

Come and See

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Sermon Series:
Following Jesus
Around

John 1:5-51

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Who teaches you? Whose disciple are you? One thing is sure, you are somebody's disciple. You learned how to live from somebody else. You and I are the students of a few select people, living or deceased, who taught us about the meaning and purpose of life.

We are disciples of our parents or other family members most intimately related to us. Usually our families trained us for good, but not always.

We are the disciples of our teachers. This week, I had occasion to thank one of my aging mentors in person. I had the distinct privilege of telling him where he ranks in my spiritual hall of fame.

We are disciples of our peers. That's why we make such a big deal over the peer group you hang with in school. Peer pressure can be in a positive or negative direction. Incidentally, the same principle holds for adults. We urge you to establish spiritual friends in the church in order to create positive peer pressure.

Are you a disciple of Jesus? Becoming a disciple has become optional in many churches. It has become possible to become members of churches without making any real progress toward becoming disciples. Christians view discipleship like accessory

jewelry. Women wear jewelry to accessorize an outfit. That's the way many of us treat discipleship—as something extra.

Some of us want to do just enough in life to “make the final cut.” You know, do enough good deeds to make it into heaven. But to live that way means to speculate endlessly about whether we will ever be good enough to merit God's favor. Am I good enough? Have I sinned too much?

If you are intent on living as Jesus' disciple, there is no need to worry about such questions. People who are seeking to be apprentices of Jesus in their daily existence are sure to be Christians in every sense of the word.

Jesus isn't recruiting believers, he's seeking followers. Every disciple is a believer but, unfortunately, not every believer is a disciple. People are eager to join the Jesus Christ fan club but are reticent about becoming his disciples.

Come and see means to follow. When two would-be disciples are trailing Jesus, he asks them, “What do you want?” (1:38). They ask in return, “Where are you staying?” Jesus replies, “Come and see.” Four times in our Scripture lesson, we are told Jesus' disciples followed him (1:37, 38, 40, 43). These new disciples spend time watching and helping Jesus. Then, they are sent by Jesus to do what he does.

If we want to be Jesus' disciples, we must spend time with him to become what he is and do what he does.

Dallas Willard writes in his book *The Divine Conspiracy*, "If I am someone's disciple or apprentice, there is one absolutely essential condition; I must be with that person." Being with that person enables us to become what that person is and do what that person does. The same holds true with Jesus. If we want to be Jesus' disciples, we must spend time with him to become what he is and do what he does.

Let's imagine you love the writing of John Doe. You join the John Doe fan club. Every month, you gather as a fan club to read another of John Doe's books. You are enthralled by his writing. One day, John Doe makes a surprise personal appearance. You are agog to shake John Doe's hand. "I'll never wash my hand again," you say. "I just touched John Doe."

But let's say you marry John Doe or, alternatively, Jane Doe. Now, all of a sudden, all of John or Jane Doe's life becomes a part of your life. You can hardly go anywhere without telling John or Jane of your whereabouts.

Being Jesus' disciple is more like being married than being in his fan club. Of course, we can't be with Jesus in exactly the same way his first disciples could. They could be with him physically; we can't. Yet, we can still become his pupil. He gives us his very presence, called the Holy Spirit, to energize and direct us. We learn how to become his disciples by studying his word and putting it into practice.

Keep in mind, I'm not trying to live Jesus' life. His life has already been wonderfully lived. I am trying to live my life in the manner Jesus would live it if he were I. My life is the focus of my discipleship.

Some people think when we talk about discipleship we are discussing some extraordinary religious thing. Discipleship is learning how to live for Christ in the time and place in our lives. We are learning how to live for Christ in our families, our jobs (or school) and our neighborhoods (or dorm).

Let's take the matter of our jobs. I am learning how to do my job as Jesus would do it if he were I.

Specifically, how do we learn how to make our employment a place of Christian apprenticeship? Most assuredly, it is not by becoming a dead-eye critic of everyone else's behavior, what Willard calls "a Christian nag-in-residence." I do my job well because that's what Jesus would do if he were I. I promote what I know to be right and practice non-cooperation with what I know to be wrong. I want to be engaged in a sensitive, non-intrusive service to others. I want to promote fairness, helpfulness and generosity.

This is particularly relevant to those among us who hate our jobs. If you hate your job, then, in your attitude, change employers. Imagine that you no longer work for some mortal but that you work for God. After all, we do our best work for God.

"Come and see" means to follow. "Come and see" also means let's go together. Our Scripture lesson con-

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sists of two consecutive stories about two sets of new disciples. Jesus invites Andrew to follow, who, in turn, recruits his brother Peter. Jesus invites Philip to follow, who, likewise, invites a friend named Nathaniel.

Andrew is Jesus' first disciple. He's also the first one to bring someone else to Jesus. He is heralded as the first missionary in the church, because every time he appears in John's gospel he is bringing someone to Jesus (6:8; 12:22).

St. Andrew is regarded as the patron saint of Scotland, consistent with the ancient tradition that his bones were brought to the east coast of Scotland for safe keeping. (He's also the patron saint of Greece, Malta, Romania and Russia). The saltire or St. Andrew's cross serves as the national flag of Scotland.

Some of you, when you hear the name St. Andrew, think of Scotland's oldest university, which dates back to 1413. Or you think of the world's oldest continuous golf course, which bears the name, St. Andrews. Christians remember St. Andrew as someone who brings other people to Jesus.

When Jesus invites Philip to follow, Philip says to his friend Nathaniel, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth" (1:45). Nathaniel replies, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip responds, "Come and see." Notice, Philip doesn't argue with

his friend. He says simply "Come and see." He invites his friend to see for himself. I have never been successful in arguing anyone into the kingdom of God.

We need to cultivate spiritual friends to accompany us on this discipleship journey. We need people who, spiritually speaking, are a few steps ahead of us and a few steps behind us.

Fellow Christians help us grow. Some of you come to worship but have no one to process what you are learning. If we have no one to process what we are learning, we will not likely understand how this gospel applies to our lives.

If you need a spiritual friend, we have a simple way to facilitate spiritual friendship in this church. Turn to page 9 of your bulletin. In the middle of the page, look for the verse, "I am about to do a new thing...do you not perceive it?", which will be our theme verse for our Lenten season of renewal. We are serious in this church about making 2007 a year of renewal for our church.

We have listed five events taking place during Lent to help us establish spiritual friendship. Let me say from the outset it is not my intent in this sermon to promote church programs. My intent is to identify concrete ways for you to discover what it means to follow Jesus.

The first event listed is our Ash Wednesday service, which inaugurates Lent. The second event, what we call our WOW groups (WOW is an acronym for Church

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Without Walls), are small groups of two or more people meeting each week to explore discipleship in depth. Why do you think Jesus spent 80 percent of his time with 12 people? He could have invested more time speaking to the masses. I suspect it's because Jesus knows that fellowship in small groups is one of the best ways to encourage and hold one another accountable.

The third event is a Monday-through-Friday prayer gathering each weekday morning and repeated at the noon hour. "The Daily Office," is a structured rotation of prayer taken from the Book of Common Prayer. Why not build into your daily schedule daily prayer and scripture?

The fourth event featured is the Great Banquet weekends, a 72-hour renewal experience held in our church. Some of you are in need of a major spiritual overhaul. You give God 72 hours and He will change your life!

I know what you're thinking—72 hours. No way can I spare 72 hours! I realize after being a part of this ministry for several years how zealously people guard their time. You'd think this event lasted for a month, the way some people covet their time.

The last event is a monthly prayer gathering in our church. We are praying for renewal in this church, both personal and corporate.

Some of you might be saying, but I already have spiritual friends. What about the mission of making friends for Jesus? Some of us have

a lot to offer, but we are not finding anybody for Jesus.

"Come and see" means to follow. We spend time with Jesus to become what he is and do what he does.

"Come and see" means let's go together. Jesus calls us into a community of spiritual friends to become what he is and do what he does.

