

4Ws The Gospel of John: So That You May Know the *Messiah*

Part 4 - John 1:35-51
Dgroup's Curriculum: Leaders Copy

WORSHIP

(Remember, the Worship time is designed to get everyone involved in 'recommending' God, so make sure you highlight who God is and what he has done for us, and avoid asking him for anything at least for these few minutes.)

Consider reading Psalm 74 together, taking turns reading a verse at a time, or reading responsively with the leader reading a verse and the group responding with the next verse. You can discuss the Psalms you read and share what they mean to you.

Consider singing some of the songs on the sheets that were included in your packet if you have someone in the group that plays the guitar or can lead music and/or play the guitar

End your worship time together with 'popcorn praise'. Tell the group that you'll pray together, but without the usual trappings of prayer, no long prayers, no eloquent speech, and no requests, just simple words of praise like, "Father, you know I was almost in an accident this week and you showed up and protected me and my family, thank you."

WELCOME

(Remember, the Welcome Question is designed to get everyone talking, so make sure you take your time and allow everyone to respond to this question.)

Question: Do you have a nickname, perhaps something that people used to call you to describe the person you used to be? If you could choose a nickname for yourself today, what would you choose? Tell us the story.

WORD

(Remember that our time in the Word is intended to remind people what they learned during the message and help them find ways to apply those truths to their lives. Hand out the copies of the questions and then lead them in a discussion. Make sure that everyone has a chance to be involved in the discussion without letting anyone dominate the discussion time.)

1. We said in the message that there was something Andrew put priority on when he first began to follow Jesus. What did Andrew do first when he became a follower and what would it look like if we were to follow Andrew's example in our daily lives?

Answer:

Let them discuss this. (Read John 1:40-41.) Andrew had 'found' Jesus and Andrew believed Jesus to be the Messiah. And now, before Andrew did anything else he went and found his brother, Simon to tell Simon about Jesus. Andrew became a follower of Jesus and right away

WENT LOOKING for someone to tell. Remind the group that this is one of the characteristics of a true follower of Jesus. A true follower of Jesus is someone who is always on the lookout for someone that they can talk to about Jesus. We often claim that we are Jesus' followers – Jesus' disciples – but this passage makes clear to us that if we're not telling other people about Jesus, we really can't claim to be a disciple of Jesus. Jesus is our Rabbi and he was always telling other people the truth about Himself. If we really are His disciples then we will follow His lead and tell others about Him as well.

2. We said in the message that Jesus is offering today to change our names. What does this mean and what are some of the examples of 'name change' that we might expect in our lives?

Answer:

Let them discuss this. (Read John 1:42.) Jesus changed Simon's name from Simon (which means 'to hear') to Peter (which means 'rock'). Simon may very well have been a man who didn't speak up very much, but Peter would become a man who was unafraid to tell people the truth. He was a man of stability and provided part of the foundation of the early church and of our church today. Remind the group that Jesus wants to change our names as well. He wants to change our name from 'weak' to 'strong', from 'shy' to 'bold', from 'fearful' to 'brave', from 'weary' to 'energized', from 'dull' to 'radiant', from 'captive' to 'captivating'. Ask the group to share how they have seen themselves becoming new people (with new names) as they have followed Jesus.

3. We said in the message that Nathanael challenged Philip with the idea that the Messiah would not come from Nazareth, so that probably meant that Jesus wasn't the Messiah. Why did Nathanael say this? What valuable lesson can we learn for our lives from Philip's response?

Answer:

Let them discuss this. (Read John 1:46.) Nathanael was clearly a man who studied and knew God's Word. Philip has just told Nathanael that he has just met the man to whom Moses and the Prophets pointed, in other words, the Messiah. Philip then says that the Messiah is 'Jesus of Nazareth'. Nathanael picked up on this right away and remarks that nothing good could come from Nazareth. In other words, Nathanael is saying that if Jesus is from Nazareth, he's probably NOT the Messiah. Nathanael must have known that the Scripture says that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem, or – at the very least – he knows that the Messiah is not supposed to come from Nazareth. We know today that Jesus was in fact born in Bethlehem, but was living at the time in the town of Nazareth. So, Philip is correct about where Jesus was living even if Philip didn't have all his facts about the Messiah straight. Remind the group that we all find ourselves in situations like Philip found himself that day. We don't always have all our facts straight when it comes to God's Word, and that sometimes prevents us from telling other people about Jesus. That means it's important that we learn the lesson that Philip had already learned. He knew that Nathanael was correct in saying that the Messiah would not come from Nazareth, but rather than argue the point or just deciding to shut up, Philip says something that is remarkably wise: "Come and see for yourself!" Philip doesn't get all flustered, he just says, "You have to meet this guy!" Philip is not put off by the fact that he doesn't have all the answers. He simply challenges Nathanael to come and see for himself. This is a valuable lesson we should all learn. We don't have to have all the answers before we can begin telling people about Jesus, we just need to know Jesus and know what He has done for us. The rest will follow.

4. We said in the message that Jesus used a play on words (that had to do with names) when he met Nathanael. What did Jesus literally say to Nathanael and what might it mean for our lives today?

Answer:

Let them discuss this. (Read John 1:47.) Remind the group of the story of Jacob from Genesis. Isaac, Jacob's dad, had chosen the name Jacob for his youngest son because he believed that Jacob would grow up to be deceitful. In fact, Jacob means 'Deceiver' or 'deceitful'. Jacob started his life with that name and went on to live out the part. Jacob was a schemer and a trickster and a deceiver for most of his early life, but then, later in life he spent a long night wrestling with God. That was the night that God changed Jacob's heart and because of Jacob's heart change, God changed Jacob's name as well. God changed his name to Israel, which means 'A Prince with God'. So, Jacob went from being Jacob to being Israel, from being Deceiver to being A Prince with God. Jesus played with those two names when he met Nathanael. The translation for what Jesus said is, "Here is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit," but what Jesus literally said was, "Here is a descendant of Israel in whom there is no trace of Jacob." Those words went right to Nathanael's core and he knew immediately that Jesus really KNEW him. Remind the group that Jesus has just changed Simon's name to Peter, and now Jesus is referencing the day that Jacob's name was changed to Israel. Help them to understand that this is something that Jesus wants to do in their lives as well. He wants to change their names. Challenge them to begin trusting Jesus to do that for each one of them.

5. We said in the message that Nathanael may have been hiding under the fig tree, and that that is something that we all do from time to time. What did Jesus tell Philip about being under the fig tree and in what way could that be a sweet truth for our lives today?

Answer:

Let them discuss this. (Read John 1:48.) We don't really know whether Nathanael was hiding under the fig tree or not, but a fig tree would not be a bad place to hide because of their low, overhanging foliage. We also know that we all hide from time to time. Many of us go through our entire lives hiding because we just don't like who we are. We don't know whether Nathanael was hiding, but we DO know that he wasn't hiding from Jesus. Jesus told Nathanael that he SAW Nathanael when Nathanael was under the fig tree. He also greeted Nathanael with some sweet words, "Here is a descendant of Israel in whom there is no trace of Jacob." Jesus didn't just see Nathanael; he saw him and LOVED what he saw! We all know that Jesus is perfect in every way, but we sometimes forget that He is perfect in His LOVE as well. Taken together this means two things: We shouldn't hide from Jesus because no matter where we hide, He can always see us. And, we shouldn't hide from Jesus because we don't have to – He loves us no matter how broken, messed-up or unbeautiful we may be. We're all a mess and we know it, but our messiness doesn't stop Jesus from reaching out to us in love. He loves you no matter what, so sit back and let him love you, and while you're at it, let Him get busy about changing your name so that He can change you from who you used to be into the person He has dreamed you WILL be.

WORK

(Remember that the main question to ask during the Work time is, **“Who else needs to hear about this?”** You will be generating a list of people who we will plan to invite to a future meeting.)

We’ve been talking about the Messiah and how He relates to us. We’ve also been talking about how Jesus’ followers related to Him as the Messiah. Every one of Jesus’ followers told other people about Jesus and who He was. That’s one of the marks of a true follower, and that helps us to understand that if we aren’t telling other people about Jesus we really can’t call ourselves one of his followers. This is the part of the Life Group time when we get to put legs on what we believe. Let’s get out into this broken old world and start bringing the message of life to the people around us. Remember that we have often said that Jesus doesn’t make bad people good; He makes dead people alive, so what does that make you want to do?

Those of us who lead should remember that there is no better way to motivate others to share the gospel than to set an example for them. Speak to others about Jesus when you have the opportunity and set an example of lifestyle evangelism for the members of your group. They will be much more likely to follow your example than they will be to simply do what you tell them to do. Ask the group to discuss this and then ask them to think through the list of people you have been praying for each week. Discuss how we can be more aggressively involved in sharing the good news with these folks for whom God has burdened us. We will pray for these people tonight and each night we’re together until they come to Life Group, or come to Christ through some other means. Have each couple or individual share the name of one couple/person to pray for and then ask one of the other people in the group to pray for them.

Close your time together in prayer.