



Discussion Guide

Invited by Others—John 1.35-42

Getting Started: 10 minutes

- If you could have but one wish, what would it be?

Setting the Stage: *What do you want? I suppose there are many things that we want. Our lives are marked by deep longings, not just one. We want love, recognition, power, prestige, leisure, comfort, and a home in the Bahamas. At least, most of us want a home in the Bahamas mid-January. If you were asked to boil it all down to one, if you could only long for one thing, what would that one thing be? What is it that your heart craves for the most? What is the one thing that, if you possessed it, might change everything?*

Diving Into the Text: 60 minutes (The following questions are intended to provide your group with a simple road map through the text. Feel free to use these questions in ways that best fit your group and the dynamics of your own meeting.)

- Using the group notes, describe the background, context, and content of John 1.35-42.
- Read John 1.35-39 slowly, pausing with the major phrases. Ask the members of the group to imagine they are experiencing the scene as Andrew. Allow them to sit for a few moments to soak the scene in.
- As Andrew, what do you experience? What draws you to Jesus? Can you elaborate?
- Read John 1.35-39 slowly, pausing with the major phrases. Ask the members of the group to imagine that Jesus is speaking directly to them. Allow them to sit for a few moments.
- In what way would you respond to Jesus? What do you truly want?
- Are you willing to go and “be with” Jesus to find what you want? Can you elaborate?
- What might your response say about your relationship with Jesus? Can you explain?
- Read John 1.40-42 slowly, pausing with the major phrases. Ask the members of the group to imagine they are experiencing the scene as Simon. Allow them to sit for a few moments.
- How do Jesus’ words make you feel? What response do they evoke in you? Can you explain?
- How willing are you to being truly known and changed by Jesus? Can you elaborate?
- Read John 1.35-42 slowly. Have the group sit “with Jesus” without expectation or an agenda for five minutes in silence. Have someone serve as a timekeeper for this. Thoughts may plague your group members. It may help to say the name “Jesus” with each exhalation as a means of focusing mind and body on him.
- Conclude by turning to a partner. Each should say in turn “Jesus, I want to follow you.” To which the response should be given, “You are _____. I love you. You will be called ‘Blessed.’”

Wrapping Up: 20 minutes

Group Notes

Invited by Others: John 1.35-42

Context and Background

John: The Gospel of John is the fourth Gospel. It was perhaps the most influential Gospel in the earliest days of the Christian movement. The book of John differs from the other three Gospels in that it has no mention of Jesus' birth and little information about Jesus' ministry in Galilee. In contrast to the other Gospels, John focuses on Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem, his final dialogue with his disciples, and the use of signs and metaphors to point to the divinity of Jesus. Some have noted that John's Gospel is decidedly more "theological" than the other three Gospels. This is not to say that theology is missing from Matthew, Mark and Luke. Rather, John's heavy use of dialogue in contrast to action in the other Gospels and the focus of these dialogues on the thematic topics of faith, life, love, regeneration, and truth provide a more explicit theology than the implicit theology found in the other Gospels. Another difference between the Gospel of John and the other Gospels which influences the nature of this Gospel is the intended audience. Matthew, Mark, and Luke each seem to be writing to specific audiences which influences the way the story of Jesus is told. For instance, Mark is writing to a Gentile audience and thus spends time explaining Jewish customs. John, on the other hand, seems to attempt to transcend audiences. He seems to be writing a Gospel for the "every man." He places his emphasis on universal truths that lead his audience to faith (John 20.30-31), universals such as light, life, truth, bread and water. His point may be both to lead people to faith for the first time and to lead people to deeper faith in Christ.

Lamb of God: In the New Testament, the title "Lamb of God" is assigned to Jesus by John the Baptist. The image of a lamb would certainly call to mind the sacrificial system for his Jewish hearers. John expands upon this concept by noting that Jesus is a lamb that will take away the sin of the world. The statement implies that Jesus will be sacrificed and that his sacrifice will atone for the sinfulness of all people. This statement expands upon the Jewish sacrificial system in two ways. First, the sacrificial system is expanded to include a person and not just an animal. Second, the effectiveness of the sacrificial system is expanded to all people and not just to the Jews. Some of John's hearers might have questioned his expansions of the Jewish sacrificial system. However these expansions are probably built upon the episode of Abraham's testing. In Genesis 22, God tested Abraham by asking him to sacrifice his son Issac. Abraham obeyed and offered his son to God. Before he could slay his son, God stopped him and provided a lamb. In response to Abraham's obedience, God promised to bless Abraham, his descendants, and all people through Abraham (Genesis 22.1-19). In this episode, we see an allusion to Jesus' own sacrifice as God provides both a lamb and asks for the sacrifice of an only son. The story of Abraham's testing provides the backdrop for understanding the great lengths God was going to go to bless all people and reverse the effects of the Fall (Genesis 3). In Jesus, God once again provides a lamb, one that is his only son (John 1.29, 36; 3.16). Likewise, the outcome of God's provision is blessing both for Abraham's family and for all people (John 1.29).

The Text

Jesus' Invitation (John 1.35-39): John the Baptist has been preaching, raising both concerns and expectations among his audience. Through his preaching, the Jewish people are beginning to expect the arrival of the Messiah (John 1.19-28). The Messiah was the expected agent of God whom God would send to redeem Israel by leading them out of physical and spiritual exile. One day while preaching, John sees Jesus and identifies him and the Lamb of God (John 1.29). He goes further to state that Jesus will deal with the sins of the world. In so doing, John hearkens back to the story of Abraham's testing to indicate that God is doing something in the person of Jesus that will bless all people. The implication is that John loosely identifies Jesus as the Messiah, though he redefines the Messiah as one who is concerned with spiritual exile of all people and not just the Jewish people. The next day, John once again identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God. However, this time two of John's disciples overhear John and choose to follow Jesus. The following seems to be quite literal, with these two men walking after Jesus until he sensed their presence. Upon recognizing them, Jesus turns and asks them what they want. On one level, the question is basic discourse. However, on a deeper level, Jesus is seeking to identify the desires of these men so that he might meet them (see John 5.6 and Mark 10.51). These men reply by asking where Jesus is staying. In the culture, they are asking to be with Jesus so that they might learn from him. In other words, they are asking permission to align themselves with Jesus as his apprentices/disciples. Jesus grants this request. He invites them to come and see; that is, Jesus invites these two men to become his disciples by being with him. In so doing, he grants their desire. Interestingly, Jesus does not grant every desire he encounters (see John 6.15; Matthew 17.4; Mark 8.31-33). Rather, he withdraws from those whose desires are focused on self. However, he grants those desires that hold faith in him as central to the desire.

Andrew's Invitation (John 1.40-42): We discover that one of the men who followed Jesus was named Andrew. This man had a brother by the name of Simon. After spending time with Jesus, Andrew went and found his brother in order to bring him to Jesus. Andrew believed that he had found the Messiah. When Andrew brought Simon to Jesus, Jesus stated that he knew Simon's name and was changing it. In this culture, names referred to one's character. The symbolism is difficult to miss. Jesus knew Simon by name; that is, he knew his character. Jesus not only knew Simon's character but he promised to change it. Jesus promised to change Simon's character to one of stability (*petros*—rock).

Application: Jesus invites people to become his apprentices/disciples. He longs for people to be with him so that they might learn from him. When people choose to come to Jesus they find that he already knows them. Rather than turning them away, Jesus invites them into an intimate relationship, a relationship that changes their character. When we invite others to Jesus, we are inviting them "be with" Jesus as his apprentice. We are inviting them into a life-changing relationship with Jesus.