

Discovery Series. Session 1, Who to follow? Come and See!

For Sunday 26 Jan 2025

Jesus calls his first disciples

¹⁸As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will send you out to fish for people.’ ²⁰At once they left their nets and followed him.

²¹Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, ²²and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. (Matt.4:18-22 NIV)

Matthews’s placement of these events makes it easy to picture, fishermen at the lake - yes, got it! But it also adds to the radical action that the brothers take - abandoning their work and livelihood to become the teacher’s students.

... why would they do that? They were expectant that Jesus could show them the blessing of a new future, reimagining their life so far as being the foundation for discovering more about life and of how to live well.

‘Come, follow me’ says Jesus. First, Jesus is creating in them a greater awareness and imagination. This is what God does...He creates.

Right from the start, when God created people, calling them very good, we see in his interactions with Adam that God blesses him; to use his creative ability. God passes on the creativity and imagination, telling Adam that his blessing is to name the animals, enjoy creation and simply to be very good amongst the animals and plants.

God creates a big picture, and we are part of it. This is what God does... He creates, calls us into what he does, and He blesses.

John’s gospel tells the calling of the first disciples in a different way, where it is not only the disciples who make the first steps into a reimagined future, but there is a father-figure who gives two young men in his care to that future:

John’s disciples follow Jesus

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 round, 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.’ (John 1:35-42 NIV).

Here, John the Baptist who loses two disciples when they leave him to follow Jesus. John the Baptist is not upset that they are leaving him, he does not feel let-down, spurned or otherwise less useful or important. Rather, it is the opposite for John’s job was to point people toward Jesus.¹ Here he has been successful!

Our voyage of discovery starts with discovering our value and worth as a person is not to be measured by how many friends we have or how popular we are.

Discovery Series. Session 1, Who to follow? Come and See!

For Sunday 26 Jan 2025

We also discover that part of our shaping on what we think and how we act comes from who or what we follow. Some people and organisations make it their business to be social influencers. Who or what is influencing us?

Social media even uses a biblical term – followers. However, our value and worth as a person is not based on how many followers we have nor in our success in absorbing or passing on the influences of the world around us.

We must be careful not to allow what we create to become our master...

Misuse

Humans have a tendency to forget that this creative blessing is from God and to proclaim it for ourselves.

In the garden God had also placed a limit on them - just don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But, having done so that desire to claim knowledge, to make it our own and to call it progress is to ignore that the creative ability, paired with responsibility is a gift of God.

As the story develops in the OT we hear that the people decided to build a great tower, to show-off their creative ability and make a name for themselves. (Gen.11:4)

We haven't changed and are still doing that today. As example, technological development continues at pace, and these can be very helpful for us. Creative ability and imagination is good, a calling from God, but it should not become god and the means of salvation...

For example, in an interesting article I read this week, by Baptist Minister Chris Goswami makes observation on a 'new religion emerging from Silicon Valley', [where] a new ideology, a new belief system [is] emerging [...] This ideology mirrors a religion, offering its own version of God (technology) heaven (techno-utopia), and salvation(human enhancement and immortality).ⁱⁱ

We must be careful not to allow what we create to become our master but remember we are called into creative ability as a gift of God, to be used as a gift with the one who gives that gift as the one who is praise.

Value and Worth

The greater value and worth is in the very act of Jesus calling his creative imagination into our lives.

It is greater than we can imagine:

It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. ⁶But there is a place where someone has testified:

'What is mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of man that you care for him?

⁷You made them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honour and put everything under their feet. (Heb.2:5-9 NIV).

The writer to the Hebrews comments on both Jesus and his people. Who are we? So small in the world and universe? *Except* that we are called by Jesus, a little lower than the angels.

Our value and worth is based on Jesus' invitation to come and see (v.39). He offers a personal invite of discovery. It is a voyage of discovery that is not 'limited by time [or] the world'.ⁱⁱⁱ

Discovery Series. Session 1, Who to follow? Come and See!

For Sunday 26 Jan 2025

Disciples

Something of that discovery is in the next part of John the Baptist's story. The next new disciples that John mentions are Philip and Nathanael:

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.

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

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.' (John 1:43-49 NIV)

Philip repeats Jesus' call and then Jesus' declaration to Nathanael was enough to convince him to 'come and see'.

Who were these men, humble fishermen who knew well the power of the sea? And yet Jesus calls them into a greater sense of being and purpose. For them, it meant leaving their trade but for most disciples the call is to bring Jesus' calling into their job, their craft their profession; for example, the apostle Paul continued in leatherwork even though he was a trained pharisee-turned-disciple by Jesus.

Will we hear Jesus call on our lives, to 'come and see'? What will he create and reimagine in us?

I share with you the invitation that William Barclay penned:

It would be well if every now and again in life, we were to ask ourselves: "What am I looking for? [...] What's my aim and goal? If I am honest, what, in the depth of my heart, am I really trying to get out of life?"

There are some who are searching for *security* [...] a material security which will take away the essential worry about material things. It is not a wrong aim, but it is a low aim. [...] There are some who are searching for [...] a career [...] a place to fit the talents and the abilities they believe themselves to have. [...] Again, it is not a bad aim [and] if it can be directed by motives of the service [of others] it can be a high aim.

But it is not enough, for its horizon is limited by time and the world.

There are some searching for some kind of peace [to] live at peace with themselves [with] God and with [others]. That is the search for God [an] aim only Jesus Christ can meet and supply.^{iv}

The invite to you right now is to ask ourselves that question, 'what am I looking for?' to be curious and to come and see.

Discovery Series. Session 1, Who to follow? Come and See!

For Sunday 26 Jan 2025

ⁱ William Barclay's assessment is that 'There was no jealousy in John' and 'He had come to attach [others] not to himself. But to Christ.' William Barclay, *The Gospel of John: Volume 1* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1960), p69.

ⁱⁱ Chris Goswami, 'Impeached to empowered – the second coming of Donald Trump' in the *Baptist Times*, (Didcot: Baptist Union of Great Britain, 2025)

https://baptisttimes.co.uk/Articles/705459/Impeached_to_empowered.aspx [accessed 25/01/25].

ⁱⁱⁱ Barclay, p.70.

^{iv} Barclay, p.70.