

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Small Group Discussion Guide

Text: John 1:35-42 - [35] The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, [36] and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" [37] The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. [38] Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which 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, for it was about the tenth hour. [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" (which means Christ). [42] He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter). (ESV)

Theme/ Big Idea: John wants us to see that Jesus is the Messiah and then see the response that we are intended to give.

Context/ Background Information: As we advance in our study of the Gospel of John it is imperative that we remember *why* John wrote his Gospel. John The Evangelist wrote so that we might "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing [we] may have life in his name" (**John 20:31**). Therefore, every story we read of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel must be understood in light of John's purpose in writing. John's prologue introduces Jesus as the preeminent one who was with God in the beginning and through whom all things were created. Additionally, Jesus is the one through whom all things can be restored. The rest of John's Gospel records story after story supporting this claim. For example, John The Baptist's witness points us to Jesus the Messiah. John The Baptist's declaration of Jesus as the lamb of God who takes away sin points us to the Messiah. And now, as John the Baptist's disciples shift their allegiance and focus to Jesus we are once again pointed to Jesus who is the Messiah.

John The Evangelist wants us to see that Jesus is the Messiah and in this particular text he intends for us to see the response that we are intended to give to the Messiah. We are told that John The Baptist was standing with two of his disciples and declared to them, "Behold, the lamb of God" (**v 36**). Their immediate response was to follow after Jesus. **Verse 41** tells us why they responded so quickly. Andrew told his brother, "We have found the Messiah." At John The Baptist's declaration and at their own revelation the disciples altered their agenda and went after Jesus. Remember that John The Baptist was renowned at the time and yet he was immediately put in the background. This is significant for a number of reasons. First, John The Baptist is the last in a long line of prophets and this marks an official transition from himself to Jesus. John confessed freely that he, himself, was not the Messiah and that Jesus was. For this reason he came baptizing, proclaiming, and warning. And for this reason he had no problem redirecting his disciples away from himself and towards Jesus, their only hope.

Secondly, the disciples immediate response tells us something we already know intuitively. That is, when we encounter something truly remarkable we respond and give ourselves to it. This is what it means to be a Christian. To be a Christian is to see Jesus for the treasure that he is and to give our lives in pursuit of him. **Verse 37** says they "followed" after Jesus. This literally means they accompanied or travelled close behind. In other words, they heard John The Baptist's witness and immediately altered and submitted their lives and agendas to Jesus'.

Upon seeing them follow him, Jesus asked, "What are you seeking?" This is the question everyone who encounters Jesus must answer. Why are you following? What are your expectations? Who do you say that he is? These are the questions wrapped up in "What are you seeking?" In **verse 39**, the disciples make a telling confession and ask an interesting question. The disciples "said to him, 'Rabbi' (which means Teacher), 'where are you staying?'" The disciples' immediate response, confession, and question all reveal that they were not merely curious, but they were instead committed to learning from Jesus. Traditional rabbinical teaching was done on the move with rabbi and disciple spending endless hours together in every imaginable setting. Borchert notes, "Disciples, learners, or followers in the first century were quite literally people who followed (walked after) a teacher and learned from both the words and actions of their mentor."¹ Notice that a disciples' aim was not merely to gain information but to become like their teacher in knowledge and action. This is best done in the context of daily life together. This explains to some degree why these two disciples asked Jesus, in **verse 38**, "Where are you staying?" **Verse 39** notes that the disciples followed, they saw, and they stayed. This word stayed will play a prominent theme in The Gospel of John. It means they "abided."

Not only did they immediately follow and alter their lives, they also immediately told the people closest to them. **Verse 40** says that one of the initial two disciples was Andrew and **verse 41** tells us that one of the first things he did was to tell his brother Simon Peter. This is yet again the only natural reaction to discovering something profound and remarkable. But notice that it was not enough for Andrew to simply tell Peter they had found the Messiah. Instead, Andrew also "brought [Peter] to Jesus." And what does Peter discover? That only Jesus has the power to transform our identity. **Verse 42** is unique to the gospels in that it records the moment Simon met Jesus and his name and identity was transformed.

The disciples heard, they followed, they stayed, they told, and they brought others to meet Jesus. John is yet again forcing us to wrestle with our own response to Jesus. Everything John has said proclaims that Jesus is the Messiah and every coming miracle in the Gospel of John will verify this truth. We must, therefore, respond. Secondly, John shows us that when we, ourselves, experience the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, it transforms us and leads to a response, to enjoying him, to confessing him, and to dragging people to him.

Quotes For Further Consideration/ Discussion:

- "For Jesus, discipleship was rational and relational...." —**Jonathan K. Dodson**
- "True discipleship is more than intellectual assent to a belief in Christ; it involves the whole person and lifestyle." —**J. Oswald Sanders**

Discussion Questions:

1. How would you summarize the response of these disciples to the revelation that Jesus is the Messiah?
 - What actions do they take? What is their attitude?
 - What qualities and characteristics of discipleship can we glean from these verses?
 - Are these qualities and characteristics true of your life as a disciple of Christ? Why or why not?
2. How do these disciples bend and submit their agendas and lives to Jesus?
 - Is this something you have a hard time doing? Why or why not?
3. What do you do when you discover something profound and remarkable? Who do you often tell first?
 - What is the first thing Andrew does when he discovers the Messiah (v 41a)?
 - What else does Andrew do for Simon Peter (vs 42a)?
 - Why do discovery, joy and excitement naturally lead to telling and bringing?

4. In the first century disciples followed closely behind their teachers. They were concerned with knowing and being like their teacher.
 - Is this true of you as a follower of Jesus?
 - What are the dangers of placing too much emphasis on either extreme of knowing or being like?
5. What power does Jesus have according to verse 42? What is the significance of this for our own lives?

For Further Study:

Read Matt 4:18-20. Many scholars suggest that John 1:35-42 records Andrew and Simon's initial introduction to Jesus while Matt 4:18-20 records their calling to be disciples. How does their initial introduction in John 1:35-42 help to explain their reaction in Matt 4:18-20?

Footnotes:

1. Gerald L. Borchert, [John 1-11](#), vol. 25A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 141.