

Make an Invitation

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Preacher: Roger Simpson

- [0 : 00] Today's Bible reading is from John chapter 1, starting to read at verse 35. The next day, John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, look, the Lamb of God.
- When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning round, Jesus saw them following and asked, what do you want? They said, Rabbi, which means teacher, where are you staying?
- Come, he replied, and you will see. So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.
- Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother, Simon, and tell him, We have found the Messiah, that is, the Christ.
- And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, you are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas, which means, when translated, Peter.
- [1 : 10] The next day, Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, follow me. Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida.
- Philip found Nathanael and told him, we have found the one that Moses wrote about in the law, and about whom the prophets also wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, son of Joseph.
- Nazareth? Can anything good come from there? Nathanael asked. Come and see, said Philip. When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.
- How do you know me? Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you. Then Nathanael declared, Rabbi, you are the son of God.
- You are the king of Israel. Jesus said, you believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that.
- [2 : 17] He then added, very truly I tell you, you will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the son of man. This is the word of the Lord.
- Amen. Okay, if you've got a Bible, can you keep it open? Because we're going to look at that passage. And let's just pray now.
- Dear Lord, we thank you for the scriptures which teach us and point us to you. And I'd like to pray now. Come Holy Spirit and speak to us clearly and directly and simply from your word we pray this morning.
- Move our hearts and our minds and our wills. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Now just to say, when you live in Chipping Norton, in England, Chipping Norton has a bit of a sort of, they think, oh, it's the famous people live in Chipping Norton.
- So I do bump into David Cameron occasionally in the supermarket. I know that's very unpopular to say that in Scotland. But I heard this great story about a little boy who really wanted 100 pounds very badly.

[3 : 35] So he prayed to God for a whole week and absolutely nothing happened. So he decided, after nothing seemed to happen through his prayers, he decided to write a letter to God requesting 100 pounds.

So when the post office received the letter addressed to God UK, they decided to send the letter to the Prime Minister.

Anyway, the Prime Minister was so impressed and touched and amused by the little boy's request that he instructed his private secretary to send the boy a five-pound note.

Because he thought that the five-pound note would make the little boy very happy and would be a lot of money to a little boy. Anyway, the boy was delighted to get the five pounds, so he sat down to write a thank-you letter to God.

And it read as follows. Dear God, thank you very much for sending me the money. However, I noticed for one reason, you had to send it through number 10 Downing Street.

[4 : 45] And as usual, they took most of it. So you don't know who you're going to bump into in Chipping Norton. Anyway, I want to talk on this morning about the call of the first disciples.

So if you've got it there in front of you. And I want to start by saying that a few years ago, they did some research. It was called Talking Jesus. And this research was done on behalf of the Church of England.

And they came up, they interviewed 3,000 non-Christians. Now, the good news from the survey was that 67% of the non-Christians who were surveyed knew a Christian.

And this is what was so amazing. They liked them. They liked them. 43% of the non-Christians that were surveyed believed, this was in England, they believed that Jesus rose from the dead.

And then this, and this was the statistic which really caught my eye. One in five of the non-Christians who were surveyed were open to an encounter or an experience of Jesus Christ.

[6 : 15] So one in five. The bad news was that 40% of those who were interviewed were not convinced that Jesus was a real person, that he actually existed.

And 59% of those surveyed did not want to know any more about Jesus Christ. But one in five were open.

That's a lot of people in Britain who are open to Jesus Christ. Of the people that you know who are not yet Christians, one in five statistically is open to Jesus Christ.

Now if we look at this story of the first disciples, the context, just reading from verse 35, this was the next day, John tells us.

John was there, that's John the Baptist, and he was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, look, the Lamb of God, the Saviour of the world.

[7 : 28] And when the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus, and turning round, Jesus saw them following, and he said, what do you want? They said, Rabbi, which means teacher, where are you staying?

Come, he replied, and you will see. Now I found it very interesting when I was looking at this story to discover that when they said to Jesus, where are you staying?

The word that is used in the original is the same word that Jesus uses in John 15 when he says, remain in me.

It's the same word, abide in me. Where are you staying? Where are you remaining?

And they go. Jesus says, come, they go, and they stay with him, and then something happens to them. Now, a Christian is someone who remains, abides in Jesus Christ.

- [8 : 45] And when we remain in Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ remains in us, we're a Christian. That's what a Christian is.
- Somebody illustrated it like this. They said, if you put your name, so I put my name on this piece of paper, and I put that piece of paper in the Bible, that's me.
- And if the Bible represents, in the illustration, Jesus Christ, when I am in Christ, and Christ is in me, when I remain in Jesus Christ, and he remains in me, I am a Christian.
- And what I find very interesting, that's the way you start the Christian life. How do you start the Christian life? You start the Christian life by getting into Christ, remaining in him, and as he remains in you, by the Holy Spirit, then you, that's how you continue in Christ.
- Now, what I want you to notice, is what then happens to Andrew. Look at verse 40. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two.
- [10 : 03] We don't know who the other one was. I think it was probably, most of the commentaries think it was probably John, was one of the two who heard what John had said, and who had followed Jesus.
- And the first thing, that Andrew did, was to find his brother Simon, and tell him, we have found the Messiah, that is the Christ, and he brought him, to Jesus.
- Now, I find this really interesting, because Andrew is not one of those, characters, who actually, he's not very well known, in the New Testament. I did a little search, in John's Gospel, and I found three instances, of Andrew, where he's specifically mentioned.
- And in each case, in John's Gospel, we see him bringing, someone, to Jesus Christ. So the first, incident, is this story, in John 1.
- What does he do? As soon as he's found, the Messiah, what does he do? He goes, and he brings, his brother, Simon Peter, to Jesus. He appears again, in John chapter 6, in the story, of the feeding, of the 5,000.
- [11 : 21] You all know, the story well. They had no food. Jesus says, has anybody got any food? Who is it, that brings the boy, with his loaves, and his fishes, to Jesus?
- It's Andrew. Andrew brings the boy, and Jesus feeds everyone. And then he appears again, in John chapter 12, where there are some Greeks, looking for Jesus.
- They're trying to find him, in Jerusalem. And who is it, that introduces, the Greeks to Jesus? It's Andrew. It's Andrew and Philip. So again and again, we find Andrew, bringing people, to Jesus Christ.
- And here, he brings his brother, Simon Peter, one of the greatest influences, in the early days, of Christianity. Christianity, the rock, Cephas, the leader.
- And while, very few of us, will be Simon Peters, we can all do, what Andrew did. There was a famous, archbishop of Canterbury, called William Temple, and he wrote, and he wrote, a very good commentary, on John's gospel.
- [12 : 41] He apparently, wrote it on his knees. And he wrote, in his margin, on this verse, where it says, and he brought him, to Jesus.
- He wrote the words, the greatest service, that one man, can rend, to another, to bring them, to Christ. So the greatest thing, that you can do, is to bring, someone, to Jesus Christ.
- Now a few years ago, I was in, sorry, a few months ago, I was in Vietnam. And I was asked to go, and teach, house church leaders, in Vietnam.
- I've never been to Vietnam, this was in Hanoi. I didn't realize, that the church, in Vietnam, has suffered, appalling, persecution. Terrible. The pastors, have been imprisoned, tortured.

So the church, meets secretly. And they meet, in small, house churches. And the man, who invited me, to go and do this, I had to teach, every day, for six hours.

[13 : 49] Can you imagine that? Can you imagine, listening to, somebody like me, for six hours. They were so, hungry, for the Bible. I've never come across, any, there were, signs and wonders, happening, with great persecution.

And the man, who took me, to meet these, house church leaders, who works with them, was the man, who 50 years ago, when I was a student, I had, long hair and beads, and a big fur coat, in those days.

He taught me, how to lead, students, to Jesus Christ. Christ. He taught me, how to introduce, a friend, to Jesus Christ.

I had, it completely, changed my life. Before that, I used to take them, to hear John Stott, and John Stott, would bring them, to Christ. Charlie, Charlie Powell, taught me, how to lead people, to Christ.

And the first person, I'd ever led, to Christ, was a, another student, called Peter. He was a, he was a, at the Bartlett. And the first thing he did, after I'd led him, to Christ, I was full of fear, when I did it, I thought, is anything going to happen?

[15 : 00] He went off, and he got his friend, Mike, who then went, and got his friend, Roger. They're all following, Christ today, in different parts, of the world. In 1924, some of you, will know this, 1934, Albert McMakin, who was a, 24 year old, farmer, became a Christian.

And he was so, full of enthusiasm, once he discovered Christ, that he filled a truck, with people, and he took them, to a meeting, to hear about Jesus.

There was a big tent, and he was taking them, to hear, he was a, an evangelist, called Mordecai Ham, who was preaching. And there was one, particular, very good looking, farmer's son, who, who he was, especially keen, to get to the meeting.

But this man, was very hard, to persuade. He was, too busy, falling in, and out of love, with different girls. And he didn't seem, at all attracted, to Christianity. Anyway, eventually, Albert McMakin, managed to persuade him, to attend the meeting, by asking him, to drive the truck.

He said, will you drive the truck? So he drove the truck, and when they arrived, Albert's guest driver, decided to go in, and was absolutely, spellbound, by what he heard.

[16 : 26] And he began, to have thoughts, that he'd never had before. And he went back, night after night, he drove the truck, and then he'd slip in, at the back of the tent, and he'd listen. And on the final night, he went forward, and he gave his life, to Jesus Christ.

Now since then, that young truck driver, has spoken to millions, and millions of people, about Jesus Christ, during his lifetime.

He actually came to Edinburgh, when I was at P&G;'s, and he spoke, in Murrayfield Stadium. And he went on, to become the spiritual advisor, to nine US presidents.

The young truck driver, was a man called Billy Graham. Now you've heard, most of you have heard, of Billy Graham. I shouldn't think, any of you have heard, of Albert McMakin. But Albert McMakin, brought Billy, to a meeting, where he could hear, about Jesus Christ.

Now what happens next, and if you just look, at the story again, I've just got one more point, and then I'll wrap it up. Look what happens next. The next day, verse 43, Jesus decided, to leave for Galilee.

[17 : 40] Finding Philip, he said to him, follow me. Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town, of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathaniel, and told him, we found the one, Moses wrote about, in the law, and about whom, the prophets also wrote.

Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. Nazareth? Can anything good, come from Chipping Norton? Nathaniel asked. Come and see.

Come and see. Said Philip. Now we can all do that. We can all say, come and see.

To our friends. To our family. To our work colleagues. To our neighbours. We can all be part, of God's amazing plan, which is he wants, to bring people, to hear about his son, and to put their trust, in his son.

And we can be involved, and this is the extraordinary thing, God can involve you, and me, ordinary people like us, in this amazing work, of introducing, our friends, to Jesus Christ.

[18 : 56] Now, the extraordinary thing to me, is that God doesn't need, any of us. He doesn't need, he can do whatever he wants, because he's God. But the amazing thing, is that God chooses, to use people, like you, and me.

So, how do we bring people, to Jesus? Here are four hints. I've been doing this, for 50 years, and I still find it difficult. I still get nervous, I still get, feel shame, I still feel guilt, even now, and I've been doing it, so I won't find it easy, when I come here, in two months time, I will be full of all sorts, of fear, and foreboding, just like you will be.

So I say that, just to reassure you, doesn't get any easier, this stuff. But, I've, first of all, always start, who do I know? Always start, with the people you know.

Who do I know? My family, my friends, my neighbours, maybe somebody I, play golf with, if you play golf, I play golf, so I meet people through that.

People who I'm in touch with. I'm always looking for, people of peace. Do you remember Jesus, when he sent them out, he said, look for people of peace. And I used to think, who are people of peace?

[20 : 14] And then I learnt, that people of peace, are people, who I like, and who like, me. I used to think, everybody liked me.

But they don't. I'm surprised by that. I thought everybody would. But there are certain people, I get on with, very well. I'll let you into a secret.

I get on very well, with multi-millionaires. I don't know why, but I've led quite a few, multi-millionaires, to Jesus Christ.

Where does that come from? So if you've got any, multi-millionaires, do introduce me, to them. I like them. I like entrepreneurs. They seem to like me, even though I'm just a clergyman.

There will be certain people, that you like, and who really like you. Who won't like me, but they like you. They're the people, that you need to witness to.

[21 : 16] Secondly, be ready to invite them. We usually find, that to invite them, to a social occasion first, a meal. So you could be, over the next few, couple of months, before we come, just have some neighbours in, for a meal.

Don't talk to them, about Jesus. My wife said to me, recently, we went to the Lord, of the manor. He invited us, for a meal, with his wife, in this village, we live in, in the Cotswolds.

And my wife said to me, Roger, you are not, to talk about Jesus, to the chap. And I said, he's called Sir Alistair Reid, Alec Reid. I said, no, I won't talk to him, about Jesus, unless, he brings up the subject.

So we're all sitting around, having this great, dinner party, the four of us. And Alec Reid, suddenly turns to me, and he says, Roger, what is going to happen to me, when I die?

In the middle of the party, I said, Alec, that is a great question. And then I did what, rugby, scrum halves do. I went, darling, what would you say, in answer to that?

[22 : 20] So she had to answer it. And then later on, his wife said, I just don't get it. Why is Christianity, different from other religions? I said, great question, Adrienne, darling, what would you say?

So she answered the question. I didn't say a thing, about Jesus all night. But you could just have people in, for some food, just have them around. Get used to that.

And then we have also found, it's helpful to have, one chili, two chili, and three chili meetings. I was talking to Martin about, so some of the meetings, are one chili, very gentle, food, maybe a little bit of, testimony.

Two chili's a bit stronger, and then three chili is, look, I'd like you to give your life, to Jesus Christ. But we need to know, what sort of, how hot is the meeting going to be? We can talk about that afterwards.

Hudson Taylor said, we had to learn to talk to, to God about people, before we learned to talk to people, about God. And then, thirdly, be prepared for surprises.

[23 : 26] I find, it's the duvet principle. You know, if you sit on a duvet, so you're praying for Bill, and Tom gets converted. It's a great mystery.

I don't understand this. I have no idea, why some people, who I think, God is working in, and then he goes and works in, somebody completely different. It's a complete mystery to me.

So, be prepared for surprises, and then finally, don't be put off by rejection. Remember the one in five. One in five.

So, pray that God will lead you, to those who are open, and are seeking. Keith DeBerry, who I used to work with, said, it's not a failure, if we invite people, and they don't come.

It's only a failure, if we don't invite them. Let's pray. Now, I don't know about you, but I'm really encouraged, by this story, that God could use Andrew, to bring his brother, to Christ.

[24 : 36] That God could use Philip, to bring his friend Nathaniel. Come and see. And Lord, I'd like to pray, for all of us, because we all struggle, with this.

It's hard, we don't like it, when people reject us. We need to be courageous, and full of faith.

So, help us Lord, and encourage us, as we reach out, to our friends, and our neighbours, and say to them, come and see.

Amen. Amen.