

**Series:** Receiving life by believing in God's Son (a Gospel of John study)

**Sermon Text:** John 1:35-42

**Kids Word:** Follow

(\*This account is not in the other gospels)

Our first 4 lessons covered what's called "*the Prologue*" of this letter. Verses 1-18 set the stage for the remaining 20 ½ chapters, which John said were "*written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*" Last week, we got acquainted with John the Baptist and several key players in 1<sup>st</sup> century Judaism. It was a lot, but it will pay off for you to review that information and become familiar with it. Today begins the next section of this long letter, which provides several pictures of what happened when people met Jesus. I love that phrase, which you might recall was a teaching series Pastor Russ delivered a few years ago. Anyway, unlike the other gospel letters, John gets right to Jesus inviting people to follow Him. As we will see, His invitation was not what people expected and ended up changing life in ways nobody could have imagined. As we study today, I'd like you to consider this simple question, which is our...

**BIG IDEA: Have you truly decided to follow Jesus?**

**Let's consider some key ideas and applications in our text.**

*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.*

***Following Jesus is not more of the same.***

- To **follow** someone in Jewish culture was about a boy becoming a **disciple** (student) of a **Rabbi** (religious teacher). He would **follow** (walk after) the **Rabbi** to carefully observe his thinking, reasoning, and activities, and then mimic him in every way. **Rabbis** were essential walking teachers, and the world was their classroom. When the two men asked Jesus, "**where are you staying?**", it implied a willingness to **follow** and **abide** with Him. It would have been obvious to anyone what they were after, yet for some odd reason Jesus asked them, "**What are you seeking?**" Why would He ask this if the answer was obvious? It's because Jesus has not come to just be acknowledged or tacked on to life as usual. He was not more of the same.
- Jesus was no normal **Rabbi**. In fact, many were buying into the idea that He could be Israel's long-awaited Messiah or King. The problem was that Israel was **seeking** a Messiah for many

reasons, just not the most important one--not a “*Lamb of God* *who takes away the sin of the world.*” Like people today, they knew they had problems, but their issues were “*out there*” and “*with someone else*”, but not “*inside them.*” Consequently, they were *seeking* a Messiah to bring political rescue from oppressors, therapeutic rescue from traumas, or maybe educational rescue from ignorance but not for rescue from sin. They had a system for that, which God had put in place to reveal their need, but they were missing the point.

- This was the world Jesus stepped into, but not for more of the same. He not only challenged *what they were seeking*, but He also made the rather cryptic and mysterious statement, “*come and you will see.*” *Following Him would* cause them to *see* more than they had bargained for. While this isn’t 1<sup>st</sup> century Israel, we too have systems we count on to help us feel better and make sense of the world (e.g., political parties, careers, philosophical ideas, modern medicine, daily habits). Sin is constantly convincing us to view our systems, ambitions, and dreams as substitute saviors or God replacements. Maybe you’ve never thought of it like this, but of what value are your systems, goals, ambitions, and dreams if you’re still under *sin’s* influence and bondage? Jesus essentially stepped into Israel’s way of life--their systems and processes--and took things in a new direction. Can you imagine that today? Imagine Him visiting Washington D.C. and saying, “*follow me.*” He’d be like, “*Let’s agree I’m King and start handling stuff my way.*” Imagine Jesus visiting your office, classroom, or home and saying, “*follow me.*” What would have to change? How would **following** Jesus bring new perspectives to stuff like your politics, career, friendships, and family? If that scares you a bit or you can’t envision the whole picture, that’s okay. *The baptizer’s disciples* had no clue what they were getting into when their *Rabbi* handed them over to another *Rabbi*, yet they *followed* Him in faith! *Following* Jesus is often like this...we rarely know what we’re getting into. Every time we open God’s Word Jesus is asking, “*What are you seeking?*” It’s our Savior’s disturbing habit to constantly challenge our perceived reality and make us ponder this searching question at every stage and crossroad of life. I had no clue, at age 14, how following Jesus would turn my world upside down and lead me through painful places. I’ve come a long way from being the teenager who laid on my waterbed exploring a leather-bound NIV student Bible my grandparents gave me at my baptism. If Jesus had asked me, “*What are you seeking?*”, I may have said “*a girl, a graduation, a career, a house, and a peaceful life.*” There was no way to have known that

**following** Him would lead me to things like, “*self-denial, battles with sin and with people, suffering, heartache, confusion, doubt, and fear.*” Anyone want to sign up today? I don’t mean to imply that **following** Jesus is ONLY challenging, but it’s not the magic potion or lottery ticket some people make it out to be, and it’s certainly not more of the same. While **following** Jesus is challenging, it’s also extremely rewarding. I mean, we get a fresh start with the Creator who slowly helps us learn to love and care for His creation like He does. Not only that, but He the longer we follow Jesus, the more we’re filled with unimaginable peace and confidence in a future reward that’s worth any short-term risk. This segues into our next point...

***Following Jesus is about gaining through loss.***

- Philippians 3 contains some interesting observations. After listing a bunch of things that he used to think were life’s “*must haves*”, the Apostle Paul said, “*I’ve come to realize the stuff that used to matter most must be laid aside if it keeps me from knowing Jesus better.*” He said, “*this attitude safeguards your faith and helps you rejoice no matter what happens.*” Are you there yet? In Matthew 16:24-26, Jesus told His **disciples**, “*If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?*” What “must haves” are keeping you from Jesus?
- Did you notice how selflessly **the baptizer** handed off his **disciples** to Jesus? We’re not quite like that are we? We don’t like when **following** Jesus means people spend less time with us or when **following** Jesus causes us to miss out on stuff everyone else “*gets to do.*” I recently heard Pastor John Piper remind people, “*We’re not made for little piddly things like sports, hobbies, or other temporal things...we’re made for Jesus. How can you expect to ready yourself for Jesus if you’re not preparing yourself every day?*” Too often we choose creation over Creator, don’t we? **The baptizer** models how **following** Jesus means holding the things of earth loosely. The old hymn goes like this, “*The things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.*” I’ve seen believers ruined by their unwillingness to let go of people, places, things, and ideas they can’t imagine living without or with less of. I get it! My life has been full of changed circumstances and awkward losses. There’s so much I haven’t liked, understood, or felt should have happened. Here’s the thing...faith keeps us from turning life’s losses, and stuff we’ve had to set aside, into gods (idols) we can’t live without. Like Jesus,

faith helps us say, “*Not my will, but yours be done*”, even when we hate the circumstances that lead to better. This takes us to verses...

**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).**

***Following Jesus is about your potential, not your past.***

- John 1:11 said, “*He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him*”; but here we see not every Jew in Israel rejected Jesus. The first 2 *disciples* of *the baptizer* to follow Jesus were *Andrew* and some unnamed guy. Most scholars agree this was John, the son of Zebedee, which seems obvious since we’re reading about his first-hand experiences. What’s interesting is how *Andrew* immediately went and told *his brother* about Jesus. Folks, this is how things should be! Encountering the Savior of the world should excite us to share our experience with family and friends. Of course, I realize people may not share our enthusiasm, especially if they’ve had a bad or different religious experience. When I was 14 and told my dad about my salvation, his first response was, “*What did you do that for?*” Not the response I was hoping for, but he was just worried about me. Those next 4 years became a tug of war between how I had grown up and who I was becoming. I’m happy to report dad got on board, along with other family who were skeptical or had higher hopes for me. I don’t blame them; they just hadn’t come to know Jesus like I was starting to. My point is, don’t be surprised when people aren’t initially thrilled when you become more interested in what Jesus wants than their earthly ambitions. Don’t let it stop you from sharing the excitement when it bubbles up inside you!
- In this story, *Andrew* told *his brother, Simon Peter*, who arguably became one of the most dynamic forces of the early church. It goes to show you that, even on your first day of following Jesus, God can use your testimony to draw others to him. I mean, *Andrew* caught one of the biggest fish of the faith on his first day out! While we know little about him, it’s worth noting that each time John mentioned *Andrew* (6:8–9; 12:20–22) he was bringing people to Jesus. Not a bad legacy, eh? Oh, and did you catch how Jesus changed *Simon’s* name when they met? His name change underscored his transformation from “*one who hears God’s Words*” to “*spiritual rock*.” That may seem strange, but as we study the Gospel of John, we’ll see how *following* Jesus is not about our past, it’s about our potential. One thing is certain...Jesus never let a few

past failures define people nor did they keep Him from seeing the potential of what people could become with His help. These confused, misguided, and imperfect Jewish boys had lots of baggage (e.g., religious, political, familial) and had no experience for the tasks ahead, but none of that matters when people meet Jesus. If we'll only believe and follow, Jesus can turn us into people, who like His *disciples*, are able to turn the world upside down (cf. Acts 17).

Let's pray...Father, following Jesus is not more of the same. It's about slowly learning to release the people, places, things, and ideas that we view as "*must haves*", so we can gain more than we could ever imagine. It's about trusting that your storyline is better than any storyline we could dream up for ourselves, our family, and our friends. Most of all, it's about seeing our potential as citizens of a new kingdom who can bring light and life to this world, if only we'd truly decided to follow Jesus. Thank you that you show us where we need help, you meet us there, and you invite us to come and see more than we could ever imagine as we journey with you. Amen.

Our next song is a perfect follow up to this message. Please join us in singing about, "*The Wonderous Cross.*"

So, what's your NEXT STEP?

- Remember, our next step always begins with faith in Christ. Either placing faith in Him for the first time or exercising faith to repent, change, and grow. Either way, His Spirit will help you.

**Quotes/Additional thoughts:**

- **Context:** The Gospel of the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee, provides a clearly stated purpose. *John 20:30-31* says, "***Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.***" Some people demand to have all their questions satisfied before bowing to Jesus, yet John claimed his limited account was enough to bring anyone to faith. As we read it, our Savior and friend emerges from the pages as a real person in the real world. Jesus shows us what we could become, if we too would rely on His infinite Father who will gladly supply whatever we need.
- **The unnamed disciple:** Professor NT Wright said, "Since he isn't named, here or elsewhere, it is not impossible that we are here meeting the author of the book, or at least the one who told the stories on which the book was based...But there is quite a good chance that this was John, the brother of James, one of Zebedee's sons. A young man at the time – quite likely still in his teens." Ligionier Devotionals said, "Later on, one of these initial disciples is identified—Andrew, Simon Peter's brother (v. 40)—but the other disciple is never named. Traditionally, commentators have argued that this second disciple was none other than John the son of Zebedee, author of the gospel of John, and that is likely correct given that John chooses never to identify himself by name in his gospel account. In any case, it is worth noting that John 1:35–39 does not record Jesus' issuing a formal call to discipleship. That official call to leave everything and follow Jesus came later, as the other gospel accounts tell us (Mark 1:16–20).



Today's account shows us that initially, at least some of Jesus' disciples started listening to Him as the result of John's testimony."

- **Jesus recruited disciples:** "In this Jesus conforms to Jewish rabbinical models where teachers were traditionally surrounded by 'learners', which is what 'disciples' means. There is, however, a significant difference in Jesus' case. In Judaism the student was left to find a teacher for himself. Here, Jesus took the initiative." Pastor Bruce Milne
- **Peter's name change:** Pastor Chuck Swindoll wrote, "Jesus changed the man's name from Simon, which is derived from the Hebrew word shama, 'to hear.' His name would be changed to Kepha, the Aramaic word for 'stone.' (John transliterated the name as 'Cephas' for Greek readers). However, Greeks would know him by their word for 'stone,' Petros, or Peter." In the Ligonier Devotional it says, "Aramaic was the common language of first-century Jews in Palestine, and Cephas comes from the Aramaic word that means 'rock.' Peter is from the Greek term that means the same thing. Jesus would again identify Simon as Peter, the rock, later in His ministry (Matt. 16:13–20), but this record in John's gospel tells us that Jesus identified Peter as the 'rock,' as having a key role among the disciples, long before Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi. He would be essential for laying the foundation of the church by preaching on Pentecost, by being the instrument through whom God worked to convert the first Gentiles to Christ, and by writing parts of the New Testament (Acts 2; 10; 1 and 2 Peter)."
- **The baptizer's selflessness:** "John the Baptist did not keep this revelation of Jesus' identity to himself, but he proclaimed it to others. He made this announcement before both the crowds of ordinary Jewish citizens as well as those who represented the leading Jews in Jerusalem (John 1:19–34). But he also announced Jesus to his own disciples. As a preacher and prophet, John the Baptist had attracted his own band of disciples, or learners, and he was not afraid to lose them. If he had wanted to keep his followers for himself, John would have not told them about the coming Messiah or would have stood in their way as they left him to follow Jesus. However, John did not do that. He understood his role as the forerunner, so he let two of his disciples go after Jesus (vv. 35–37)." Ligonier Devotionals
- **Potential in Christ:** "It is striking how regularly Jesus approached people from the perspective of their potential...Our concern to declare the sin and fallenness of those we witness to (which has its place, cf. 'though you are evil', Lk. 11:13) must not inhibit our recognition of the possibilities of grace ('know how to give good gifts', Lk. 11:13)." Pastor Bruce Milne

#### Articles/Songs/Videos:

- [What it means to let go and follow Jesus](#) from Ligonier Devotionals

#### Helpful thoughts for discussion leaders:

1. Go for a single, not a home run...don't drag the night out; realize more people = less deep sharing.
2. Keep discussion around 30mins. Once you hit the "sweet spot", spend your time there.

#### Challenge Questions

*Review the BIG IDEA: Have you truly decided to follow Jesus?*

**-Simple questions...**What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

#### Preparation questions for John 1:35-42.

- What happened to John's disciples when He introduced them to Jesus? (1:35-37)

- What did Jesus ask the two disciples? (1:38)
- What do you think Jesus was implying in verse 39?
- What did Andrew do the very day He met Jesus? (1:40-42)

### **Application questions from John 1:35-42.**

- What if Jesus walked into your office, home, or classroom and said, “follow me”? Would things need to change? Give specific examples of how following Jesus would change your politics, philosophies, career, family, friendships, etc.
- What have you lost in life that has soured your faith and joy? Is there a person, place, thing, or idea you’re holding onto too tightly that perhaps you could try letting go of for a while to see what God could do with it? Do you have any stories of God doing something amazing with something or someone you’ve released for His glory?
- What flaws and moments of weakness have you allowed to define you? How can faith help you process your failures and become optimistic about your potential?

### **Here are some great resources for digging deeper into community group life...**

How life together looks <http://austinstone.org/stories/film/item/140-missional-community-lukes-story>

Rethinking what we do [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvWnXYSELF4&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvWnXYSELF4&feature=player_embedded)

Numerous articles to provoke thought <http://toddengstrom.com/archives/>

What groups of 2-3 might look like <http://toddengstrom.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/LTG-Overview.pdf>