

Sermon outline and notes:

© Dr. Stephen Felker, Pastor

[Swift Creek Baptist Church.com](http://SwiftCreekBaptistChurch.com), 18510 Branders Bridge Rd., Colonial Heights, VA 23834

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## John 1:35-51 “Leading Others to Jesus”

Intro. Today we will learn how some of Jesus’ first disciples came to know Him as their Savior. In most cases, they came to know Jesus through the personal witness and testimony of others. Then, they immediately sought to tell others about Jesus. And notice that they did so rather spontaneously. No one commanded Andrew and Philip to tell others about Jesus.

Telling others about Jesus Christ is going to be the main focus of my message today. Oh, that we would have the same impulsive desire to share Christ, just like the early disciples did! I also want us to consider how we can be better witnesses for Jesus Christ. The need is so great. The workers are so few. I read some time ago that nearly 80% of Southern Baptists have *never* shared their faith with someone. A 2008 survey revealed that 53% of *pastors* had not engaged in a personal witness the last six months. The devil is working overtime to drag as many to hell as he possibly can. The cults are working hard to pull people into their false religion. How many of us are doing little to nothing about it? Don’t you want to obey the call of Acts 1:8, where Christ says, “And you shall be witnesses unto me”? Well, if you do, let me start with a foundational principle for becoming an effective witness for Christ:

### I. YOU NEED TO HAVE ASSURANCE OF WHO JESUS IS

Now if we are going to be effective in winning others to Jesus, we must have a strong conviction as to who Jesus is. We are called upon to be witnesses of what we know, and have experienced.<sup>1</sup> Yet if you are not confident that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of the world, how can you witness with any effectiveness?

A soul winner is similar to a salesman. You know, it really helps if a salesman believes in the product that he is selling. What if a salesman was trying to sell a product to you, but he did not speak with any conviction of the effectiveness of the product. Instead, he just says, “I hope this will work, but I’m not sure it will.” Would you buy from him? I don’t think so.

So I want to briefly note what these early disciples learned and believed about Jesus. And then in each case we will see how they came to be convinced that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Son of God. Let’s see how they became so convinced that they wanted to tell others of their faith. So first of all, note with me:

A. Andrew & John’s Assurance - V.37 says, “The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.” He is talking about two disciples of John the Baptist. The unnamed disciple was most likely John the apostle. And so after hearing John the Baptist speak about Jesus, v.37 says that they started following Jesus. And after following Jesus for a while, notice what Andrew concluded in v.41, “We have found the Messiah.” Notice that he did not say, “We *think* we have found the Messiah.” He simply announced, with perfect assurance, “We have found the Messiah.” To be an effective soul-winner, one must have such assurance as Andrew had. Now how did he & John come to such assurance?

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 4:20 says, "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

1. From John's Testimony - The context makes it very clear that they heard John the Baptist testify of Jesus. They heard him say in v.29, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" And again he said in v.36, "Behold! The Lamb of God." These men had a heart for God. They had already attached themselves to John, and had not only been baptized but were eagerly awaiting the promised Messiah. Then John pointed Jesus out to those two disciples, telling them who Jesus was, and what He had come to do: to die as a sacrificial lamb for the sins of others. Hearing this, Andrew and John would have thought of the sacrificial lambs of the Old Testament. So God used the testimony of John the Baptist as one contributing factor in their belief that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. By the way, it is still important for us to testify about Jesus to others. God can use your testimony to lead someone else to Christ.

But I don't think they were fully convinced yet. One man's testimony was not enough. So they decided to follow Jesus and find out for themselves. And I would say to anyone, "Don't believe simply based on what I say. Investigate Jesus for yourself." So the second way they came to this assurance was:

2. From Being with Jesus - It wasn't until these men had a personal encounter with Jesus Christ that they became true followers of Christ. Now as they started following Jesus, soon Jesus turned around and asked in v.38, "What do you seek?" These are the first recorded words of Christ after He began His ministry. Christ is testing their motivation in following Him.

What are you seeking in Christianity? Why are you here today? The true answer to this question reveals your spiritual state. Are you seeking physical and worldly blessings? Or are you seeking the forgiveness, peace, love, and joy that only Jesus can give? Are you seeking purity and an increased knowledge of Christ, a closer walk with Him? (Cf. Ps. 42:1). Do you seek a glorious home in heaven? These blessings you will find in Christ!

So in answer to the question of Jesus, their answer was simple, "Where are You staying?" This was no idle curiosity. It showed that they longed to be with Him and abide with Him.<sup>2</sup> They were hoping that Jesus would give them an invitation to visit with Him, and spend time with Him. They desired an opportunity for uninterrupted conversation with Jesus. Well, the Word of God commands hospitality, so Jesus said, "Come and see." To every soul who is honestly seeking the truth about Jesus, His invitation is the same, "Come and see." He discerned that they sought His presence, His person, His fellowship. He never disappoints such longings. The Psalmist said, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good..." (34:8). Christ extends an invitation to everyone to get to know Him.

So v.39 says, "They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day..." I wish I could have been there! When they spent the day with Jesus, from 10 a.m. on, they became convinced of what Andrew says in v.41, "We have found the Messiah." That visit made such an impact on John that he remembered the very hour of their meeting with Jesus. That day with Jesus changed his whole life. We do not know what they talked about or what they saw, but we do know the result of that visit. They became faithful disciples from that day on.

So one plain conclusion from this last part of our narrative is that the impression of Christ's own personality is the strongest force to make disciples. No man has looked to Jesus and has said: "Ah! There is nothing to Jesus. He is of no consequence. His help is vain, His promises empty." Have a true encounter with Jesus, and you too will say, "We have found the Messiah!"

Now our text tells us of another person who became convinced of who Jesus really is. So let's see next of all:

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<sup>2</sup> "staying" is "abide" in Gk., and especially in the present tense, it indicates that they were seeking to know where Jesus normally lived.

B. Philip's Assurance – Now this time Jesus took the initiative and in v.43, notice that He “found” Philip. I believe that Jesus was probably already acquainted with him. Or perhaps based on v.44 Andrew told Jesus about Philip. Either way, Jesus had chosen him to be one of His disciples. Here we have an illustration of the words of Jesus in Lk. 19:10, “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save....” And may I tell you this morning that just as Jesus sought Philip, even so Jesus is seeking you that He may save you!<sup>3</sup>

Now we are not told what transpired immediately after that invitation, but notice what he concludes about Jesus in v.45, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote.” Clearly, that is just another way of saying that he & some others had found the Messiah. Now how did he come to that conclusion?

It is clear that Philip knew what Moses & the prophets promised about the coming Messiah. And as he compared what they had written, with what he saw & heard in Jesus, he concluded that Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus said in John 5:39, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.”

Have you ever read the Bible for yourself? Reading the Bible was a major factor in my coming to fully believe in Jesus Christ. When I was 16 years old, I started reading the Bible just about every day. And the more I read it, the more I became fully convinced that Jesus *is* the Son of God, the Savior of the world. And as the years have passed, I can say that the more I study the Old Testament, the more I see Jesus in the Old Testament. It's amazing!

Now Philip soon did for Nathaniel, what Jesus had done for him. He “found” Nathaniel, and witnessed to him about Jesus. So let's see next of all:

C. Nathaniel's<sup>4</sup> Assurance – Nathaniel likewise came to the conclusion that Jesus was indeed the Son of God, the King or Messiah of Israel, as he stated in v.49. In fact, each time he says “You” to Jesus, he says it emphatically according to the Greek. He said, “Rabbi, *You* are the Son of God!” That was a strong statement for a Jew to say. Furthermore, by calling Jesus “King of Israel” he was affirming that Jesus was the Messiah that God had promised.

So how did Nathaniel come to this conclusion? After all, when he first heard of Jesus, he was quite skeptical. He said in v.46, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” After all, Nazareth was an insignificant village of only 200 people. It was smaller than McKenney, VA with a population of 481. Nathaniel did not know of any prophecy that linked Nazareth to the Messiah. So how did the skeptic become a believer in Jesus? Basically, it was because Jesus demonstrated divine omniscience. Jesus knew things that no ordinary man could know. We see two evidences of this in our text. First of all:

1. Jesus Knew Nathaniel's Character – 1 Samuel 16:7 says, “...man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” When Jesus saw Nathaniel approaching, He said of him in v.47, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!” Well Nathaniel was dumbfounded! He exclaimed, “How do You know me?” Evidently he had never met Jesus before. And yet Jesus knew that Nathaniel was different from most of his contemporaries. The Jews descended from Jacob, who was a deceiver. And yet Nathaniel was free from deceit. How could Jesus have known this? Only if He was indeed the Son of God! In fact, look over to 2:25, where we

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<sup>3</sup> In that verse it also says that Jesus said to Philip, “**Follow Me.**” That is the essence of the Christian Life. Follow Christ in baptism. Follow Him in learning what He teaches. Follow Him by following the example of His actions.

<sup>4</sup> He is probably the same as Bartholomew in the Synoptics. In those gospels Philip is always listed with Bartholomew. Nathaniel would be his Hebrew name, meaning, “gift of God.” Bar-tholomew is Aramaic, meaning “son of Tolmai.”

read that He “had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.” Furthermore, Jesus displayed His omniscience in that:

2. Jesus Knew Nathaniel’s Activity - Nathaniel was evidently a quiet, meditative person. He would spend time alone under a fig tree<sup>5</sup>, meditating upon God’s Word. As you probably know, a fig tree has large leaves, and provides good shade. Also, a fig tree was often in the back garden of a house. Perhaps in light of v.51, he had been meditating upon Gen. 28 concerning the story of Jacob’s ladder. And it is probable that Christ displayed His omniscience when He said that He saw Nathaniel under the fig tree. Nathaniel must have thought, “How did He know that I was sitting under a fig tree earlier today? I was alone. I did not see anyone.” Jesus did not see him with eyes of flesh, but with the all-seeing eye of divinity. So the eyes of Nathaniel were opened to behold the Divine glory of the Savior. The impact of this brief encounter with Nathaniel was so impressive, that he concluded that Jesus is the Son of God.<sup>6</sup>

Are you conscience of the fact that Jesus knows your activities as well? He knows what you did this past week, whether good or bad. Furthermore, have you come to such assurance, that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior God has sent? That is indeed the starting point of becoming an effective soul winner. Many professing Christians never witness because they do not know Jesus in a real & personal way, and they have nothing to testify of.

So let’s move on to the second requirement for becoming an effective witness for Christ:

## II. YOU NEED TO FOLLOW THE SOUL-WINNING METHODS OF SCRIPTURE

If you are going to lead someone to Jesus, we should follow the proven methods that we read about in our text. There are two basic means that God continues to use to lead people to Christ. First of all, He saves souls:

A. Through Preaching – I have already referenced John’s preaching about Jesus in vv.29 & 36. Perhaps Arthur Pink is correct in saying, “The fact that the first [disciples] came to Christ as the result of the preaching of John the Baptist, seems to show that God puts the preaching of the Word as of first importance in the saving of sinners.” Some people say that preaching is outdated, but God is still using preaching as an important means of saving souls. When a preacher is gifted by God and filled with the Spirit, proclaiming God’s Word which is living and powerful, then souls should indeed be saved! Evangelists are especially gifted in this regard.

Now I will acknowledge that by preaching alone, few will be reached for Christ. Why? It is because the vast majority of unbelievers are not gathering with us on Sunday. So we have to get the preaching of the gospel to them, such as through media outlets, and we have to do a better job getting them to our churches to hear the preaching of God’s Word. Most will not come unless you and I invite them to come, and surveys reveal that no small percentage of unbelievers would accept a personal invitation.

But even with our best efforts, many will not come hear a preacher. So we need to employ the 2<sup>nd</sup> main method of leading others to Christ:

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<sup>5</sup> Micah 4:4 gives a prophecy of the blessings of the coming Kingdom, “...everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree.” Likewise, Zech. 3:10 says, “Everyone will invite his neighbor under his vine and under his fig tree.” Jews tended to spend time under the shade of these plants.

<sup>6</sup> As we respond with faith, the Lord will reveal more truth (see vv. 50-51). Here Jesus is making an allusion to Jacob’s ladder, or stairway to heaven. He affirms that He Himself is that way to heaven. Last of all, they believe that He accomplished this role of spanning the gulf between God and man by becoming the Lamb of God who dies to take away our sin (vv.29, 36).

B. Through Personal Witnessing - There are people who will not listen to a preacher, but who would be willing to listen to a layman who is truly living the Christian life. So we need men, women, young people, and even children doing personal witnessing. So what must we do? First of all, let's follow the example of Andrew, Jesus, & Philip and:

1. Go to People - Over the past 40 years, there has been a significant decline in the number of non-Christians who attend church services. Years ago they came to church because that was about the only social activity in town! Today, by in large they will not come to us; we must go to them. That is especially true of people who are different from most of us. Note the examples of going and talking to people in vv. 41, 43, 45. Andrew witnessed to his brother. Philip witnessed to his friend Nathaniel. They went to them. That is why the Great Commission of Jesus in Matt. 28:19 begins with the word, "Go."

Cincinnati Reds' pitcher Michael Lorenzen did not grow up a man of faith. One night at a Huntington Beach pier, while Michael was high on pot, a man came up and witnessed to him. The young Lorenzen did not profess faith in Christ immediately, but began thinking about what the man said. Eventually, Lorenzen became an avid Christian, studies the Bible regularly and speaks often of God when the opportunity presents itself. It all started with a Christian taking the Gospel to someone at a pier.<sup>7</sup>

Now as we go, we need to make sure we have the right message. The apostle Paul said in Roman 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes...." So be sure that as you go you:

2. Tell them about *Jesus* - Jesus was the focus of Andrew's message, as well as Philip's. He was the focus of the message of John the Baptist who said, "Behold the Lamb of God." John turned people away from himself and to Jesus. Paul said in 2 Cor. 4:5, "For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." (See also I Cor. 2:2; 15:3-4). But so often in church visitation, we talk mainly about the church. Sometimes we do not even talk about anything spiritual or relating to God. But more of us need to talk more about Jesus for Jesus is the focus of our message. We must tell others about the Lamb of God who shed His blood for our sins.

The one who seeks to win souls must expect to be met with objections. As we see in v.46, Nathaniel raised an objection about Jesus to Philip. I remember a time when I raised objections to the faith that I now hold. But we would do well to follow Philip's example. All that he said to Nathaniel in reply to his question was, "Come and see." Instead of arguing, he invited Nathaniel to come and put Christ to the test for himself. People will find fault with hypocrites in the church. They will raise objections about organized religion. So turn their attention to Jesus. Even Pilate said of Him, "I find no fault with him."

So do not be turned aside by the objections of the one to whom you are speaking, but continue to press upon him the claims of Christ. You may pound a man's mistaken creed to atoms with sledgehammers of reasoning, but he will probably not be much nearer being a Christian than he was before. But Nathaniel's question was honest and sincere. As we have seen, it was the voicing of a genuine difficulty. We must not conclude that all questions put to us are asked in a carping spirit, though many are. Usually objections are simply excuses people use because they do not want to give up their sin.

Now this work of leading souls to Christ requires commitment and sacrifice and faith. So to motivate you and me to enter into this important work, I would to consider last of all the fact that:

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<sup>7</sup> J. Michael Shannon in *Preaching*, September/October 2015, page 13.

### III. YOU SHOULD BE MOTIVATED BY THE REWARDS OF WITNESSING

Why be a soul winner? Why go to the trouble of being trained how to share your faith? Well consider this: A farmer is willing to work hard in the field because of the harvest he believes that he will receive. Even so the Lord motivates us by reminding us that there will be a spiritual harvest if we lead people to Christ. In fact, He likens the work of soul winning to that of the farmer. So what kind of harvest or reward can we hope for & expect? Let me share with you three rewards of a soul winner. First of all:

#### A. You Can Be Instrumental in Changing Lives for the Better – Do people change?

Generally speaking, No. People are set in their ways. Old habits are hard to break. Yet Jesus and the power of the Gospel can change lives.

We see an example of that in our text today. When Jesus first met Peter, no one would have expected that Peter would ever be anything but a hot-headed, impulsive, unstable sinner. And even though Christ knew this about Peter's character, He looked beyond what he was to what he could become by His grace. So Jesus gave him a new name to reflect that he was going to change him into a new person by His life-changing power. He said in v.42, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas' (which is translated, A Stone)." So Jesus is saying, "You will be a rock, fixed and stable. The process will likely be long and painful, but the change will come." What a blessed fulfillment did this promise receive after the Savior's resurrection! Likewise, God changed the name of Abram and Jacob, for God is in the business of changing lives for the better. Indeed, no man's character is so obstinately rooted in evil but that Christ can change its direction. He dismisses no people out of His hospital as incurable.

So we can have a part in seeing people change from being immoral to moral and godly. Through the Gospel a hateful man can become a loving man. How rewarding is it to be a part of such a transformation!

#### B. You Can Be Instrumental in Winning a Future Great Christian to the Lord – In v.41 we see that Andrew led his brother Peter to Christ. Think about the significance of that! The Scriptures do not say much about Andrew. In fact, as reflected in v.40, Andrew was hardly known as anything more than "Simon Peter's brother" (see also John 6:8). He is never again mentioned in Scripture after Pentecost. But Simon Peter became a spiritual giant. He became the leader of the early church. So Peter overshadowed his brother greatly. With his bold, dashing, daring spirit and confident soul, there were none to match Peter. As far as we can tell, Peter was worth 10 Andrews, except for the fact that it took an Andrew to bring Peter to Christ. So Andrew will no doubt share in the reward that Peter will receive from Christ.

Most of you have heard of the great preacher of yesteryear, D.L. Moody. He led thousands to Christ in both America & England. Yet how many of you know the name of the man to led him to Christ? It was Edward Kimball who sought D.L. Moody out in a shoe store and led him to Christ when Moody was just a young man.<sup>8</sup> Will he not share in D.L. Moody's reward for the tens of thousands of souls that came to Christ?

Therefore, you should keep in mind that you may be the means of bringing a great man or woman to Christ. You may teach a child in S.S. or VBS or AWANA, and that child may become a spiritual giant that will stir the Christian Church in years to come.

By the way, J. Harvey Oswald went to S.S. a number of times as a boy. Think of how

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<sup>8</sup> Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: #5821* (Rockville, Maryland: Assurance Publishers, 1979);

history could have been changed if he had been led to Christ as a boy! President Kennedy may never have been assassinated.

C. You Can Be Instrumental in Building God's Kingdom – There is no greater building project in all the world than the building up of God's Kingdom. Our church can have a part in building up God's kingdom in this world.

Remember the beginnings of the Christian Church. We see from our text that John the Baptist led two of his disciples to Jesus. Each of whom found two more.  $2 + 2 = 4$ . And their number would continue to grow as others believed in Jesus through them. In a few years thousands believed in Jesus. Even so, if every one of us would go and win just one person to Christ in the next 12 months, our church could double in size in just one year! I challenge you to make a commitment today to witness of your faith to someone between now and Easter Sunday. Invite people who need the Lord or a church home to a Sunday service, or to one of our special events.

Sources: Dr. Ernest L. Easley (a few notes from his sermon on this text dated 1/21/01); Oliver B. Greene, *The Gospel According to John, Vol. 1* (Greenville, SC: The Gospel Hour, 1966); William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1955); Herschel H. Hobbs *John: A Study Guide Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint, vv. 37-42); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 4 (Pasadena: Thru The Bible Radio, 1982); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 4:10] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2011); Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975); Charles H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon's Expository Encyclopedia*, Vol. \_ (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), \_\_\_ - \_\_\_; Merrill C. Tenney, *John: The Gospel of Belief* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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