

**#6 – John 1:35-51**

**Need:** To follow Jesus.

**Aim:** To present the beginning price of discipleship.

**Title:** “Follow Me”

**Prop:** In Jn. 1:35-51, Jesus began the selection of His disciples promising, in verse 51, great reward for those who heed the call and follow Him.

**Intro:** Dana and I have been friends since the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, a friendship which has endured for over 50 years. We met in a church Sunday School Class, went to Junior High, High School and College together. Although we have been close friends over the years, the friendship has changed from time to time. I remember one benchmark in particular of our friendship over the years. In the earlier years of the relationship, Dana was always the leader and or the instigator. He had “**great ideas**” which ultimately got us both into trouble. At the beginning we were an odd pair; I was a mama’s boy growing up while Dana, being the product of “**second honeymoon,**” was for all facts and purposes a single child and pretty much had free reign while growing up. He was the adventurer, the risk taker. So he took this mama’s boy and taught him the fine art of taking risks, often with high danger but exhilarating excitement. Nevertheless I was always in his shadow. I was accepted in many circles simply because Dana was my friend.

In the final year of college, he got kicked out with one semester to go and suddenly I began to thrive on my own. I came out from under his shadow, even became a “**big man on campus (BMC).**” In college I was chosen by the student body as the recipient of an award for my standard of Christian behavior and conduct as a senior at the school sponsored Spring Banquet. The following year Dana returned for his final semester, newly married, but it was obvious things had changed. I stood on my own and he was unknown to the younger students and came under my shadow for a time. No longer was I Dana’s friend, but he had become my friend.

In John chapter one, Jesus had been introduced to the world: “**The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.**” In the passage today Jesus began His ministry with the calling of His disciples, men through whom He would multiply Himself, for the age to come. Jesus was now out from under the shadow of John the Baptist and stood on His own two feet as John just faded into the background.

**Prop: In Jn. 1:35-51, Jesus began the I. Selection of Disciples -1:35-49, promising II. Great Reward – 1:50-51 for those who heed the call and follow Jesus.**

**Transition: Let’s begin our study with the selection of Jesus’ disciples.**

## **I. Selection of Disciples – Jn. 1:35-50**

### **A. Transference of Disciples (35-39)**

**1. John's Declaration (36)** – Since the time of Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist and the descending of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus, the Baptist was very clear about the identity of Jesus, "**The Lamb of God,**" as recorded in verse 36

**2. From John to Jesus (35)** – Jumping back to verse 35, we find that John made this declaration in the presence of two of his disciples and having heard John's words they immediately left John and began to follow Jesus. This was the way it was supposed to happen, for the followers of John to move on and upward to follow Jesus. John's ministry must decrease in order that all focus would be upon Jesus, the Messiah, and the Son of God.

**3. Request to Follow (37-38)** – In verse 37, two of John's disciples heard Jesus speak and as a result chose to follow Jesus. He alone provided the hope which John the Baptist could only bear witness to with his call to repentance through water baptism. Through his declaration and call to repentance, he commanded acceptance of the Messiah who would baptize believers with the Holy Spirit.

As these two men followed after Jesus, there was a pause where He turned to these men asking what they were seeking.

Verse 40 identified one as Andrew, while other gospels acknowledged the second individual was the apostle John. They had been drawn to John the Baptist and most likely been baptized, but they were looking for more. The appearance of Jesus filled the gap in their spiritual journey. The men called Jesus “**Rabbi,**” which was a term of acknowledgement, endearment and respect. It literally meant “**Teacher**” which was a title they gave Jesus solely based upon the first time they heard Him teach.

Their desire to be with Jesus was manifested in verse 39 as they united themselves with Him and began a journey that would change their very lives, as well as the course of the world from that time forward. John the Apostle was there at the beginning and would be there at the finish, having the distinction as the only one of the twelve chosen, to die of natural causes. All others were put to death for their faith, save Judas who died from his own hand.

## **B. Call of the Twelve – Peter (40-42)**

**1. Call of Peter** – In verses 40-42 we find the call to Andrew’s brother Peter. Overcome with excitement Andrew ran to his brother Peter to tell him, that he had found the Messiah!!

Peter was a fisherman by trade and apparently had a working relationship with John and his family. But Peter, being the older brother, worked while his brother Andrew went off on some religious quest. Peter remained at the Sea of Galilee bringing home the family bacon. He was the only one of the original twelve that scripture confirmed as having been married. He had a family to feed and provide for, which also included his brother Andrew and his mother-in-law.

**2. Religious Zealot (41)** – In verse 41, full of excitement, Andrew went to his brother Peter and told him: **“We have found the Messiah.”** The Apostle John added the editorial clarification of the Greek word for **“Messiah”** as he did so in verse 39 with the Jewish word **“Rabbi.”** In the Greek **“Messiah”** meant **“Christ.”**

Peter, like any good Jew, was looking for Messiah who would deliver Israel from the dominance of the Romans, establish a kingdom based in Jerusalem, and rule the world.

The road of history is littered with men of good intentions. For example, in our most recent history, universal health care was not a new idea; it was originally proposed by Woodrow Wilson, revived again under Harry Truman.

Economic equality, judicial justice, all these things in theory are great ideas, but they don't work because they don't fix the real problem, which is the heart and soul of mankind. The goal is utopia, but it will only be realized when Jesus comes to rule in truth and justice and the hearts of men and woman are changed from the inside out by the Holy Spirit of God! Man must be changed before all things are made equal in Jesus. Social programs are flawed, just Band-Aids because man is flawed. Don't misunderstand me here. People are looking for answers to their personal situations and at times look to government to fix their problem. And in some cases public programs only compound the problem, because a government comprised of men does not have the answers to life's challenges, circumstances and issues. Only Jesus, the Word of God possesses the ability to make a real difference in one's life. Jesus doesn't offer so much social change, but real inside, eternal transformation. Jesus deals with the infections caused by lack of treatment by men and their social attempts.

Peter and the other 11 disciples' understanding of Jesus and His ministry was flawed in their thought process that Jesus came to conquer the world. He came to conquer the hearts of all people. To give eternal life for all who would believe!

**3. Peter's Awakening (42)** – In verse 42 we find a yearning in Peter's heart as he wanted more. The synagogue and religious leeches had taken its toll mentally, physically and spiritually and had poisoned his heart. But when he met Jesus, something stirred within the very depth of his soul. Peter was not a young man, but hardened by life, responsible for a family, running his own business and set in his ways. But something awakened within Peter as he stood in the presence of Jesus, when He pronounced to Peter: **“You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas” which translated Peter).**” Again John added an editorial footnote. With this one simple phrase,

Peter's life was changed forever and Jesus laid the foundation for the church to come. That was the outcome but it was not so at the beginning.

**Transition: In verses 43-49 Jesus called yet more disciples. Three had already joined the band of what would be twelve; they were John, Andrew and Peter. In verses 43-44, Jesus would call Philip and then in verses 45-49 Nathaniel.**

### **C. Philip and Nathaniel (43-49)**

**1. Call of Philip (43-44)** – After gaining 3 disciples Jesus moved on from the river Jordan into the area known as Galilee, this referred to the shoreline around the sea which was the central hub of the local economy.

It was there He found Philip and issued the simple call **“to Follow Me.”** As to whether Philip was a disciple of John the Baptist was not recorded; like the others there was no mention of how God had prepared him for Jesus. We know that He issued a special call to 12 men to follow Him, but Jesus also called to all the crowds and multitudes to also follow Him, to heed His words and make them part of their lives. Nevertheless, Philip dropped whatever he was doing and followed. And as he followed, in verse 45 he found his friend Nathaniel, the skeptic and said: **“We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”**

**2. Call of Nathanael (45-49)** – The answer to Philip’s news was met with a degree of skepticism on Nathanael’s part: **“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”** It was slander against Nazareth, because it was a low class working community. Nothing noteworthy had ever been done there and no one of honor came from Nazareth. Surely if Messiah was to come He would come with great fanfare, religious backing and credentials. He most certainly would have come from Jerusalem, not Nazareth. Philip pushed aside Nathanael’s reply and said, **“Come and see for yourself!”**

The interaction between Jesus and Nathanael was somewhat puzzling as John gave great detail about Jesus’ call to him to come and follow.

As Nathanael approached Jesus cried out: **“Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is not deceit!”** Jesus’ words give us insight to Nathanael’s spiritual journey. The conversation ensued with Nathanael’s reply: **“How do You know me?”**

In verse 48 we see divine insight in that Jesus not only knew him but had singled Nathanael out for discipleship. There is some question about verse 49 concerning Nathanael’s response here: **“Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel!”** As I read this, two thoughts came into my mind. (1) Nathanael might have been doing something he ought not to have been involved in. But the more likely, given Jesus’ assessment in verse 47 was (2) he was praying, meditating, thinking and or reading scripture, probably all of the above, and by Jesus’ words in verses 51 his focus of study was concerning Jacob and his dream. He was probably alone in his thoughts when Philip interrupted and then the conversation between Nathanael and Jesus took place. Nathanael’s response in verse 49 confirmed that he had been convinced and alluded to the fact that his prayer concerning the coming and revealing of Messiah was answered and Nathanael immediately recognized that fact.

**Transition: In verses 50-51 Jesus gave a promise to Nathanael that in return applies to us in the here and now.**

## **II. Great Reward – Jn. 1:50-51**

### **A Jesus' Promise (50)**

**1. Promise of Faith** - Jesus' words of verse 50 applied to Nathanael's profession of faith. Jesus expressed a sense of wonderment that Nathanael responded so quickly simply because Jesus had seen him under a fig tree.

The point here was that Nathanael was looking and Jesus had knowledge of what he had been thinking He approached Nathanael and on that basis Jesus alone had all the answers to all his questions.

**2. Greater Things!** – As a result of his faith, Jesus promised Nathanael that all doors of knowledge and experience would be open to him. In other words: **“You ain't seen anything yet!”** Faith opens the door to relationship with God and eternal life.

### **B. Glorious Things (51)**

**1. Jacob's Ladder (Gen. 28:10-17)** – In Genesis 28:10-17 we find the dream of Jacob which corresponded to Jesus' words here. In his dream Jacob saw pretty much the same thing that Jesus described here, which gave the notion that it was this passage which Nathanael was contemplating when Jesus saw him.

**2. Meaning** – Jesus used this passage for two distinct purposes. **(1)** To confirm that He was indeed knowledgeable of Philip's thoughts while under the fig tree. **(2)** Because of his faith, Philip would be open to experience much more than he ever imagined. The doors and windows of heaven would be open to him if he just would continue to believe. And the promise bids us in the same way.

Five men heard the call of Jesus upon their lives, and all responded by following Jesus. In verses 51-52, Jesus promised these men, Nathanael in particular great wonders and things which would happen if they would but follow Jesus. The concept was also known as discipleship. It meant not only hearing Jesus' words and giving verbal ascent, but actually doing them. Being obedient to that which we know is right. And as we grow in our relationship with God, the gray areas of our lives will become less and less while the right and wrong areas will become bigger and more defined. My life is in constant review and adjustment as more things which were originally of no concern, have now been revealed as displeasing to God. And with this knowledge comes great responsibility to be obedient and follow God's direction.

Finally you may be hearing the call of God on your life today. It may be a call to salvation, putting your faith, your trust, and your very life in the hands of Jesus. You may be a Christian but have become despondent, crushed by the weight of conviction of some area in your life which needs to be yielded to Jesus. Nothing will change, or it may even get worse until we yielded it all to God and His provision. It is so simple to do things God's way. Many of us have tried over and over again to do it our own way. How is that working for you? We need to release it and let God do it His way.

## **“Follow Me” – Jn. 1:35-51**

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