



INTRO:

So we're in a series entitled, ***"That You Believe."*** And that title is a reflection of the fact that John wrote this Gospel for ONE reason; that YOU would not simply agree with Jesus, but BELIEVE Jesus to be your Lord and Savior! Some of you know my story of coming to that belief. I was a sophomore in College and had a friend, who cared enough about Jesus AND me to risk awkwardness and explain the Gospel TO me. It wasn't something I initially received or frankly thought I needed, UNTIL one night, at 1:30 in the morning, in a dorm room, I found myself - no other way to explain it - prompted by the Holy Spirit to pray. My prayer was simple, and wonderfully-so Jesus' response was even simpler. I prayed, *"Jesus, I don't know if you exist. But if you do. I need you. I can't keep living for myself."* ...And then, because it was 1:30 in the morning, I did something incredibly spiritual - I went to sleep!...BUT I remember waking the next morning and not only feeling like a HUGE weight had been lifted off me, BUT that a God, who I didn't even know the night before, was pleased with me. Delighted in me. Loved me... Actually liked me. Again, just really simple stuff...But here's the thing: It took about 7 minutes for that simplicity to turn to complexity. Cuz, of course, feeling like an entirely new person - that's what Scripture says, *"that in Christ we're new creations. The old is gone and the new has come"* - I started asking those who I knew were a little ahead of me on this journey of following Christ, *"what do I do now?"* And I KNOW/please hear the spirit in which I'm saying this/I KNOW they meant well, but more often than not, the response I got was to be handed a ton of, frankly, exhausting religious activities that made following Jesus/or what's known as "discipleship," seem like this kind of PhD-level math. Ya know, Discipleship = Daily Quiet Times + Weekly Church Attendance, Small Group Involvement and Accountability Meetings x Generous Giving + Annual Mission Trips and Community Volunteering - ANY disobedience, distrust, or doubt \ Morning and Evening, 6 Days A Week + a Sabbath...Squared. OR if you're really crushing it...cubed. All good things to be sure, but exhausting nonetheless, since of course that's on top of faithfully working your job, loving your spouse, caring for your kids, not disappointing friends, planning for the future...and occasionally bathing! It just felt like a maze of religiosity... ***Ya ever felt that? Or perhaps if you don't consider yourself a follower of Christ this morning, you ever just assumed that's what it WOULD look like if you WERE to follow Christ?***...Albert Einstein and Woody Guthrie said respectively, *"the mark of genius is being able to make the complex simple; while any fool can make the simple complex."* Somewhere along the way, we've made the beautifully simple life of discipleship and following Jesus...complex... which may be WHY there's so much religious burnout, moral failure, people walking away from the faith OR just deconstructing it to the point that it's unrecognizable from ANYTHING Jesus ever talked about...What I wanna do together this morning is take a look at what the passage you just heard read tells us about just the simple beauty of following Jesus FROM the perspective of Jesus' FIRST followers. My hope being that if you're a follower of Christ this morning, but maybe life with Christ has grown a bit dull or worse exhausting, that, quite simply, you'd be refreshed and filled with a new sense of urgency to not just be a disciple, but a disciple-making-disciple. And if you're NOT a follower of Christ, that God-willing, some of the, maybe assumptions, you have that keep you from following Christ, would get decluttered!... ***So would you pray with me:*** *"Father, your word tells us that 'the one who desires to teach in the church desires a good thing, BUT with a great responsibility.' Father, I have a sense of that*

responsibility this morning, knowing that when it comes to making things simple, I am perhaps the worst candidate for the job. Were this to be about crafting to-do lists, reminder notifications, calendar entries, and generally making SIMPLE things complex, maybe it would be different. But as it stands, what is needed today, is for YOU to open our eyes to the wonder of dwelling with and declaring you to others. We'd be so pleased if you did that Father. And so we pray it in Jesus' name!... Amen!

TEXT:¹

Beginning in **v.35**, we read, “*The next day John - that’s John the Baptist - was standing with two of his disciples and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God! The two disciples heard him, and followed Jesus.”*” And we talked at length last week about that proclamation there of Jesus as “*the lamb of God*” - the voluntary sacrifice for your sin. But what’s important to notice HERE is the repetition OF it. Cuz this is now the second time in just a few verses that John’s declared Jesus to be the “*lamb of God.*” Here’s what it means: John NEVER tired of **dwelling with and declaring Jesus/dwelling with and declaring Jesus!** Cuz if his proclamation last week was a reflection of, for the first time, himself, seeing and savoring Jesus as the Messiah, then his proclamation here you see, is about declaring it to others INCLUDING own his disciples! **Delighting to dwell with and declare Jesus.** THAT is our life! Not advancing, succeeding, or platforming yourself, but daily **dwelling with and declaring Jesus!** It’s like the double-helix of a strand of DNA. Seeing and savoring Jesus/**dwelling** with Him and then **declaring** Him, or as Jesus said in His Great Commandment - loving God and loving your neighbor/they go hand-in-hand, and AS such really constitute discipleship!

And so it says, “*Jesus turned and saw (these new disciples) following (Him) and said to them, ‘What are you seeking?’*” Literally, “*what’s your pursuit? What are you after?*” If you’re gonna follow Jesus you have to answer that question. WHY do you wanna follow Him? Is it: **Tradition?** Perhaps it's what your family’s always done. **Morality?** Ya think that to be a good person includes something of Jesus. Maybe it’s **guilt?** Ya want help becoming a better version of yourself. OR like a lot of people, ya just want some **inspiration**/to, ya know, be “*blessed with the best, hallelujah!*” ...But here’s the deal: The only legitimate reason for following Jesus is because you wanna be WITH Jesus/**dwell** with Jesus... Which is why, you see, when Jesus asks these two disciples what they want, they say, “*‘Rabbi, where are you staying?’*” And it says they stayed with Jesus for the night. All these guys wanted was just to BE with Jesus, and presumably ask questions OF Jesus... Which tells you 3 Important Things here: **One**, you can have questions with Jesus! You don’t have to have all your theology and religious practice straightened out. Heck, you don’t have to have your life straightened out. Jesus doesn’t demand immediate belief and obedience. You see He just says, “*come and see.*” “*Come and investigate.*” You can have

¹ Message aided by insights from numerous sermons including:

- “The Fundamentals of Discipleship” - Kevin Sanders - October 28, 2019 - Seven Mile Road Church: Waltham - <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/sermons-from-seven-mile-waltham/id1253500100?i=1000455280349>
- “The Gospel of John (John 1:35-51)” - Adam Mabry - September 14, 2014 - Alethia Church Boston - <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/alethia-sermon-audio/id393747812?i=1000375046474>
- “Come and See” - Larkcast - June 14, 2022 - <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/larkcast/id1339351918?i=1000566356510>
- “What It Means to Be a Disciple - Gospel of John, Part 1—November 4, 1990 - John 1:35–51 - Timothy J. Keller, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).
- “Come and See - John - On Knowing the Christ—November 15, 1998 - John 1:35–51 - Timothy J. Keller, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

questions because knowing/certainly ***dwelling*** with a person REQUIRES em... But ***Second***, it shows you that while questions are ok, INDEFINITELY questioning ISN'T. And I know this is kinda the spirit of our age - to question, deconstruct, and generally maintain an open mind about everything. But as G.K. Chesterton said, *"merely having an open mind is nothing. The object of opening the mind, as of opening the mouth, is to shut it again on something solid."*² When Jesus says, *"come and see,"* He's saying, *"you're free to come to me with questions or concerns, but ULTIMATELY, I want you to leave with answers and commitment."*... But then ***Third***, what this shows you is that, in asking to BE with Jesus, these guys understood that INTERACTING with Jesus restructures your entire life. Cuz understand, they're not just bringing their questions to Jesus, they're taking off work, gettin childcare for the kids, spending the day with Him. I think a lot of times the way we think about being a Christian is like how we think about being a grad student or something. Ya know, on top of everything we're already doing, we tack on a few credit hours in order to advance with Jesus... But you understand: That's just not a reasonable way to relate to, as we've already seen in John, the One who created and even now holds the universe together with His word... I learned this week that if the distance between the earth and sun - which is 93 million miles - could be put into the thickness of a piece of paper, then the distance to the nearest star - just in our galaxy - would be a stack of paper 70 feet high. While the diameter of the WHOLE Milky Way galaxy would then be a stack of paper 310 MILES high. And of course, the Milky Way galaxy is just a speck in comparison to the whole of the universe... which Jesus Christ holds together with merely a word! ***How do you relate to someone like that if not by letting him restructure your entire life?*** And yet, most of us treat Him like we'd treat an assistant or a consultant. Ya know, *"Jesus, I notice, you say in your word, for example, that human beings aren't built to have sex outside of marriage between a man and a woman, and so any sexual activity other than that is wrong. And also that, because human beings are created in your image, and formed by you in the womb, abortion is therefore murder... Jesus, I notice things like this and I'd really love your thoughts on em. Cuz that way I can take em up for advisement and see if I agree."* No! ***Dwelling*** with Jesus restructures everything!

Which is exactly, you see, what happened with these first disciples. Notice Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ***What'd he do?*** It says *"He went and found Simon and said to him, 'We've FOUND the Messiah' (which means Christ)."* ***You see that?*** And I don't just mean that *"Christ"* isn't actually Jesus' last name... ***Some of you all, I just blew your mind, didn't I?***... No, but ya see that Andrew tells Peter, *"we've FOUND the Messiah."* Found! That's being sure. That's not searching anymore. That's desiring to ***dwelling*** with Jesus - no matter what gets restructured - and THEN ***declaring*** Jesus to others! Even more, it says, *"the next day JESUS... found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.'"* And I love that, because it shows that if you're a follower of Christ today, it's not because you made a good decision, or thought it out, or in ANY WAY found Jesus. It's cuz He found YOU! ***Ephesians 2*** says we were *"dead in our trespasses and sins... BUT GOD, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, made us alive together with Christ."* If you coming to ***dwelling*** with Jesus is anything BUT His grace, then YOU

² Cited in Lark Network. Reclaiming Church (Kindle Locations 48-49). Kindle Edition.

have something about which to boast! BUT if it's entirely BECAUSE of His grace, then the only appropriate response is to surrender and let Him restructure everything.

Incidentally, that's why, you see, Jesus tells Philip to "*follow Him.*" Cuz to "*follow*" means to have Jesus as your highest priority! It's the opposite, for example, of being a fan. A lotta people are fans of Jesus. Good dude. Sweet party tricks like ability to turn water to wine. A lotta people are fans of Jesus. But FOLLOWING Jesus means having Him as your "center of gravity," so that everything in your life gets pulled into His orbit. - how you spend your money, make decisions, what you do with your time, where you find meaning, how you interact with people, ALL of it! And understand, you NEED a "center of gravity." Just ask astronauts who've spent time in zero-gravity. You go without a center of gravity for too long and it'll literally atrophy away your life! Jesus invited Philip/invites YOU to "*follow*" Him, BECAUSE discipleship is simply ***delighting to dwell with Him and delighting to declare Him to others.*** Which is WHY, once Philip starts following Jesus, *what does he do?* He immediately goes and finds his buddy Nathanael, who we're told is skeptical to say the least/says "*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*" And I love their interchange. ***First***, because it shows you that ***declaring*** Jesus isn't about getting your apologetics together or being seminary-trained, but simply about friendship and family! Remember, Andrew shared Jesus with Simon Peter, *why?* Cuz he was his bother. And here, Philip shares Jesus with Nathanael, presumably cuz they're friends... Ya ever wondered why there're so many, what's called "one another passages" in the NT; ya know, "*love one another, serve one another, be kind to one another.*" It's BECAUSE those are the things you find in healthy friendships and families! So as one person says, "*The long list of 'one another' passages in the NT emphasizes that Church is about ongoing friendships... (And that really) it wouldn't be far-fetched to imagine the entirety of the Church's medium - meaning the vehicle that best drives the message of the Gospel - AS friendship and family.*"³ ***Do you have friends, who help you dwell with Jesus and to whom you declare Jesus? Do you see this church as your family?***

But too, I love this interaction, cuz it shows us that Nathanael...is JUST like us. Full of doubt ***right?*** Specifically, if anything good/a good God, can come from Nazareth. Now, that might not be a doubt you have, but I think if Nathanael were more modern-day he'd ask something like, "*How can there be a good God, when the world's filled with so much injustice.*" I mean he's just like us in his doubt and cynicism. So notice, ***what does Philip do? Does he bust out his theology textbook and answer the "problem of evil" question?*** No! He just says, "*Bro, come and see for yourself.*" ...He simply invites his friend to take an honest look at Jesus. That's all ***declaring*** Jesus is. Simply witnessing to Him rather than thinking you have to be an attorney FOR Him. After all, in living a sinless life, dying a substitutionary death, and miraculously resurrecting, Jesus has already made a pretty good case for Himself. We simply invite people to take an honest look at Him! Open a Bible with em, Invite em to Brunch Church/Missional Family, you name it...Cuz LOOK at what happens to Nathanael when Philip does: Nathanael meets up with Jesus, and Jesus tells him, "*Nate! I saw him under the fig tree bro.*" Now, at first glance you might think that just means Jesus saw Nathanael, like you might see a neighbor coming out of StopNShop. But given how Nathanael responds, that can't be what's going on. Cuz he says,

³ Lark Network. Reclaiming Church (Kindle Locations 118-119). Kindle Edition.

“Rabbi, you ARE the Son of God/the King of Israel!” Nathanael had to’ve been doing something pretty interesting under that fig tree - we don’t know what - but interesting enough to think, *“if Jesus knows about that, He MUST be God!”* To which Jesus then tells him, *“Man, that’s nothin’. Cuz you’re gonna see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending ON the Son of Man,”* which is of course is a reference to a story all the way back in **Genesis 28**, when Jacob had a dream about an opening that had happened in this incredible concrete wall between God and man/a dream about link between heaven and earth being made with this ladder going right up into God’s presence. And in the dream Jacob sees angels going up and down the ladder in such a way that it wakes him up and he thinks, *“How could there be a ladder to God? And if there is, who but an angel could go up it anyway?”* Jesus is referencing that story with Nathanael, but ya notice He tells Nathanael NOT *“you’ll see angels ascending and descending TO the Son of Man,”* **but what?** *“You’ll see em ascending and descending ON the Son of Man.”*

In other words, Jesus is telling Nathanael/telling YOU that discipleship/life with Him isn’t about some complex system of religious practices or procedures that if ya try your best to follow em, you’ll get up to God because, ya know, Jesus has now set out the ladder for you to climb...No! He’s saying, in a sense, it’s about laying your climbing and complexity DOWN...BECAUSE... Jesus IS the ladder/IS the one on whom the angels ascend and descend, because He’s the One who lived the life you should’ve lived, died the death you should’ve died, accomplished what was impossible for us; namely, cracking open heaven to make a straight connection between you and God, and who therefore NOW invites you to interact with Him by simply **delighting to dwell with Him.** When you realize that AND realize that He DID all that even when, like with Nathanael, He knows you at your deepest - knows every *“fig tree fault”* if you will - then you realize that the ONLY thing following Him could really mean IS simply **delighting to dwell with and declare Him** to others. THAT friends, is the ***simplicity of discipleship.***

CONCLUSION:

SO...let me close by asking: Are you exhausted, maybe overwhelmed when you think about following Christ/what feels like complexity at BEING a Christ-follower? Or maybe like Nathanael you’re still skeptical/cynical even as to if Jesus Christ could be your center of gravity. Regardless of where you’re at this morning, the invitation? is actually the same, because it was the same for Andrew, Peter, Philip and Nathanael. And that is: *“come and see.”* Take an honest look at Jesus...**Commit**, for example, to being here every week NOT because church attendance MAKES you a disciple, but because this time where we pray that simple hospitality & surprising grace collide, remind us TOGETHER of the wonders of BEING disciples! And parents, speaking from experience, I know how hard it is to get the kids out the door. Young Professionals, I know that this might feel inconvenient in light of trips, outings and other activities you could be doing, but ask yourself: Is there anything more important than seeing and savoring Jesus Christ with a people hungry to do the same? Be here every week...Additionally, **Commit** to the life of a Missional Family, NOT to add something “spiritual” to your calendar, but because - dirty little secret for ya - 9 times out of 10 you’re not going to be able to really process what you’re learning here UNLESS you get with some friends on a consistent basis...BECAUSE Christianity isn’t a philosophy by which you save yourself, but rather an encounter with a SAVIOR. So the main

way you're gonna really begin to encounter that Savior is through friends that you can know, discuss and apply with. Just ask Andrew, Peter, Philip or Nathanael! There's just no way to BE a disciple if you insist on being a radical individual!...So "Come and See!"/Take a continually honest look at Jesus...Cuz I promise: If you do, eventually what you're gonna find is that following Jesus/being His disciple/***delighting to dwell with and declare Jesus***...it's like breathing fresh air. How could it not be? Jesus is "*the lamb of God*" and "*the ladder up to heaven*," who therefore puts an end to you having to atone for yourself or tirelessly climb the next rung up to God or otherwise...(BREATHE)...Just "Come and See."...It's as **simple** as that!..."*Father, in a moment, as we take up the offering, and reflect together on what we've learned, we pray that you would give us eyes to see just the beautiful simplicity of being your followers. What a privilege to be able to dwell with and declare you "the Word, the light, the One in whom we have life...the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."* Help us to see and know that privilege afresh! We pray it in Jesus' name...!"