as we follow Jesus' command to go into all the world and make disciples. We are summarizing and reviewing what we call The Four E's here at Community Alliance Church. Jesus was very effective in helping others make spiritual progress and move forward in their relationship with God. There is much we can learn from Jesus' example so we can become good disciple makers as well.

II. Explanation

A. As our spiritual family has been on this multiyear journey of defining and clarifying the type of culture we want to build and embrace as an outworking of our updated mission statement, the elders understand that a person needs to hear the same truths several times before it is understood and adopted. Toward that end, each year in the fall, we do a sermon series focused on our mission statement, core values, vision, plans, and ministry strategies. This year's fall sermon series will be similarly focused. As the elders have been monitoring our mission and culture, it's been observed that there is still confusion surrounding the direction we are moving regarding discipleship. This series is intended to provide another opportunity to further clarify and communicate the direction we are heading.

- B. As we observe and understand the ministry patterns of Jesus, we have attempted to capture Jesus' way of doing ministry in what we call the Four E's. The Four E's stand for our overview and explanation of how the Christian life should be understood from Jesus' point of view. The Four E's are an explanation and understanding of how a relationship with Jesus progresses over time. It captures and communicates the whole picture of a person's spiritual life with God. The Four E's refer to four observable and distinct spiritual stages or seasons within the Christian life as a person moves from their first contact with Jesus to a life of loving service for Jesus. Although an individual progresses through these spiritual stages in order, when Jesus interacts with people at various stages, all these stages tend to appear all at the same, time making it a challenge to identify each of these spiritual stages. The Four E's refer to the Expose, Educate, Equip, and Engage stages of spiritual development that occur throughout the Christian life.
- C. The first step of discipleship with Jesus can be summarized in this statement made by Jesus:
- ³⁸ And Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, "What are you seeking?" They said to Him, "Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), 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; it was about the tenth hour. (Jn. 1:38-39)
- ⁴³ The next day He decided to go to Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow Me." 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 wrote in the Law, and the prophets *also wrote*: Jesus the son of Joseph, from Nazareth!" ⁴⁶ Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good be from Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." (Jn. 1:43-45)¹
- D. Jesus' summary statement, which the disciples picked up on and used themselves, is the invitation to "come and see" Jesus ("Come, and you will see", v. 39 and "Come and see", v. 45).² Discipleship begins when curious and spiritually interested people seek out and start to have contact with Jesus and His teachings. These individuals could be spiritually labelled as interested non-Christians.³ These people aren't yet committed to following Jesus' teachings and way of life, and they wouldn't self-identify as Christians or disciples. At the same time, these individuals are open and searching. Some may eventually accept Jesus for the person He claims to be and commit themselves to following Jesus, while others may end up rejecting Jesus and walking away. No matter how it plays out, discipleship begins when people are curious and interested in learning more about God, the Bible, Jesus, and Christianity. Here at Community Alliance Church, we refer to this initial stage of discipleship as the Expose stage. At this point in

¹ For more on this stage of discipleship and the contrast between Nathanael and Philip see the sermon by Andy Davis titled Expose Stage of Spiritual Development under the sermon series Our Discipleship Plan

² While Jesus' statement "come and see" did contain a practical element of the location of where He was staying in Judah, it also included the spiritual element of exploring who Jesus is as the two disciples also "and they stayed with Him that day" (v. 39). Clearly there was something more going on than simply wanting to know the physical location where Jesus was sleeping.

³ Daniel Im, [*The Discipleship Opportunity: Leading a Great-Commission Church in a Post-Everything World*](#) (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2024), 32.

the Jesus journey, these individuals need to have contact with Jesus, observe Him, and hear what He has to say as they become familiar with who Jesus is.

- E. The whole discipleship process Jesus started with His disciples began when He noticed the spiritual interest of individuals He encountered (“Jesus turned and saw them following”, v. 38). What caused these two men to start following Jesus out of curiosity? Their spiritual mentor, John the Baptist, identified Jesus and made a few statements about who He is (John 1:29-34, 1:35-37). All it took to generate spiritual interest in Jesus was hearing a few statements made about Jesus from someone they trusted and found credible. These statements motivated these two disciples to act. After hearing a little about Jesus, these two disciples put themselves in a position to spend time with Jesus, and they took the initiative to learn more about who Jesus is. Forward movement and spiritual progress are being made because God is working in these men behind the scenes.
- F. Jesus describes this stage of discipleship like this:

⁴¹ So then the Jews were complaining about Him because He said, “I am the bread that came down out of heaven.” ⁴² And they were saying, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, ‘I have come down out of heaven’?” ⁴³ Jesus answered and said to them, “Stop complaining among yourselves. ⁴⁴ No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets: ‘And they shall all be taught of God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me. (Jn. 6:41-45)
- G. Jesus is speaking to a crowd and explaining His identity to them. Jesus uses the title “the Bread of Heaven” and the manna provided by God in the wilderness to help people understand that Jesus claims to be able to give spiritual life to the world in a similar way God the Father provided physical life to the people of Israel through the bread that was provided to them. When some people heard what Jesus was teaching about Himself, they rejected it and started to complain. This motivated Jesus to explain why some people reject what He teaches, while other people listen to Him and accept what He says about Himself. Jesus is explaining what happens in the spiritual realm during the Expose stage of discipleship.
- H. As people are exposed to the claims of Jesus about His own identity, there is such a spiritual barrier in place that no person left to themselves will overcome and respond positively to Jesus (“No one can come to Me”, v. 44). If there is any openness or acceptance to the message of Jesus, it means God the Father is working in that person through the Holy Spirit. If the person who hears the teachings of Jesus takes Jesus seriously and feels the importance and weight of who Jesus is, the Spirit of God is influencing that person’s reactions to Jesus (Jn. 16:7-11).
- I. To overcome this universal, natural spiritual barrier between humanity and God, God the Father intervenes in the Expose stage to draw individuals to Jesus (“unless the Father who sent Me draws him”, v. 44). According to Jesus, God the Father is actively involved in moving individuals toward Jesus as they are exposed to the life and words of Jesus. A person’s natural resistance and opposition is overcome as a person moves closer to Jesus in curiosity. Instead of getting mad, disagreeing, and rejecting the teachings and claims of Jesus, a person considers

and contemplates them. All this is evidence that God the Father is working in a person during the Expose stage of discipleship.

- J. The way the Father draws people to Jesus through the Spirit is by teaching them from the word of God (“they shall all be taught of God”, v. 45). Jesus refers to Isaiah 53:14 and Jeremiah 31:34 to demonstrate that every person who is part of the New Covenant relationship with God will be taught directly from God, which draws them to Jesus (“Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me”, v. 45). God the Father actively works to draw individuals to Jesus, resulting in them accepting the teachings of Jesus about Himself. The people in whom God the Father is working will move closer to and eventually believe in Jesus—trust Jesus is right about His own identity and accept that Jesus can forgive their wrongdoings and make them right with God the Father.
- K. This brief yet detailed explanation of the Expose stage of discipleship directly from Jesus helps us develop a good understanding of what is taking place in the spiritual realm between God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit with the individual as they hear the claims Jesus made about Himself and observe Jesus for themselves (Jn. 1:40). All this happens as people begin taking their first steps toward God.
- L. As a helpful exercise to learn more about what the Expose stage of discipleship is, how it works, what takes place, and find examples of how it plays out practically in the life of Jesus and the early church, all disciples are encouraged to read the Gospels and Acts. As they are reading, try to identify all the interactions that take place with people who are curious and interested in Jesus, but who have not yet committed to following Him. As you do this, you will notice the same spiritual work Jesus describes in John 6 as it plays out in the lives of individuals through personal conversations as well as in groups through the preaching and teaching of the word of God.
- M. You will also encounter various methods used by God to draw people to Jesus, whether that be exposure to miracles, hearing the word of God communicated, or a personal interaction with Jesus. Those who do this exercise and are attentive will also observe the range of time it takes for people to be drawn to Jesus to the point they decide to commit themselves to Jesus and trust (believe) Him. Some people are in this stage of their relationship with Jesus for a short time, others for a long time. While there is great diversity in how this stage of discipleship plays out in a person’s life, the same work of God is done in every case.

III. Example

- A. To help us move from what might seem like an abstract spiritual concept to viewing the Expose stage in a practical and concrete way, we are going to look at an example of how this initial work of God plays out as a person is drawn to Jesus through the influence of the Holy Spirit. A common question that people ask at this stage of discipleship, as they have contact with Jesus, is, “Who is this?” (Mt. 21:10, Lk. 5:21, 7:49, 9:9). As people are trying to figure out who Jesus is, they go through a process of discovery as they learn about Jesus. People encounter Jesus by hearing what He says and by observing how He lives and acts. As this happens, people develop a perspective on the identity of Jesus over time. Peter is no exception.

- B. As Peter is on this journey of discovery with Jesus, He has various experiences with Jesus. Peter had already learned a good amount about Jesus as he spent time with Jesus. Peter eventually develops the right convictions about the identity of Jesus. However, in the meantime, as Peter experiences Jesus, Jesus surprised Peter on several occasions by exceeding Peter's expectations and contradicting Peter's assumptions:

³⁵ On that day, when evening came, He said to them, "Let's go over to the other side."

³⁶ After dismissing the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. ³⁷ And a fierce gale of wind developed, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling *with water*. ³⁸ And yet Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" ³⁹ And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. ⁴⁰ And He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" ⁴¹ They became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who, then, is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" (Mk. 4:35-41)

- C. The disciples, including Peter, had been with Jesus for awhile and had been spending time with Him. They had been hearing Jesus teach and talk about Himself (Mk. 4:33-34). They had witnessed Jesus in a variety of situations as He interacted with a variety of people. They had even observed Jesus performing miracles (Mk. 3:1-7). The disciples clearly had a high opinion of Jesus and were convinced He was a righteous man of God—a prophet and teacher. Yet, even after all this, they were still learning more about Jesus and who He is. After having some familiarity with Jesus and His teachings, they still got surprised by the magnitude of His identity. Jesus performed actions and made statements that did not match the disciples' expectations.
- D. Interestingly, the disciples, out of fear and desperation, go to Jesus for help when they encountered a large and dangerous storm while they were on a boat ("they woke Him and said to Him, 'Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?'" (v. 38). What are the disciples expecting Jesus to do at this point? Why are they going to Jesus? Are they hoping for permission to head toward shore? These are curious questions because of how the disciples react to Jesus' response. Jesus gets up and stops the storm. The disciples clearly didn't expect Jesus to fix the storm, and this unexpected act of Jesus causes them to question their understanding of the identity of Jesus ("Who, then, is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?", v. 41). Despite the knowledge the disciples had and their past experiences with Jesus, they still didn't know who He really is...yet.
- E. People can have contact with and encounter Jesus today by reading the gospels for themselves—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—and by putting Jesus' teachings into practice in their life. Every person who is curious and interested spiritually needs to see and hear Jesus for themselves. While listening to sermons and attending church is good, healthy, and necessary, this is only secondhand information about Jesus. The Christian life can't be lived vicariously through someone else. As encouraging as it may be to hear other people tell us what they've experienced with Jesus, that is not enough for us to develop our own personal conviction about Him.

- F. We need to develop our own personal experiences with Jesus by reading the Bible for ourselves, encountering Jesus directly, and understanding what happens when we put His teachings into practice in our own lives. If anyone is unwilling to do this, they will never develop an informed and accurate conviction about Jesus. Instead, they may dismiss Jesus as irrelevant because of what other people have said about Him. Don't make this serious mistake. Our own personal conviction about Jesus, whether informed or not, whether strong or weak, will ultimately be the result of our experiences of Jesus. Even if a person listens to thousands of sermons, their conviction about Jesus will not deepen as much as reading through the gospels a few times on their own.

IV. Exemplify

- A. If we are going to learn to become disciple makers, we need to understand what we are aiming at, the outcomes we are trying to produce, how to encourage people to move in the direction Jesus wants for them, and give them opportunities to move forward in their relationship with God. What is the main goal and intended outcome toward which we are working to bring a person in the Expose stage of discipleship? Jesus Himself models it for us in His ministry. If we are going to exemplify this disciple making strategy of Jesus, how will understanding the Expose stage of discipleship impact the way we make disciples in our own lives?
- B. Here is how Jesus finished out the Expose stage of discipleship with His own disciples:
- ¹³ Now when Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and *still* others, Jeremiah, or one of the *other* prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you yourselves say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. (Mt. 16:13-17)
- C. Notice how much Jesus focused on and emphasized His own identity and what people thought about Him. He started drawing the disciples' attention to His identity by asking how other people thought about Him ("Who do people say that the Son of Man [Jesus] is?", v. 13).⁴ There has always been controversy and different opinions about Jesus. It started in Jesus' lifetime, and it continues in the present day. There is only one Jesus, but there are many different perspectives about Him. Jesus is a fascinating and wonderful individual who is at the center of spiritual controversy. Why is Jesus, who is such a good and upright person, so controversial? Because of what He claimed about Himself.
- D. Jesus wasn't content to have his disciples have intellectual knowledge about all the variety of views that existed about His identity. Jesus didn't stop and tell the disciples they will be successful in doing His kingdom work because they are aware of all the views others have about Jesus and they might be able to defend the accurate understanding that Jesus had about Himself. The disciples, after listening to Jesus teach about Himself for a time, could probably repeat and teach the same truths Jesus taught about Himself. However, Jesus wanted

⁴ Luke 9:20

something else. He asked His disciples another question to get at the heart of the matter at this stage of discipleship. Jesus asked His disciples to express their personal conviction of Jesus' identity ("But who do you yourselves say that I am?", v. 15). Essentially, Jesus is asking them, do you believe that I am the person I have claimed to be and the person I've taught others I am (Jn. 8:25)?

- E. Jesus is looking for the right answer. The answer that is true and in harmony with the reality of who He is. The identity Jesus gave reasons and evidence to support. This is why Jesus responded positively when the disciples gave the correct answer, which is why Peter was praised for His response ("Blessed are you, Simon Barjona [Peter]", v. 17). Jesus went so far as to claim correctly identifying who Jesus is was a truth that can only be learned from the Father ("because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven", v. 17). Only those who have been taught by the Father through the Spirit will be able to identify Jesus as the special, unique, divine ruler revealed prior to His arrival in the word of God—called the Messiah or Christ and Son of God ("You are the Christ, the Son of the living God", v. 17). Coming to this accurate understanding of the identity of Jesus is a work of God in a person.
- F. When Jesus interacts with individuals who do not know Him but are moving toward Him, the primary focus is on explaining His identity and encouraging a correct response to Him—including explaining what a person needs to do to be right with God through Him. This focus on the identity of Jesus and a person's response to Him is the central aim of the Expose stage of discipleship. While other topics and issues come up, Jesus and a person's response to Him are the main points on Jesus' agenda. Dealing with and overcoming any barriers or issues that get in the way of a person developing an accurate and informed personal conviction about Jesus and an understanding of how to respond to Him in an appropriate way is the main thrust of the Expose season of the spiritual life.
- G. As we are spiritually investing into the lives of others and we are discipling a person who has not yet committed their life to living for Jesus, our main spiritual objective and goal is help the person develop a firm personal conviction about the identity of Jesus. The person must become convinced and draw a conclusion about who they think Jesus is. Hopefully, they come to understand Jesus as He is and reach a decision based on that information. This understanding of Jesus may lead to acceptance, but it may also need to lead to rejection. Whatever the reaction is, we want a person's response to Jesus to be based on a true understanding of Jesus rather than a mistaken one. Tragically, there are many people who reject Jesus because of a misunderstood perspective of who He is. We want to help people avoid this situation as much as possible.
- H. As we point people to Jesus, how He lived and what He taught about Himself, we can move others toward developing an informed personal conviction about the identity of Jesus.⁵ This is the destination toward which we want to travel with people in the first stage of the discipleship process. If we are going to have the ability and skill to make disciples at the most basic level, we need to have a sufficient understanding of Jesus' identity ourselves. We need to know the

⁵ For more on how to do this and some of the major claims Jesus made about Himself see the sermon series "The Claims of Jesus" available on the church's app.

claims Jesus made about Himself. We need to understand how Jesus taught other people about His identity. We need to comprehend the way Jesus wanted people to respond to Him. In short, we need to possess accurate knowledge of Jesus. Those who don't know very much about Jesus will not be able to take even the first step of spiritually investing in others. Disciples should be encouraged to continue to deepen their knowledge and understanding of Jesus throughout the rest of their lives.

V. Conclusion

- A. The disciple making process begins when a person is open, curious, and interested in learning more about God and how to relate to Him. When this happens, individuals within the church should respond by coming alongside this person and exposing them to Jesus' identity and encouraging them to respond to Jesus in a healthy way. Assisting others in developing an accurately informed conviction about Jesus is the primary focus of the Expose stage of discipleship. Our goal is to help them behold Jesus and believe in Him (Jn. 6:40).
- B. The first question in discipleship that a person will need help answering is, "Do you believe in Jesus" or "Do you believe in the claims Jesus made about Himself":

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had put him out, and upon finding him, He said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" ³⁶ He answered by saying, "And who is He, Sir, that I may believe in Him?" ³⁷ Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you." (Jn. 9:35-37)