

Discussion Questions: John's Gospel (1:35-51)

These questions are to use (or not) as a group may see fit.

Overview Question:

1. What are your questions, wonderings, disagreements, reflections, AND/OR connections from the teaching this past Sunday on John 1:35-51 where John the Baptist's testimony leads to a chain of individuals who each become followers of Jesus based upon the word/witness of another?

Literary/textual Questions: (feel free to skip these and head straight for the implication/connection questions or not)

2. Is there a reason you can think of why John the author might include the detail of Jesus' renaming of Andrew's brother, Simon, to Peter here?
3. What do you think Jesus means when he says of Nathanael that he is a "true Israelite in whom is no deceit/guile"? What is a "true Israelite"? Why "no deceit"? Is this statement about Nathanael by Jesus based upon Jesus' knowledge about what Nathanael has said to Philip prior to meeting Jesus, potentially indicating that Jesus had knowledge of that conversation? If so, what is the connection? OR is it simply Jesus showing that he knows that Nathanael is a straightforward kind of person? Either way, is Jesus showing that he has clairvoyant knowledge about Nathanael, or not?
4. Jesus' response to Philip's question (how do you know me?) is to tell him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." What do you think Jesus means by this statement? What does Jesus mean that he "saw" Nathanael? Why is Nathanael so impressed by this knowledge on Jesus' part such that he proclaims him to be the Messiah? Does this special knowledge help us to answer the previous question (#3)?
5. Read Genesis 28:10-18. If Jesus' statement in 1:51 is an allusion to Jacob's dream/vision, then what is Jesus trying to communicate about himself? How is it related to what he has just said to Nathanael in 1:50?

Connection and Implication Questions:

6. Each of the very first disciples only came to be followers of Jesus through the testimony of someone else, before coming to truly know Jesus. What was your own personal experience that first brought you to encounter Jesus? Whose "testimony"/witness was involved, good or negative?
7. Which one of these initial disciples' experiences in this section do you most resonate with? Why?
8. Do you think we are supposed to see some kind of commendation in Jesus' words for Nathanael's initial reticence/hesitancy to believe based upon Philip's testimony? Why or why not?
9. In every instance of testimony given about Jesus in this section, the person "receiving" the testimony knows the person providing the testimony. Does that matter? Why or why not? Are there implications to be drawn?