

<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.”

In the name of Jesus, our Savior, dear friends,

Think for a moment about how you behave when you witness something spectacular. What do you do when you see a beautiful double-rainbow outside your house? What would you do if you heard outside your door that horrible “crunch,”—that sound of car metal on car metal—and you ran out and saw the accident? Every kid here today can tell me what happens when fire trucks go blaring past your schoolroom window!

If you’re like most people, you are amazed or shocked or pleased, depending on what spectacular thing you’ve seen! And in most cases, you would run to tell your child or your co-worker or your classmate. *“You’ve gotta see this! Come here and look at this!”* ...then you’d take a picture with your cell phone and post it on Facebook for all of your world to enjoy! When we witness the uncommon or spectacular, we tend to share it with others.

When Jesus started out publicly proclaiming God’s Word and showing his divinity in miracles and with his teaching, he chose twelve men to be his disciples and witnesses. Some of the accounts of Jesus hand-picking these men are recorded in the Bible and today we get to look at one of those. God tells us how Jesus came to find Philip and Nathanael. In addition to being amazed at Jesus in this account, we are given

## **A LESSON IN WITNESSING**

### **1. THANKFUL PEOPLE ARE EAGER TO WITNESS**

From a couple of events which we hear about later in John’s gospel, we find Philip to be a kind of practical guy who was even a bit hesitant or cautious by nature. You might say, *“Well, there was nothing hesitant or cautious about Philip here!”* And you’re right. Why was Philip not more cautious when this Jesus walked up to him and said ***Follow me***? Oh, don’t let Philip’s name fool you. Despite his Greek name, he was a believer in the one true God and Jesus had somehow revealed himself as the Savior and the fulfillment of God’s promises. Apparently, it was convincing to Philip because his confession to Nathanael is crystal clear: ***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.***

And not only was his confession of faith in Jesus clear, his actions revealed trust in the Savior. Jesus said ***“Follow me”*** and he did! But even more obvious was the fact that

he went right away to find his friend Nathanael to tell him the news. Philip was so thankful to have the Savior...to know the Savior...to be with the Savior, that it made him eager to tell someone! He knew the One who brought forgiveness of sins and salvation had finally appeared and had come directly to him! This made Philip happy and joyful and eager to witness about the Savior.

Perhaps you feel like Philip did. Maybe you're one who always wondered about God or had brief contacts with him, went to church here and there, had some Christian friends, knew a little something about Jesus, but when Jesus actually came to you and pulled you in by his grace and you understood it and believed it, you were overjoyed!

Or you who have grown up in the church—he came to you before you can even remember! You have had the blessing of always knowing the forgiveness and love and salvation of Jesus—is there not joy in your heart as well?! And because of Jesus calling us to him, don't we share the mind of Christ that wants all people to know their Savior? This is the bottom line: if we are thankful for what Jesus has done for us, we are eager to witness Jesus to others as Philip did.

You can't tell me, can you, that you'd run to tell a friend about a spectacular double-rainbow arching over the mountains, but you would keep silent about a person's soul and Savior?

You can't tell me, can you that you would share all the details of the accident you witnessed, but wouldn't share the details about God's love in Jesus?

Tragically, the sinful side of us IS like that. Often, it causes us to be afraid. We're afraid we'll be laughed at or made fun of or ignored, that we'll be seen as weird, that we'll lose a friend. After all, everyone can see some beauty in a rainbow, but you just never know what people will think of Jesus or what their reaction will be. We really need to repent to God for that kind of thinking—it is sin; it does nothing for the kingdom of God, which ought to be our priority.

After we repent, then do not fret over missed opportunities to witness. Remember Jesus forgives completely. Be assured that those and our other sins are covered by the blood of Christ shed for you and me. And now pay attention, because Jesus is calling you again to tell people about him by giving you this LESSON IN WITNESSING!

What will happen when we witness? As you and I think about sharing Jesus with someone, we sometimes imagine the worst possible response, right? Sometimes we are just sure our witnessing is not going to “work.” But what if something like this happens—like when Philip talked to Nathanael?

## **2. SIMPLY INVITE SOMEONE TO COME AND SEE**

I can't imagine anyone calling Philip fanatical or pushy, can you? It was not a fancy speech or striking sermon that he gave. He was simply one faith-filled person with an invitation. He stated what he knew and believed to be true, then came the simple ***“Come and see.”***

Why did he say it? Why did he want Nathanael to come and see? Because he was filled with joy over knowing his Savior. He had peace in knowing that the promises of God about a Savior from sin were being fulfilled right before his very eyes. His joyful faith moved him to witness to his friend about Jesus and invite him to come and see.

And look what happened! Did Philip run up against our greatest fear—rejection? Well, not all-out rejection—resistance, maybe. Nathanael didn't jump right away at the news like Philip did, so Philip simply invited him—“**Come and see.**” And Nathanael did it! The fact is, part of our God-given responsibility, our joy, is to invite people to take a look at Jesus, to hear him out. That might mean that you simply invite a friend to church with you. That might mean that you invite a friend to a Bible class that you think they might find interesting. That might mean that you invite someone to a concert where God's Word is put to music. That might mean that you invite a troubled friend to talk with your pastor. That might mean that you offer to show a person a few things about Jesus in the Bible. This is not rocket science; it can be as simple as an invitation.

It is difficult to imagine a thankful, joyful Christian who loves their Savior, who would see an example like this in Scripture or hear Jesus' encouragement to be his witnesses and NEVER invite someone in some way to come and see their Lord! Especially since the pressure is never really on us! The pressure was not on Philip and it isn't on us. We can simply INVITE and then let God speak.

### 3. LET GOD SPEAK

Isn't that what Philip did? Nathanael accepted the invitation to come and see and Jesus took over! ***When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.” “How do you know me?”***

***Nathanael asked.*** Jesus spoke loudly enough that the approaching Nathanael could hear him. The all-knowing Savior had read his heart and his character! When he said that there was nothing false in him, he wasn't implying that Nathanael was sinless, but that he was honest, that he said what he thought and felt. And I think that was borne out in the conversation that took place between them. He had gotten Nathanael's attention! Jesus knew something about him. In fact, Jesus had his divine eye on him before he was even in sight. ***“I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you”*** Jesus said.

This little miracle put Nathanael over the top—now he knew that his friend was right! This was the promised Savior; this was the Christ! And listen to the declaration of faith Nathanael then gave: ***“Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel!”*** Wow—can you believe that?! Talk about a 180°! He went from skepticism to solid confession in what—minutes?! Oh, we think we know how people are going to respond to our invitations or to Jesus' words, but we don't. Do you realize that Jesus effectively communicated who he was in 2 words to Philip and 2 sentences to Nathanael?! And you think it's up to you to change a heart! Look what God can do! Trust me, no 20-minute sermon, no pleading with your friend, or arguing in just the right way—nothing we can say is going to outdo what God can do if we LET GOD SPEAK!

So when we witness, we need to show people Jesus—and that means not just with our behavior, but with God’s message of sin and grace. Jesus spoke and brought Nathanael to faith. Today, whenever we speak the good news that Jesus lived and died to pay for sin and then defeated death for us—and whenever the pages of the Bible are opened—the Holy Spirit goes to work and brings some to faith. God calls us to speak his words, so letting God speak is sometimes us explaining things to a person. This also means that we pastors preach the pure, unadulterated Scripture of the saving God. This means that we invite others to open the pages of the Bible and to come and hear God’s Word preached.

The vital thing about this LESSON IN WITNESSING is that it center on Christ. Jesus was beginning his earthly ministry—his preaching of forgiveness and salvation through faith in him, his profound and public miracles, his journey to the cross to lay down his life in sacrifice for sin. Jesus called Philip to follow. Jesus called Nathanael to faith. It is all about Jesus from beginning to end and it is the same today. That means we must go beyond generic talk about “prayer” and “God” to specifically pointing people to Jesus.

It is important for us to keep in mind that our church is not just a social club or a beautiful building or a nice bunch of people or a place to kill time on a Sunday morning. This is Christ’s church—it belongs to him and he has called you to be his witnesses. It is all about Jesus and his promises of love and forgiveness and salvation. In order to be his witnesses, you and I need to grow in our faith and understanding. This church is where you can do that, just like Jesus told Nathanael he would do when he said, ***“You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that.” 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.”*** Here you can listen as Jesus speaks to you regularly in his Word. That will make a meaningful difference in your life both now and eternally, like he did for Philip and Nathanael. And you can invite others to come here and see Jesus too.

Please do not disregard this LESSON IN WITNESSING provided by God today. Remember that THANKFUL PEOPLE ARE EAGER TO WITNESS, that YOU CAN SIMPLY INVITE SOMEONE TO COME AND SEE, and that you just need to LET GOD SPEAK. Jesus is more beautiful than a double-rainbow. More attention-getting than an accident and more exciting than passing fire trucks. How much more important and valuable it is for us to invite others to come and see the Savior! I want to encourage you to talk to someone this week about Jesus. Invite someone to listen to his love. Invite them to come with you to worship next Sunday. Make Jesus your focus and Philip your example. Don’t just listen to what God says, but hear his calling you to witness and do it boldly in his name. Amen.

**Now the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.**