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Conversations with Jesus

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Have you ever imagined being one of Jesus’ disciples during his time here on earth? What would it have been like to follow Jesus and experience his earthly ministry first-hand? Imagine listening in on the conversations he had with all kinds of people — from his would-be disciples to society’s outcasts, to the religious leader who was curious and open, to those who violently opposed him.

Through the Gospel of John, we’re going to listen in on some of Jesus’ conversations and learn from them. As we enter the season where we celebrate Christ’s first coming, we’ll see his wisdom and love on full display in the way he spoke and responded to people. May Jesus himself teach us how to have meaningful conversations where people experience Christ through us.

Week 1 | John 1:35–51

## Introduction

What would compel men and women to leave their ordinary lives and follow Jesus? This week, we’re looking at how, according to John’s Gospel, Jesus called some of his disciples to “follow me.”

# Day 1

## Read

### John 1:35–39 (NIV)

35The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. 36When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!”

37When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. 38Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?”

They said, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?”

39“Come,” he replied, “and you will see.”

So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

## Study

* The “John” mentioned in verse 3 is John the Baptist. Read [John 1:19–28](https://biblia.com/books/niv2011/Jn1.19-28) for context.
* About verse 37, scholar D.A. Carson makes this observation: “In the Fourth Gospel, the verb ‘to follow’ often means ‘to follow as a disciple’ (*e.g.* 1:43; 8:12; 12:26; 21:19, 20, 22). But this is not invariably the case: sometimes the verb is quite neutral (*e.g.* 11:31). It is possible the Evangelist is playing with both meanings: at one level, these two men were ‘following’ Jesus in the most mundane of senses, but at another they were taking the first steps of genuine discipleship.”[[1]](#footnote-2)

## Think about

* John the Baptist had amassed quite a following for himself, yet he readily concedes his position to Jesus. Many of his followers leave to become Jesus’ followers. In John 3:30 John explains his motivation and states plainly “He must become greater; I must become less.” How many of us take a similar attitude when it comes to Jesus?” Are we willing to yield to Jesus’ better agenda even if it means giving up our own? Are we willing to lay down our quest for recognition and out of love, point people to Jesus?

During this holiday season, how can we “become less” so Jesus can “become greater”? One way is to show Jesus’ love and compassion to the people we interact with. We can center the conversation on the person we’re talking to, and not on ourselves. Instead of just waiting for our turn to talk, we can ask sincere questions about the other person. At a time of year that can be difficult for so many, we can listen with care, offer to pray for people, and help them feel known and loved.

## Pray

* Pray for your engagement with this series. Pray that you will experience Jesus through the study of his Word. Be honest about what you want from Jesus (verse 37). Respond to Jesus, and you will see.
* Ask the Spirit to show you how you can more closely follow Jesus during the holiday season.

## Talk about

Have a meaningful conversation about this passage with one of your CF Encouragers, your small group, or join us virtually in the Faithlife Community. (Search groups for Engage God Daily. For full instructions, [click here](https://cfhome-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/lscheffler_cfhome_org/EYNh8cUxJRxClFV-Wt6QNe0BtkK34MHJDqeHamAwxlGmbQ?e=RL3RSh).)

* What do you love most about following Jesus? Encourage one another by sharing a personal story.
* Tell one another something that is challenging or stressful about this time of year for you. Commit to pray for one another. Share ideas about how you can center Jesus during the season.

# Day 2

## Read

### John 1:40­–42

40Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. 41The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). 42And he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter).

## Study

* In the *Faithlife Study Bible*, read the note on [John 1:41](https://biblia.com/books/fsb/Jn1.41). Why is it significant that Jesus is referred to as the Messiah?
* According to commentator Gerald Borchert, “Jesus gives Peter a new name, “Cephas” (1:42), a Greek transliteration of the Aramaic *kepha* (“rock”). This Aramaic term and its Greek equivalent *petros* (“Peter/*petra*, “rock”) did not seem to be used as a typical proper name in either language at that time. Instead, Jesus here and at Matt 16:18 seems to have used the term as a kind of nickname, like our contemporary “Rocky,” to identify this one who was to have an important role in the early church. The nickname must have fit him so well that his given name “Simon” became rather secondary to this designation by Jesus.” [[2]](#footnote-3)

## Think about

* Lots of people are given nicknames that reflect something they’ve done or something they’ve experienced. In this case, Jesus gives Peter a name that reflects his future. In [Matthew 16:18](https://biblia.com/books/niv2011/Mt16.18), Jesus says “I tell you that you are Peter (Greek *petros*) and on this rock (*petra*) I will build my church.” Though Peter would make many mistakes in his attempt to follow Jesus, Jesus used him in powerful ways.

No matter what our pasts, Jesus can rename us for a different future. He can give our lives eternal significance when we walk with him, but we must yield to him. Step by step, we have to follow Jesus.

## Pray

* Throughout this passage you can sense these men’s excitement over Jesus. When you find something amazing — something you really believe in — you can’t wait to tell others about it. We do this about all kinds of things — TV shows, vacation spots, a new product we just started using. How much more should we tell people about Jesus? Pray that God would give you opportunities to talk to someone about Jesus this week.

## Talk about

* We can encourage one another’s enthusiasm over Jesus when we remind each other of his goodness and grace. Have a conversation about something wonderful Jesus has done for you.

# Day 3

## Read

### John 1:43–45

43The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, “Follow me.”

44Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. 45Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

## Study

* Go back and look at the verses we have read so far ([John 1:35–45](https://biblia.com/books/niv2011/Jn1.35)). Notice that a form of the word “follow” shows up four times (1:37,38,40,43). We also see another important verb. These verses emphasize the theme of “finding” (1:41,43,45). Notice, who is finding whom?

## Think about

* The early disciples believed that Jesus was more than a wise teacher or prophet — they saw him as the Messiah whom the ancient prophets foretold. He was the one Israel, and ultimately the world, had been waiting for. People needed to know that the Messiah had come.

The way people would find Jesus the Messiah was through the witness of others. According to Carson, “As Andrew brought Simon Peter to Jesus, so *Philip found Nathanael* and witnessed to him. That has been the foundational principle of truly Christian expansion ever since: new followers of Jesus bear witness of him to others, who in turn become disciples and repeat the process.”[[3]](#footnote-4)

## Pray

At Christ Fellowship, our mission is to be “people helping people find and follow Christ.” Pray for people you know who don’t know Jesus and need to find him. Pray for some who are committed to following him and need encouragement. Ask the Spirit to bring certain names to mind and pray for opportunities to love them, serve them, and have conversations with them about Jesus.

## Talk about

* Why is it important that Jesus’ earliest followers were convinced that he was the prophesied Messiah that the Old Testament pointed to? Why is that still important for us today?

# Day 4

Have you given our [Pastors Pregame podcast](https://subsplash.com/christfellowship-tx/lb/ms/+hg732gk) a try? We go deeper into the sermon topic for each week. This week we’re joined by Neal Mackey, Christ Fellowship elder and our guest speaker for this Sunday. You can also subscribe through the Apple Podcast App and never miss an episode.

## Read

### John 1:45–48

45Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

46“Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked.

“Come and see,” said Philip.

47When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.”

## Study

* Nathanael is surprised that Jesus could be from Nazareth. His reaction comes from regional prejudice and possibly confusion because the Old Testament said the Messiah must come from Bethlehem.

According to Carson, “Nathanael was from Cana (21:2), another town in Galilee. As Galileans were frequently despised by people from Judea, so it appears that even fellow Galileans despised Nazareth. Nathanael’s scathing question probably reflects more than local rivalry between villages. From John’s perspective, the fact that Jesus was reared in Nazareth not only obscured his origins in Bethlehem for those who did not search very far (7:41–42, 52), but also reflected the self-abasement of the man from heaven.”[[4]](#footnote-5)

* One of the Faithlife Study Bible notes on [John 1:45](https://biblia.com/books/fsb/Jn1.45) shows some images from modern day Nazareth. Take a look.

## Think about

* When confronted with Nathanael’s prejudice, Philip replies with the only satisfactory response possible.[[5]](#footnote-6) He tells Nathanael to “come and see.”

We can’t convince people to follow Jesus. We can’t push, persuade, or bully people into the kingdom of God. Our best response is to invite them to “come and see” and experience Jesus for themselves. We can do that by sharing our own story and having meaningful conversations where they can experience Christ through us.

## Pray

Jesus comments on Nathanael’s character. As a person of integrity, others would listen and believe Nathanael when it came to Jesus. Are you someone of good character who represents Jesus well? Pray over your response. We all fail at times, but are there patterns of behavior that could ruin your witness for Christ? Confess them and ask for help to change.

## Talk about

* What are some practical ways you can invite people to “come and see”? Could you invite them to a Christmas Eve service? Offer to read the Gospels with them? Invite them to serve others with you? Discuss some ideas.

# Day 5

## Read

### John 1:48–51 (NIV)

48“How do you know me?” Nathanael asked.

Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.”

49Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.”

49Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.”

50Jesus said, “You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that.” 51He then added, “Very truly I tell you, you will see ‘heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on’ the Son of Man.”

## Study

* Read [Genesis 28:10–12](https://biblia.com/books/niv2011/Ge28.10), the verse Jesus references here. How is Jesus affirming that he is who the disciples believe him to be?

## Think about

* Humans do not climb up to God. “God instead makes the divine presence known on earth just as it happened to Jacob at Bethel and more decisively as it took place in the incarnation of Jesus.”[[6]](#footnote-7)

We don’t earn access to God. His favor came to us just as the prophets foretold — through Jesus, the Son of God and Israel’s Messiah. Jesus is the anointed one who heals the rift between humanity and their Creator. He’s the bridge who unites heaven and earth. The incarnation changed everything.

## Pray

Praise God for the incarnation. Jesus came to rescue humanity and bring us into God’s family. As you begin to prepare your heart for Christmas, back up from the verses we focused on this week and read [John 1:1–18](https://biblia.com/books/niv2011/Jn1.1), then spend some time worshipping Jesus today!

## Talk about

* In our passage for the week, we see several conversations about finding and following. How can this passage inspire us to meaningful conversations? Christmas is the time when Christians around the world celebrate Jesus’ birth. People may be more open to hearing about the true meaning of Christmas. How can you help people find and follow Christ?

1. D. A. Carson, [*The Gospel according to John*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntcjohn?ref=Bible.Jn1.35-37&off=1439&ctx=derstood+(3:27%E2%80%9330).%0a~In+the+Fourth+Gospel), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 154. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1–11*, vol. 25A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 143–144. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. D. A. Carson*,* [*The Gospel according to John*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntcjohn?ref=Bible.Jn1.45&off=6&ctx=+and+working.%0a1:45.+~As+Andrew+brought+Si), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 158–159. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. D. A. Carson, [*The Gospel according to John*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntcjohn?ref=Bible.Jn1.46&off=6&ctx=Duke%2c+p.+58).%0a1:46.+~Nathanael+was+from+C), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Gerald L. Borchert, [*John 1–11*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nac25a?ref=Bible.Jn1.47-51&off=3809&ctx=+is+extremely+weak.+~Humans+do+not+climb+), vol. 25A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)