

THE FIRST BELIEVERS

John 1:35-51
Key Verse: 1:39

Lesson 4

"Come, he replied. 'and you will see.'"

May the Lord teach us from these first believers what believing is, and show us how people come to believe.

1. Andrew goes and sees

How do we believe? Jesus' first disciples show us how faith takes root in men's hearts. Andrew and his friend were disciples of John the Baptist. They had confessed their sins and had been baptized by John in the Jordan River. But their hearts were still empty, and they had no power to overcome sin. One day, Jesus walked by and John said, "Look, the Lamb of God." John testified that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Andrew and his friend accepted this word of testimony and followed Jesus. It was not the following of commitment. They heard and decided to go and see for themselves. This is the first step of faith. Their belief started with their feet.

Jesus turned and asked them, "What do you want?" This may have simply meant, "Why are you following me?" Or it may have meant, "What are you really seeking? What is your inner thirst? What do you want to do with your life?"

What did they want? They wanted to know if Jesus were really the Messiah or not. They wanted to know if he could really take away their burden of sin and guilt and put meaning into their meaningless lives. They wanted to know if he could be the friend who would satisfy their inner hunger and thirst for truth and meaning. Then did not want superficial answers to take back to someone else. (Like the men who questioned John in vs 19-28.) They wanted to know the truth for themselves, so that they might follow it. They wanted to know Jesus personally. So they asked for his address. "Rabbi, where are you staying?"

Jesus was looking for men whom he could train to be future leaders and shepherds of his people. He wanted to have a personal relationship with them, so he said, "Come and you will see." He invited them to come home with him. They went and stayed with him the rest of that day. Then, they decided to commit themselves to him and stay with him the rest of their lives.

Believing in Jesus means having a personal relationship with him. It is not

enough to know about Jesus; we must know Jesus. There is a great difference in knowing about Jesus and knowing Jesus. We can know a great deal about a man. But we must meet him and get to know him personally if we really want to know him. We can meet Jesus by coming to him with repentant hearts, and receiving him as our Savior and Lord. We can grow in knowledge of him through prayer and Bible Study. It takes time, for we must not only listen to him; we must also obey him. When we listen and obey him, we love him. We can only truly know him when we love him and know that he loves us.

Andrew spent time with Jesus and realized that he was the Messiah. This means that Andrew was one of those waiting and longing for the Messiah. He was a Bible student. He recognized Jesus and went and got his brother Simon. He told Simon, "We have found the Messiah." And he brought him to Jesus. Witnessing to Jesus is the natural expression of belief. Coming to Jesus was the beginning, not the end. Jesus looked at Simon and gave him a new name--Peter. It was a name that he must grow up to.

2. Philip and Nathanael (43-51)

The next day Jesus and his new disciples started for Galilee. They met Philip. Philip was from Andrew's hometown and he knew him. Jesus invited Philip, "Follow me", and Philip joined them. His faith also began with his feet. Soon, he could confess, as Andrew had, "We have found the Messiah--the one prophesied in the Bible." He told his friend Nathanael of Cana, "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." Philip, like Andrew, was a Bible student. He was waiting for the Messiah. Nathanael was a skeptic. He knew that Prophets are from Jerusalem. He may have known that the Messiah must be born in Bethlehem (7:42). So Philip said, "Come and see."

Nathanael was convinced when he realized that Jesus knew him--even knew things about him that no one else knew. He felt Jesus' love and Jesus' authority. He confessed Jesus to be the Son of God with such enthusiasm that Jesus told him that his life of faith was just beginning. He would see greater things. He would someday realize that Jesus is the ladder to heaven, the link between earth and the heavenly kingdom. He would someday know that God came down to earth through Jesus, and men can go up to God through Jesus.

These 2 events are very similar. They teach us that God's history is extended through personal, one to one relationships. The gospel has come to us because someone told someone else, who told someone else. The gospel can be preached to all nations by keeping on with one to one Bible study. Our Bible

study must not just be academic--not just "about" Jesus. It must lead ourselves and others to meet Jesus and know him personally. Our faith must be faith that confesses Jesus and faith that grows.