

Bi132 The Gospels

Lesson Bi132-11 The First Disciples

As a follower of Jesus, you are called to be a witness for him. But who will you tell first? Is it easier to share the good news about Jesus with a stranger, a friend, or a family member? Though you may think it may be easier to talk with a stranger, this story suggests that it is the people closest to you who should be first to hear your testimony. They also will be most likely to respond. The lesson shows what the first disciples were doing when they met Jesus and how he called them to follow him.

After the devil ended his temptation, he left and angels came and ministered to Jesus. The exact site of the town where John was baptizing on the east side of the Jordan is not known. Jesus had been there at his baptism, just before his temptation, so it seems he returned there after being tempted. John the Baptist was standing with two of his disciples, perhaps Andrew and John, when he saw Jesus passing by. The Baptist said to them, “Look, the Lamb of God!”

When the two heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?”

They said, “Teacher, where are you staying?”

“Come,” he replied, “and you will see.” So they went and saw where he was staying and they spent the rest of the day with him. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon.

Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah, the Anointed of God,” and he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon. You will be called Peter, meaning ‘rock.’”

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, “Follow me.” Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida, meaning ‘house of fish.’ The town was located on the east side of the Jordan River where it enters the Sea of Galilee on the north side.

Philip 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.”

“Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked.

“Come and see,” said Philip.

Notice that when telling their friends about Jesus, these men did not try to convince them about Jesus, they just said, "Come and see." Why is that same approach important for us today?

When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is no deceit."

"How do you know me?" Nathanael asked.

Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree, before Philip called you."

Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel."

Jesus said, "You believed because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that." He then added, "Truly I tell you all, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man" (John 1:35-51).

Another day, as Jesus was standing by the Sea of Galilee; the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. He saw at the water's edge two boats left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. This was not the first time these men had been with Jesus, so he got into Peter's boat. He asked Peter to move the boat a short distance away from the crowd on the shore. Then Jesus sat and taught the people from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Peter, "Move the boat out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."

Peter answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

When they did, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. They signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. They came to help and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken. Among them were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Peter's fishing partners.

Then Jesus said to Peter, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything, and followed him (Luke 5:1-11).

In this story we find Jesus and the names of the first six men He called to be with him as apostles: Andrew and his brother Simon Peter, Philip, Nathanael, James and his brother John. They all knew each other and probably all were fishermen. The miracle catch of fish was what convinced them to leave their livelihood and become close followers—disciples—of Christ. For Peter the miracle also revealed his own sinfulness and his need of God's forgiveness.

To Nathanael, Jesus speaks of their seeing greater miracles, heaven opening, and angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man. In their ministry with Jesus, the disciples would see God's presence with Jesus as plainly as if they heard an announcement from heaven concerning him.

This story is **important** because it shows us the pattern of personal involvement and relationships that Jesus built before choosing his first disciples. This same pattern should be true of us as his disciples today—we should nurture personal relationships with people.

The **main truth** of this story is that Jesus called the first disciples to be with him and to experience personally the presence of God on earth.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. What did Jesus promise Nathanael and the others if they would commit to follow Him?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said Jesus told them they would see greater miracles and heaven opened, you are correct.
2. What was Peter's response to Jesus when his nets were full of fish?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said Peter's response was, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" you are correct.
3. What did Jesus promise these men if they would leave their fishing and follow Him?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said the promise of Jesus was, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will be catching people," you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to it repeatedly and learn to tell this story by memory. Then tell it to close friend or family member. Ask them, "What were the reasons you think that these first disciples decided to follow Jesus? Are people still drawn to Christ today through miracles?"