

How did you come to know Jesus? Who was it that introduced you to him? Who told you about Jesus for the very first time? And could you be that person for someone else? There's no reason why not, because God loves to use ordinary men, women and young people, from all kinds of backgrounds and circumstances to point people to his Son.

My parents were both followers of Jesus, so I grew up learning about him from them. And then they took me to a small local church where the good news about Jesus was faithfully preached week after week. And so even as a really young kid, I remember sitting in church being challenged about the need for me to trust in Jesus.

But when I was 4 years old, nearly 5, my big brother Graeme who was 5 years older than me was reading to me one night. It was a book from the Jungle Doctor series which presented the gospel through the funny experiences of group of animals in the jungle. And as he was reading this book, Graeme encouraged me to trust in Jesus.

I can't remember all the details of that night, but I know that it was then, that I first put my faith in Jesus. That night, I was brought from darkness into the light and I was given the right to become a child of God.

I was introduced to Jesus through caring parents, a faithful church and a 9 year old boy who wanted his little brother to be saved. They weren't experts or professional evangelists. Instead they were just ordinary men and women and a young person, who cared enough to point me to Jesus.

And this is how God builds his kingdom. Even at the start of Jesus' ministry, we can see how God used ordinary, everyday people to point people to his Son.

John 1:35-51: "The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. <sup>36</sup> When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"

<sup>37</sup> When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup> Turning round, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?"

They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?"

<sup>39</sup> "Come," he replied, "and you will see."

So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour.

<sup>40</sup> Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. <sup>41</sup> The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). <sup>42</sup> And he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

<sup>43</sup> The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."

<sup>44</sup> Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. <sup>45</sup> 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."

<sup>46</sup> "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked.

"Come and see," said Philip.

<sup>47</sup> When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false."

<sup>48</sup> "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked.

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

<sup>49</sup> Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel."

<sup>50</sup> Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig-tree. You shall see greater things than that." <sup>51</sup> He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

## 1. The Identity of Jesus

In this passage, John used seven different titles for Jesus, and each of them help us to understand more about his identity and mission.

### a) His Deity

So as we've seen before, Jesus is called "The Son of God." John 1:49. Last week, it was John the Baptist, this time it was Nathanael that declared the deity of Jesus. Jesus is fully God.

### b) His Humanity

But in this passage, Jesus also declared that he was fully man. When speaking to Nathanael, Jesus called himself "The Son of Man." John 1:51. This is Jesus' most common way of referring to himself and in a sense it simply declares his humanity. Yes, he was fully God, but he was also fully man.

There is, however, more depth to this name. Daniel prophesied about the one who would be established as the everlasting ruler who would receive the worship of nations. [“There before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. <sup>14</sup> He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”](#) Daniel 7:13–14

### c) His Sovereignty

So this title also points to Jesus as the king. And that is what Nathanael also recognised. He said, about Jesus, [“You are the King of Israel.”](#) John 1:49 He recognized Jesus sovereignty.

### d) His Authority

And unlike the King Herod of that day, this was not a title grabbed through deceit or political maneuverings. Instead this was a role given by God. Jesus is [“The Messiah” \(that is, the Christ\).”](#) John 1:41

He is God’s Anointed One, coming with the authority to establish God’s kingdom in people’s hearts.

### e) His Humility

And yet at the same time, in our passage, Philip declared that he is also simply, [“Jesus of Nazareth.”](#) John 1:45

Nathanael had a big problem with this. When he heard about this, he asked, [“Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?”](#) John 1:46

That might have been a bit of local competition, as Nathanael was from Bethsaida, a rival town to Nazareth. But it was also because there was no expectations of the Messiah coming from Nazareth. And they didn’t know that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, to fulfil the prophecies.

So we’ll see in chapter 7, people asked: [“How can the Christ come from Galilee?”](#) John 7:41 And, [“Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee.”](#) John 7:52

So this highlights Jesus’ humility. Yes, he was not just the King of Israel, but the King of kings. And yet, he was not ashamed to be associated with the despised and overlooked people of Nazareth.

### f) His Revelation

And it was to the downtrodden and to the lost that Jesus came to bring both his revelation and his redemption. The two disciples of John called him, [“‘Rabbi’ \(which means Teacher\).”](#) John 1:38 Jesus came to reveal the truth that people lost in the darkness so desperately needed.

As we’ll see in chapter 8, Jesus said, [“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”](#) John 8:31–32

### g) His Redemption

But that freedom will only come because Jesus was willing to pay the ultimate cost of his own blood shed on the cross for our sins. And so John the Baptist repeated his declaration here, that Jesus is [“The Lamb of God!”](#) John 1:36 He is the one who came to take away the sins of the world.

So this is who Jesus is.

- He is both the Son of God and the Son of Man.
- He is both the Messiah, the King of Israel, and also Jesus of Nazareth.
- He is both the Rabbi who came to set us free with his truth and the Lamb who came to save us with his blood.

This is who Jesus is. And if we want to be right with God, then this is who we need to accept into our lives. Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man, the one who came into our lives to be our Leader, our Teacher and our Saviour.

## 2. The Call of Christ

But how do people come to understand this truth and accept it for themselves? How do they come to put their trust in Jesus as the forgiver of their sins and the leader of their lives?

Well, ultimately, they need to respond to the call of Christ. This is what Philip did. [“The next day Jesus decided to leave for](#)

Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, 'Follow me.'" John 1:43

We don't know much about this guy called Philip. However, he's mentioned a few times in this gospel and each time he is struggling:

- In chapter 6 he didn't know how to get food for the crowd of 5000.
- In chapter 12, he didn't know what to do with the Greeks who wanted to see Jesus.
- And in chapter 14, he didn't know that seeing Jesus meant that he was seeing the Father.

But here, Philip wasn't struggling to work things out. He wasn't wondering what to do. Instead, Jesus simply found Philip and called him to follow him. And without any other person involved, Philip simply responded to the call of Christ. And today, there are still people who are found by Jesus without the involvement of others.

There are many stories coming out of the Muslim world, where people are experiencing visions or dreams of Jesus and coming to faith in him, despite never having heard a gospel message or having read the Bible.

For example I read about a man who turned up at a refugee centre. He met a pastor there who was ministering among the asylum seekers and told him that the previous night he'd seen someone dressed in white raise his hand and say, "Stand up and follow me."

The man asked, "Who are you?"

The man in white replied, "I am the Alpha and the Omega. I'm the way to heaven. No one can go to the Father, except through me."

He then asked the pastor: "Who is he? What am I going to do? Why did he ask me to follow him? How shall I go? Tell me."

In response, the pastor held out his Bible and asked, "Have you seen this before? Do you know what it is?"

"No," he replied.

The pastor then opened to the Book of Revelation and read: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end."

The man started to cry, "How can I accept him? How can I follow him?" So the pastor led him in prayer and peace came over him. The pastor then gave the man a Bible and told him to hide it, since the Muslims in the camps could cause him trouble.

But the man replied, "The Jesus that I met today, he's more powerful than the Muslims in the camp." He left and an hour later returned with 10 more migrants and told the pastor, "These people also want a Bible."

Some people still hear and respond to the call of Christ, without the involvement of anyone else.

### 3. The Message of a Preacher

But this is not the usual way that people come to discover who Jesus is. Most people need someone to tell them about him. This is what Andrew and his friend needed. They were disciples of John the Baptist and were with him, when "He saw Jesus passing by, he said, 'Look, the Lamb of God!'" John 1:36

When they heard John say that, they left him, and started following Jesus. When Jesus saw them, he asked them what they wanted. When they asked him where he was staying, Jesus said, "Come... and you will see." John 1:39, inviting them to stay with him.

And so Andrew and his friend had to meet Jesus for themselves. But they did this because John, sacrificially, did what he was called to do. As we were thinking about last week, he didn't call people to follow him, but instead pointed people to Jesus.

And the world still needs to hear the gospel from preachers who will point people to Jesus. The apostle Paul wrote: "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? <sup>15</sup> And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" Romans 10:14–15

#### 4. The Testimony of a Brother

But we mustn't think that this role is just for public preachers like John the Baptist. Andrew is not the most prominent disciple in the Bible. In fact he turns up in this gospel only on two other occasions when he brought a boy with 5 loaves and two fish to Jesus, and then later when he brought the needs of the Greeks who wanted to meet him to Jesus.

But still, Andrew was focussed on pointing people to Jesus. [“The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” \(that is, the Christ\).<sup>42</sup> And he brought him to Jesus.”](#) John 1:41-42

After listening to John and meeting Jesus for himself, Andrew was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah. But the first thing that Andrew did after coming to that conclusion was to go and tell his brother about him. It was his priority. Andrew desperately wanted his family to meet Jesus for themselves.

And Peter responded. He met Jesus for himself, and Jesus said to him: [“You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” \(which, when translated, is Peter\).](#)” John 1:42 Cephas is Aramaic, Peter is Greek – and both mean a rock or a stone. Jesus gave Peter this name, not because of his strength (as of course he would deny his Lord three times) but because of what he would become through the power of the Spirit.

Of course, our family might not respond so eagerly when we share the gospel, but this is where our mission needs to start. At home! There is a problem with our Christian life if we are unwilling to share the good news of Jesus with our family at home.

That doesn't mean we need to constantly barrage our family with the gospel. In fact sometimes we should silently live it out. Remember Peter's advice to Christian wives who were married to unbelieving husbands: [“Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.”](#) 1 Peter 3:1–2

Our witness at home is first through our lives, then through our lips. But this is our first mission field. This is what Jesus said to the man he had freed from a legion of demons: [“Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.”](#) Mark 5:19

#### 5. The Invitation of a Friend

Like Andrew, Philip was also eager to point someone to Jesus – this time it was his friend Nathanael: [“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.”](#) John 1:45

And even when Nathanael was scathing about Jesus being from Nazareth, Philip replied with a wonderful invitation: [“Come and see.”](#) John 1:46 And when he did, all his cynicism and doubt disappeared.

Jesus revealed that he knew his heart. [“Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.”](#) John 1:47

And when Nathanael questioned this, Jesus replied: [“I saw you while you were still under the fig-tree before Philip called you.”](#) John 1:48

And in a moment, Nathanael's doubts disappeared. He was convinced by Jesus' supernatural insight and knowledge and he responded with this amazingly clear declaration of faith: [“Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.”](#) John 1:49

And in response, Jesus promised Nathanael that he would see far greater evidence that would point to the true reality of who he was. In fact, like in Jacob's dream of a staircase with angels ascending and descending to heaven, he would see that Jesus is the new and supreme connection between heaven and earth, between God and humanity.

And this reminds us what our role in this is all about. We can't change people's minds about Jesus. We can't convict them of their sin. We can't force them to accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. And we certainly can't save them. It is only a personal encounter with Jesus that will transform their lives.

And they can only come to him if like Philip they are chosen and called by God. Jesus said: [“No-one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.”](#) John 6:65

However, we can do what John, Andrew and Philip did here.

- We can point people to the wonderful truth about who Jesus really is.
- We can testify to our own experience of meeting Jesus and the difference that he has made in our lives.
- And we can invite people to meet him for themselves – maybe through inviting them to church, giving them a Bible, doing the Christianity Explored course with them or just sitting down with them and telling them more about him.

We might be ordinary, everyday people. But God want to use us to point people to his Son!

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