

## REFLECTION GUIDE

### JOHN 1:35-51 | WHAT IT MEANS TO FOLLOW JESUS

#### KEY TERMS

**Rabbi/Disciples** - *Rabbi* was a title of honor meaning “teacher.” *Disciple* literally means “learner” and can also be translated “follower” or “apprentice.” This scene in John’s gospel shows that Jesus and his disciples will have a teacher and apprentice relationship.

**Messiah/Christ** - *Messiah* literally means “anointed one.” The term became associated with the long-awaited deliverer promised to Israel, who would restore God’s kingdom (see Is 9:6-7 & Dan 7:13-14). *Christ* is a Greek translation of the Hebrew word *Messiah*.

**Son of Man** - A Jewish expression referring to an individual—sometimes simply meaning “a certain person,” while other times designating an individual as representative of humankind as a whole. The term is used in Daniel to refer to a transcendent, human-like figure who will usher in God’s coming kingdom, and is applied to Jesus in the NT by Jesus himself and his followers.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

The apostle John translates three key terms in this passage from Hebrew to Greek—*Rabbi* as “teacher”, *Messiah* as “Christ”, and *Cephas* as “Peter.” This reflects John’s sensitivity to a diverse audience and highlights the universal nature of Jesus’s mission.

#### SYNOPSIS

Jesus returns to the wilderness where John the Baptist is ministering and John once again identifies Jesus as the *Lamb of God* (v. 35-36). This declaration results in two of John’s disciples leaving John in order to follow Jesus as their new *Rabbi* (vv. 37-38). Andrew—one of the two—then goes and finds his brother Peter, and tells him, *We have the found Messiah* (v. 41). Jesus then travels to Galilee and meets Philip and Nathaniel (vv. 43-46). Nathaniel initially doubts that a man from Nazareth can be the Messiah but after Jesus reveals special knowledge about Nathaniel, he identifies Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God (v. 47-49). This scene closes with Jesus telling Nathaniel (and presumably the others who were nearby), *Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man* (v. 51). This statement is a reference to Genesis 28 where Jacob has a vision of a ladder from heaven to earth with angels ascending and descending. Jesus seems to be promising his disciples a divine confirmation that he is the Messiah. John’s gospel provides more interpretation with the calling of Jesus’ first disciples than the other three. The way that he highlights the theme of seeking/finding and Jesus’ identity (*Rabbi, Messiah, Son of God, Son of Man*) is likely an intentional way to draw readers into the story to consider who Jesus is, what they (the reader) are seeking, and whether or not it might be found in Jesus.

#### GOING DEEPER

When Andrew and Philip understood that Jesus was the Messiah, they wanted to share that good news with people they loved. Read Romans 10:14-15 and 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. What does it mean to be an ambassador for Christ? Who in your life needs to be invited to follow Jesus with you? What does he/she need to believe about Jesus in order to start following him? How can God use you in that process?

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

### JOHN 1:35-51 | WHAT IT MEANS TO FOLLOW JESUS

#### LEARNING THE WORD

1. Read John 1:35-51, and make 4-5 quick observations. What's the main idea?
2. This entire section begins with John the Baptist repeating the statement "Behold, the Lamb of God!" as Jesus walks past. Why do you think John places this statement at the very beginning of the disciples "recruitment" and training? Why is this the essential starting place for their spiritual journey?
3. When you consider Jesus' disciples as a "organization" or community of faith, how do we practically see them begin to grow in these verses?
4. In what ways does John portray Jesus' deity and right to speak with authority as their Lord and Teacher?

#### LIVING THE WORD

5. Jesus asked these disciples, "What are you seeking?" What are common things that people are seeking in life?
6. How would you define the word "disciple"? What does it look like to be a disciple of Jesus in our day?
7. In this passage, what reasons are given for why someone would want to follow Jesus as their Lord? Do you desire to follow Jesus as the Lord of your life? Why or why not?
8. These sixteen verses provide an amazing list of names for Jesus:
  - Messiah (vv. 20, 41)
  - The Prophet (v. 21)
  - Jesus (v. 29)
  - Lamb of God (v. 29, 36)
  - One who baptizes with the Spirit (v. 33)
  - Chosen [Son] of God (v. 34)
  - Rabbi/Teacher (vv. 38, 49)
  - Christ/Anointed One (v. 41)
  - son of Joseph (v. 45)
  - the Nazarene (v. 45)
  - Son of God (v. 49)
  - King of Israel (v. 49)
  - Son of Man (v. 51)

As you reflect on this lesson, which of the names on the list most encourages your faith today?