

# JESUS CALLED FOLLOWERS

CORE PASSAGE: JOHN 1:35-37,40-51

## CONTEXT

John's Gospel begins with a description of Jesus as the Logos, the eternal "Word" of God, a signifier of Jesus's divinity and a bold statement concerning the Son's co-existence with the Father prior to creation (vv. 1-5). John also summarized John the Baptist's ministry, who pointed to Jesus's messianic identity and mission. Jesus is the Word who became flesh (v. 14) and "the Lamb of God" who died to take away the sins of the world (vv. 29-34). Some of John's disciples took his words to heart and followed Jesus (vv. 35-51).

## KEY CONCEPT

**Following Jesus means acknowledging Him as Savior, God, and King.**

As you examine John 1:35-37,40-51:

- Recognize that John acknowledged Jesus as the Lamb of God, and thus, his disciples followed Jesus.
- Contemplate the words of Nathanael's response when he witnessed Jesus's omniscience.



## TIMELINE

John the Baptist Calls People to Repentance in Preparation for Jesus (Matthew 3:1-12)

Jesus Is Tempted in the Wilderness (Luke 4:1-13)

Jesus Performs His First Miracle at the Wedding in Cana (John 2:1-11)

John Baptizes Jesus in the Jordan River (Matthew 3:13-17)

**SESSION STUDY:**  
Jesus Calls Disciples to Follow Him (John 1:35-51)

### Daily Readings

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 1:</b> John 1:35-42 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 4:</b> Matthew 4:12-22 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 2:</b> John 1:43-51 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 5:</b> Luke 5:1-11     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 3:</b> Mark 1:14-20 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 6:</b> Psalm 24        |



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

## JESUS, THE LAMB OF GOD AND THE MESSIAH, IS WORTHY TO BE FOLLOWED (JOHN 1:35-37,40-44).

Circle each instance of the word “follow,” and underline the reason it was used.

**35** The next day, John was standing with two of his disciples. **36** When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” **37** The two disciples heard him say this and followed Jesus. . . . **40** Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed him. **41** He first found his own brother Simon and told him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated “the Christ”), **42** and he brought Simon to Jesus. When Jesus saw him, he said, “You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which is translated “Peter”). **43** The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. He found Philip and told him, “Follow me.” **44** Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter.

In his Gospel account, the apostle John wrote down Jesus’s teachings and miracles with the purpose of showing that Jesus is the Son of God (20:31). John recorded foundational truths concerning Jesus’s messianic identity and details of His divine mission, including the testimony of John the Baptist and descriptions of Jesus’s first followers.

Like other Gospel writers, John wrote about John the Baptist, Jesus’s forerunner who came preaching a message of repentance and proclaiming that the kingdom of heaven had come. Many heard John’s message and believed him, being baptized by him as a sign of their faith in God. But a few were called to experience the fruition of John’s message up close and personal.

Andrew, a follower of John the Baptist, heard John’s proclamation that Jesus is “the Lamb of God” (1:36), a title foretelling Jesus’s sacrifice for sin. Realizing that Jesus is the Messiah, Andrew shared this news with his brother, Simon, and brought him to Christ. Jesus then issued a name-change to Simon, marking the start of his new identity as one of Jesus’s closest disciples.

**LEADER NOTE:** The revelation of Jesus’s identity as the Messiah was not simply a fact to consider but an invitation for those who believed to follow Him. When we begin to follow Jesus, we become His disciples, a word meaning a student or follower who adheres to the teaching of another. John 1:35-44 details how Jesus’s first followers—Andrew, Simon (Peter), and Philip—came to realize His true identity and how they responded in faith.

**How does the title “the Lamb of God” point to Jesus’s purpose?**

**Key Concept:** Following Jesus means acknowledging Him as Savior, God, and King.

The message of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection demands a response. We either receive the message and embrace it in faith or we reject it and suffer the consequences for that rejection. The key word in this passage is "follow," which is the proper response to hearing and receiving the good news of Jesus's sinless life, death on the cross, and resurrection to take away sin. And the proclamation of this gospel constitutes a call upon all those who hear it to repent of sin, to believe in Jesus, and to follow Him with their whole heart.

**LEADER NOTE:** Before leaving the area for Galilee, Jesus found Philip and invited him to "follow me" (v. 43). Philip accepted the invitation and became a disciple of Jesus. Andrew followed Jesus because he was pointed to Jesus by John the Baptist. Simon followed Jesus because his brother, Andrew, took him to meet Jesus. Philip followed because Jesus called him firsthand. Whichever way we are called and come to faith in Jesus, the Lamb of God and the Messiah, He is worthy to be followed.

**What are some ways you are following Jesus, the Lamb of God who has called you through the proclamation of His gospel?**

Notes

#### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**CALLING:** The calling of God to salvation happens in two ways: externally through the proclamation of the gospel and internally through the Holy Spirit working in the heart of the person who hears. Both of these callings are essential, and both work together to bring someone to faith in Christ (2 Tim. 1:8-10).

**JESUS, THE SON OF GOD AND THE KING OF ISRAEL, WILL REVEAL MANY THINGS TO HIS PEOPLE (JOHN 1:45-51).**

**Underline words or phrases that relate to the change Nathanael experienced concerning his belief about Jesus's identity.**

**45** Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law (and so did the prophets): Jesus the son of Joseph, from Nazareth." **46** "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Nathanael asked him. "Come and see," Philip answered. **47** Then Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said about him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit." **48** "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you," Jesus answered. **49** "Rabbi," Nathanael replied, "You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel!" **50** Jesus responded to him, "Do you believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this." **51** Then he said, "Truly I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

"Come and see" (v. 46). These three words sum up the invitation to experience the newness of life found in embracing the good news of Jesus as the Messiah.

The end of John 1 details the events surrounding the call of Jesus to His first disciples. We saw the good news about Jesus spread via word of mouth as the news traveled from John the Baptist to Andrew to Peter. Then Jesus Himself called Philip, and this new follower relayed the message to Nathanael, who initially responded with skepticism, maybe even disdain. Whether the gospel we share is welcomed, questioned, or rejected, it is crucial that followers of Jesus continue sharing the message about the Savior who came to set people free from their sins.

**LEADER NOTE:** Nathanael's first response to Philip's news was one of skepticism. Nathanael was from Cana (21:2), a small town near the small town of Nazareth. Nathanael's comment may have referenced some local rivalry. It also could be that Nathanael was expecting the promised Messiah to come from Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2), so identifying Jesus as being from Nazareth obscured that heritage and prophetic fulfillment (see John 7:40-43,52).

**How can we help others "come and see" Jesus for who He is and what He has done to save sinners?**

**Key Concept:** Following Jesus means acknowledging Him as Savior, God, and King.

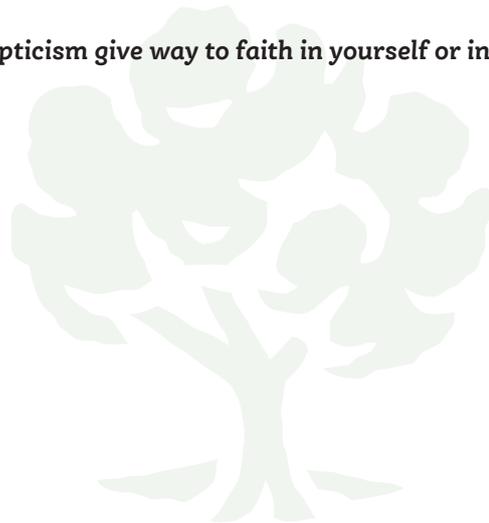
Notes

This interaction between Philip and his friend Nathanael revealed further reasons to believe in Jesus as the Messiah. Prior to their gospel conversation, Jesus had already taken note of Nathanael, having observed him underneath the shade of a fig tree. Jesus’s claim pointed to His divine omniscience as He paid attention even to one who would be skeptical of His identity. This revelation prompted Nathanael’s confession: “You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel!” (1:49).

Nathanael was amazed at Jesus’s power and authority, yet Jesus told him that “greater things” were in store (v. 50). Alluding to the Old Testament account of Jacob’s vision of a stairway between heaven and earth (see Gen. 28), Jesus told Nathanael that he would see “angels” ascend and descend upon Him, the Son of Man (John 1:51). Jesus boldly declared Himself to be the connection between heaven and earth, and no one comes to the Father except through Him (14:6).

**LEADER NOTE:** Jesus wasn’t upset by Nathanael’s skepticism. Instead, He recognized Nathanael as an authentic seeker. Jesus said Nathanael was an Israelite without deceit, and then He alluded to Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes of Israel, who used deceit to receive his father’s blessing. While Jacob fled the consequences of his deceit, he witnessed the miraculous and heard the voice of God renew His promises to Abraham and Isaac with Jacob (Gen. 28:13-15). Yet everything Jacob experienced would be nothing compared to what Nathanael and the rest of the disciples experienced as they followed Jesus.

**How have you seen skepticism give way to faith in yourself or in others?**



**CHURCH CONNECTION**

---

Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. He is also the Messiah, the Son of God, the King of Israel. He calls people to follow Him, and believers, likewise, should call on others to come and see Jesus.

**ARRIVAL**

**ENGAGE:** As the group arrives, invite them to share about a famous person they follow on social media or the news. Ask: “What draws you to follow that person? How does our culture use the term ‘follow’ in different ways?”

**CONTEXT**

**SAY:** In first-century Jewish culture, to follow someone meant that you literally went where they went. Particularly, to follow a rabbi indicated that you put yourself under the submission of the rabbi’s teaching. You went where he went and you did what he did or said to do. On account of his preparatory ministry, John the Baptist had some disciples of his own. No doubt they had been baptized as a sign of their repentance and their expectation for the coming of God’s kingdom on earth. But John made it clear that his ministry was to point to someone else—ultimately, his disciples were created to follow the Messiah.

**RECAP**

**ASK:** What stood out to you in your personal preparation this week as you learned about John’s disciples coming to Jesus? What role did word of mouth play in Jesus gaining more followers?

**SAY:** Remember that John did not begrudge his disciples for leaving him to follow Jesus. Instead, he had a heart of humility, recognizing Jesus for who He is. John knew his purpose was to point people to the Messiah, and he wanted his followers to acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God and to follow Him. This is what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

**TRANSITION:** From here, let’s consider how Jesus was identified by John the Baptist and the disciples to strengthen our own discipleship and to inform our evangelism in calling others to follow Jesus.



**Listen to session-by-session training every week on**

Ministry Grid, Apple Podcasts, or Spotify

[ministrygrid.com/gospelproject](https://ministrygrid.com/gospelproject) · [gospelproject.com/leader-training](https://gospelproject.com/leader-training).

**Key Concept:** Following Jesus means acknowledging Him as Savior, God, and King.

Notes

### GROUP ACTIVITY

**LIST:** Direct the group to page 82 in the Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a listing activity titled “Choosing to Follow.” Display the list on a board and record the group’s findings as they work through the Scripture text.

**Choosing to Follow**

Read the passages below. Write down what compelled the disciples to follow Jesus. Then record what convinced you that Jesus is the Messiah.

**ANDREW** (John 1:35-37,40-41)

---

**SIMON PETER** (John 1:41-42)

---

**PHILIP** (John 1:43-45)

---

**NATHANAEL** (John 1:45-49)

---

**YOURSELF**

---

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read John 1:35-37.

**DISCUSS:** Lead the group to discuss why the two disciples left John the Baptist to follow Jesus. Ask: “Why was trust in John necessary for these two disciples to go and follow Jesus? What develops that level of trust?”

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read John 1:40-51.

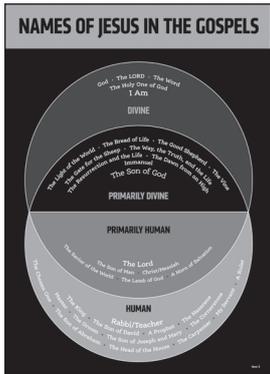
**COMPARE:** Lead the group to identify the way each disciple came to follow Christ, recording these on the board and in the PSG. Then challenge them to point out similarities and differences between the disciples’ experiences. *(Andrew listened to John, Simon Peter listened to Andrew, and Nathanael listened to Philip. / John called Jesus the Lamb of God, Andrew called Jesus the Messiah, Philip called Jesus the promised Prophet and King. / Andrew brought Simon to Jesus, Philip brought Nathanael to Jesus. / Jesus Himself called Philip / Nathanael was skeptical. / Jesus demonstrated divine authority with Simon and Nathanael.)*

Notes

**DISCUSS:** For our mission of making disciples, what can we learn from the patterns and distinctions we see in this list from our passage? *(We should try to bring our family and friends to Jesus; we need to tell others about Jesus: who He is and what He has done for us; skepticism is not a dead end; while people may come to faith directly through encountering Jesus in Scripture, more often the connection to Jesus in His Word will come through a faithful witness.)*

**REFLECT:** Instruct group members to take a couple of moments and record in their PSG how they came to follow Jesus by faith. Invite any volunteers to briefly share their calling to follow Jesus.

**ENGAGE:** Invite a volunteer to read verse 49 again. *(Recall Pack Items 3 and 4: Names of Jesus in the Gospels [poster and handout].)* Say: “Jesus had already been described as the Lamb of God, the Messiah, and the promised Prophet and King. Then Nathanael added three titles in his confession: Rabbi, the Son of God, and the King of Israel.” Ask: “How does knowing who Christ is make a difference in our willingness to follow Him and to tell others about Him?”



DEBRIEF

Based on this passage, what does it mean to follow Jesus?

How has this passage encouraged you to grow in your mission of making disciples?



SUMMARIZE

Pass out copies of **Pack Item 11: They Followed Jesus** and briefly review the lives of the disciples and their calling. Say: “Following Jesus means acknowledging Him as Lord and Savior. In Jesus’s interactions with the disciples, He revealed the pattern for discipleship: Jesus invited people to follow Him and learn from Him, and then they invited others to follow Him. Discipleship includes being a disciple and then making disciples.”

HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 83). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Heart** section in this week’s study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.

**HEAD:** Following Jesus does not only involve our intellect, but knowing what we believe is a major part of what it means to be a disciple of Christ. John the Baptist had primed Andrew and others so that when he identified Jesus as the Messiah, they were ready to believe.

How can we know more about Jesus and His Word to help our own discipleship and evangelism?



**Key Concept:** Following Jesus means acknowledging Him as Savior, God, and King.

Notes



**HEART:** Nathanael responded to Philip's invitation to "come and see"

Jesus with skepticism, questions, and doubts, which Jesus addressed without shaming Nathanael. Jesus is able to hear our questions and handle our doubts.

**What questions regarding your faith do you need to pray about and seek faithful counsel?**



**HANDS:** Jesus's first disciples came to Him as they were called, and most

of them experienced that call through the invitation of a family member or friend. As believers in Christ, as His followers, we have a responsibility and a privilege to share the good news of Jesus with others. We have come to Him as our Messiah-King, our Savior from our sins, and we should want the whole world to experience the peace and joy of following Jesus themselves.

**Who will you invite to "come and see" Jesus as the Messiah and Savior who is worthy of our faith and following?**

### NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this session.

- Read John 1:1-18 and outline what you learn about the identity of Jesus in this passage. Reflect on how knowing who Christ is makes a difference in how you follow Him and share about Him with others.
- Read Romans 10:9-17 and consider how you can tell someone the good news of the gospel this week.
- Pray for opportunities to bring others to Jesus this week. Consider who you can invite to come to Jesus with you.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 83 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

**CLOSE:** Pray through Psalm 24:3-6 with your group. Praise God for sending Jesus to be our blessing, our righteousness, and our salvation. Thank the Lord that we can follow Jesus in faith and enter into God's holy presence.