

Come and See

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."

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

"Come and see," said Philip.

– John 1:43–46

This story picks up immediately after Jesus had encountered Andrew and one unnamed man, possibly John, the author. Previously disciples of John the Baptist, these two men were directed to Jesus, Whom the Baptist identified as "the Lamb of God." In turn, Andrew brought his brother, Simon Peter to Jesus. These all seem to be initial encounters that took place in Judea where John the Baptist was preaching. Jesus then decided to return to Galilee where He would at some point extend His formal invitations for discipleship to Peter, Andrew, James, John and, perhaps, others as they were working as fishermen at the Sea of Galilee.

Philip was from the same hometown in Galilee as Peter and Andrew. When Jesus encountered this man, He said "Follow me." Whether this was just an invitation for Philip to get acquainted with Jesus or that man's formal call to discipleship is not clear, but Philip soon went to his friend, Nathanael (Bartholomew in the other Gospels). Philip told his friend that the *Messiah* of prophecy has appeared in a man named "Jesus of Nazareth".

Nathanael, an honest albeit blunt type, responded with a hint of skepticism, "Nazareth! Can anything good come from Nazareth?" There are a handful of explanations about Nathanael's question. It may have been a civic rivalry. Nathanael was from Cana, only three miles from Nazareth. "Nazareth? Why, we whip them every year at Homecoming!" Some writers suggest that this was a reference to some seedy and immoral reputation attached to Nazareth, but no archaeological findings bear this out.

Perhaps, the emphasis should be on the term "good thing" rather than on Nazareth. In other words, Nathanael may have only meant, "Don't kings come from Jerusalem, the city of David? What good thing is supposed to happen in Nazareth?" The important lesson is Philip's response to Nathanael. His most powerful argument was simply, "*Come and see.*" As it turned out, Jesus had His eye on Nathanael before Philip ever approached him:

⁴⁷When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false."

⁴⁸"How do you know me?" Nathanael asked.

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

⁴⁹Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel."

– John 1:47–49

In the work of bringing others to Jesus, we were never called to win arguments, but only to be witnesses to what we have encountered. We are absolutely dependant on the assistance of the Holy Spirit to do any preparatory work in the hearts of those who do not believe. In the meantime, the best thing we can do is to give people an unencumbered look at Jesus themselves. The most practical way for Christians to invite people to simply "come and see" Jesus today is

through a determination to live conspicuously unique lives. Then, when it's time to speak, know that God wants you to be child-like and honest about your love for and loyalty to Jesus far more than He wants you to be clever or articulate. Remember Paul's thoughts when he went to the enlightened and sophisticated Corinthians:

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”
- 1 Corinthians 2:1, 2

Peter's thoughts on evangelism are similarly to the point. If you live uniquely, your life will raise questions:

... But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have.
- 1 Peter 3:15

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