

SESSION 6

Share Christ with Your Neighbor



QUESTION 1:

What's the nicest thing a neighbor has done for you?

THE POINT

We love our neighbors when we tell them about Jesus.

THE PASSAGE

John 1:40-49

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

For many of us, the initial news of a virus in China was just that—news—and we moved on to the next news item. It didn’t take long for that little news blip to become something far greater. Within a few days, the flurries of news stories became an avalanche that affected every sphere of our lives. Overnight, everything changed throughout the world. We had to adjust to a whole new way of living.

One bright spot in that season of uncertainty and grief was how people cared for one another. Neighbors checked in on each other. Food banks saw record-breaking donations. Social media friends even helped each other find toilet paper! People felt a sense of responsibility for one another.

The devastating effects of COVID-19 pale in comparison to the desperation of being separated from a right relationship with God and the urgency of our mission to reach those lost people with His message of reconciliation. Let’s consider how we can love our neighbors by helping them find their greatest joy and deepest need—the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 1:40-42

40 Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed him.

41 He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated "the Christ"),

42 and he brought Simon to Jesus. When Jesus saw him, he said, "You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which is translated "Peter").

I'll never forget a story I once heard about a man who tried to share the gospel with his longtime friend. The man didn't know where to begin or what to say, so he just handed his friend a small booklet that explained the message of salvation. His friend read it and gave a most startling reply: "If this is really true, I can't believe we've been friends all these years and you've never told me."

We make sharing the message of Jesus far too complicated. As helpful as evangelism methods and training programs might be, the most effective witness you can give is to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to use the gifts and the personality God gave you. You see the different approaches and responses from Jesus's disciples in how they told others about Him.

Andrew had been one of John the Baptist's disciples when he responded to Jesus's invitation to follow Him (John 1:35). It seems apparent that Andrew had publicly turned away from his sins and was waiting for the promised Messiah, God's Anointed One. After John professed that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, Andrew didn't waste any time. Interestingly, in verse 41, the apostle John noted that Andrew "first found his own brother Simon and told him, 'We have found the Messiah,'" indicating that telling his brother was a top priority to him. While Simon may have been the first person he told, Andrew likely told other people this good news as well.

QUESTION 2:***What makes our testimony an effective tool when sharing the gospel?***

Evangelism is proclaiming the good news about Jesus. Someone has said, “Evangelism is just one beggar telling another where to find bread.” Think about the last time you gave or received some good news. It might have been about a job or a test result. Maybe you exhaled a sigh of relief when you heard the news, or maybe you were so elated, you couldn’t contain your excitement as you spoke.

When many of us think of evangelism, we think of an activity that we do, but what we find in the New Testament is something more akin to a lifestyle that we live. The early disciples were so completely devoted to Jesus that He had changed everything they were living for. They didn’t compartmentalize their spiritual lives—all of their lives became spiritual.

We tend to approach life differently, especially since we live in a culture influenced by what’s called the “sacred/secular divide.” We put our Christian selves in one “box” and our work selves in another. In fact, we probably have multiple “boxes”—family, recreation, entertainment, and so forth—that represent different aspects of our lives.

But as John Mark Comer describes, that mindset is incongruent with how Jesus approached the spiritual life: “It’s easy to forget that Jesus was a builder or a carpenter. And if working an ordinary, unglamorous ‘secular’ job wasn’t beneath the embodiment of the Creator Himself, why would it be below us? . . . So do your work—whatever it is—as a follower of Jesus. Because there are no compartments. The way of Jesus should permeate and influence and shape every facet of your life.”¹

What does this have to do with your witness for Christ? Everything! God has already placed you in a mission field and called you to reach the people nearest you with His good news. You don’t need to go on an international mission trip or even go door-to-door

in a community, as important as those ministry opportunities are. You can just start with the people closest to you like Andrew did. No matter where you are, people need to hear about Jesus.

QUESTION 3:

What can hold us back from telling others about Jesus?

John 1:43-46

43 The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. He found Philip and told him, “Follow me.”

44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter.

45 Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law (and so did the prophets): Jesus the son of Joseph, from Nazareth.”

46 “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Nathanael asked him. “Come and see,” Philip answered.

Did you catch Philip’s approach to evangelism in verse 46, when Nathanael was skeptical? Philip simply said, “Come and see.” Those three words tell us as much about what evangelism *is not* as they tell us what evangelism *is*. As followers of Christ, we are simply messengers, heralds who invite people to encounter the Lord Jesus for themselves. We’re not sharing *our* message; we’re sharing *His* message.

That simple truth is incredibly freeing when we feel inadequate to be His witnesses. We only need to share the message. It’s not our job to convict. We don’t even have to persuade. We only need to invite them to “come and see” who Jesus is and what He has done. This isn’t an excuse not to study or to be informed of barriers to someone’s faith. But a “come and see” approach frees us from

trying to change anyone. Only God's power can change someone's heart. Regardless of a person's sins or background, his spiritual need is first to know the Lord.

When we invite others to "come and see" Jesus, we're sharing the message of Christ the way Jesus Himself did. During Jesus's ministry, many people saw Him face-to-face, heard Him teach, and saw His miracles, but not all of them believed right away. Even after His resurrection and appearance to hundreds of people (1 Cor. 15:6-8), some still doubted (Matt. 28:17). They had all the evidence they needed but believing did not come easy to them. Look at how Jesus interacted with them. He still included them. He didn't write them off. He still patiently allowed them to "come and see" for themselves.

It's easy to give up on people in frustration, impatience, or even despair. Friends may have been coming to church, talking with you about the gospel, and even gotten connected with other Christians, but they still don't believe. The heartbreaking truth is that some never will trust in Christ. But for others, they just need someone to accept them where they are, keep patiently sharing Christ with them, and loving them enough not to give up.

In his book, *The Invested Life*, Joel Rosenberg observed all the ways Jesus interacted with His followers. Keep in mind, these weren't just the Andrews and the Peters of Jesus's earthly ministry. This also included the Judases of Jesus's ministry. Jesus lived with His followers. He ate with them, cooked with them, sang with them, showed them how to care for others, challenged their faith, and forgave them. He did this knowing not all of them would believe—and even those who did believe needed time to understand who He was.³

When we look at how Jesus shared His message of salvation, we see His love for others on display. We see Him show mercy to those with physical and spiritual needs. We watch Him teach His followers to value loving one another more than perfectly following religious rules. We see Him respond to others' failures with kindness and forgiveness. We see Him ceaselessly concerned that their hearts are right with God.

Essentially, within Jesus's simple call to "come and see" who He is, we discover everything we've been learning about loving others wrapped up in Him. He is the Good Samaritan who saw our helpless state when we were still His enemies and stopped to rescue us. He is the gracious King, who delights in forgiving the debts we can never repay. He is the Incarnation of patience, kindness, and self-sacrifice. When we see Jesus, we see love.

QUESTION 4:

Who first invited you to come and see Jesus?

John 1:47-49

47 Then Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said about him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."

48 "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you," Jesus answered.

49 "Rabbi," Nathanael replied, "You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel!"

This exchange between Jesus and Nathanael is fascinating to me. I'm curious about the significance of "the fig tree" where Jesus saw Nathanael. What happened there to lead Nathanael to believe Jesus was the promised Messiah? Was it just because the Lord knew he was there? The apostle John doesn't give us those details, but perhaps that fig tree was Nathanael's place of prayer and self-examination before the Lord. It's possible that, as C.H. Spurgeon noted, "the moment our Lord mentioned that hallowed spot, its remembrances were to Nathanael so secret and so sacred, that he felt that the omniscient One was before him."⁴

It's not necessary that we know Nathanael's backstory, because the point isn't really about Nathanael at all. It's about how deeply and perfectly Jesus knew him and the condition of his heart. Because of that, Jesus knew exactly how to communicate with Nathanael to connect to his soul. He knows each of us in that very same way, along with what we need to believe. One person may hear the gospel for the first time and trust Christ right then and there, while another must study the Bible for years before trusting in Jesus. Jesus knows the heart and background of every person.

We see the heart of Jesus in how He greeted Nathanael with a blessing. He said Nathanael was an honest man. There was no deceit in him. His heart and motives were pure. How did Jesus know this? Because Jesus is God. He created Nathanael. He knew Nathanael better than Nathanael knew himself. Jesus knows what is in the hearts of all people (John 2:24-25). He knows our sinful state and He sees our corruption. No one could accuse Jesus of being overly optimistic about the human condition.

When Jesus saw Nathanael, His first words to him were kind, even identifying what was admirable in him. Jesus could have begun with words of condemnation or judgment, but instead He started with words of grace. That principle should guide us as we lead our family and friends to "come and see" Jesus. For example, we might affirm someone's desire to be a good person and start a conversation with the truth that none of us can live up to even our own standards, much less God's standards. Or we might begin by pointing out the ways God has blessed them and how He gives all His blessings so that we would know and love Him.

In all the testimonies I've ever heard of how a person came to faith in Christ, I've never heard someone say he was argued or shamed into conversion. An invitation to "come and see" can lead someone's eyes to be opened through exploring the claims of Christ. As he encounters Jesus, the Holy Spirit does His work of conviction. It's the kindness of God that works in a person's heart. "God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance" (Rom. 2:4).

At this point of Nathanael's encounter with Jesus, Philip was in the background. Phillip simply made the introduction; it was Jesus who met Nathanael's need. With our friends, we show love when we invite them to "come and see" Jesus. We make the introduction, tell what we experienced when we "came and saw," and trust God to work in their hearts. The epitome of our friendship can be when we bring them to an even greater friendship in Christ.

QUESTION 5:

What is our responsibility when it comes to sharing Jesus with others?

ENGAGE

List three words that describe your personality.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

List three skills, talents, or spiritual gifts that you have.

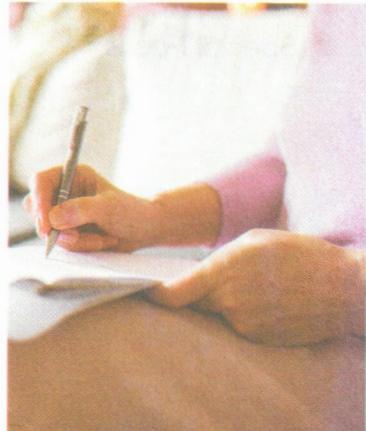
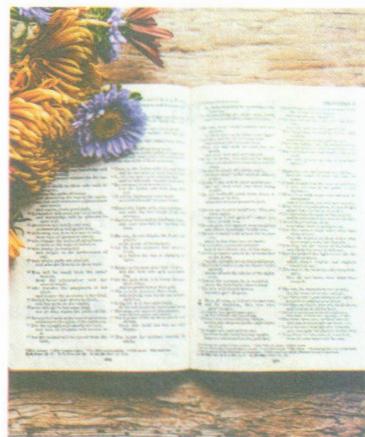
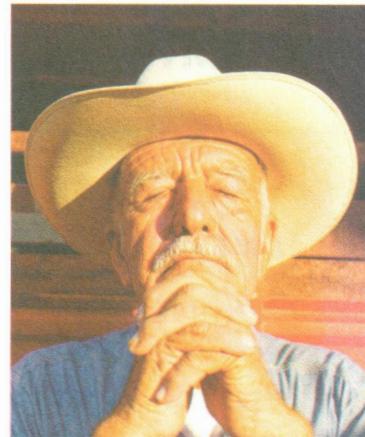
- 1.
- 2.
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How might God want you to use your personality traits and these skills, talents, and spiritual gifts to tell others about Jesus?

LIVE IT OUT

How will you love others and tell them about Jesus?

- ▶ **Trust.** What holds you back from sharing Christ? Pray and ask God to make your faith in Him greater than your fears.
- ▶ **Invite.** With the same “come and see” mindset seen in both Andrew and Philip, invite friends to come with you to your Bible study group. Your group can provide a non-threatening way to “come and see” Jesus as your group discusses God’s Word.
- ▶ **Share.** Draw three circles and make a list of people God has put in your life. In the first circle, include your closest relationships. In the second circle, write a list of your friends and co-workers. In the third circle include acquaintances or neighbors you don’t know well. Who in those circles does the Lord want you to reach with the gospel? As you pray, look for opportunities to share Christ with others.



END NOTES

1. John Mark Comer, “There’s No Difference Between ‘Spiritual’ and ‘Secular’,” *Relevant*, June 16, 2021, relevantmagazine.com/faith/theres-no-difference-between-spiritual-and-secular/.
2. Joel C. Rosenberg, *The Invested Life: Making Disciples of All Nations One Person at a Time* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Publishers, 2012), 22-24.
3. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, “Nathanael and the Fig Tree,” *The Spurgeon Center*; accessed on June 25, 2021; spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/nathanael-and-the-fig-tree/#flipbook/.