

Bible Stories for Adults

Jesus' First Followers

John 1:19-51

Opening

- Gathering: What are effective ways to point others to Jesus?
- Today's Focus: John not only prepared the way for Jesus, but he also pointed people to follow Him.
- Key Verses: *John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God. John 1:29, 34*
- The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). John 1:41*

Opening Prayer

Lesson

The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry - So Far (*Luke 3-4*)

- What event marked the beginning of Jesus' ministry as the Messiah (Christ)?
Matthew 3:13-15 = He was baptized by John in the Jordan, Came from Nazareth
- Why is this event understood as the beginning of His ministry?
Luke 3:21-22 = He was anointed with the Spirit and called by the Father
- How old was Jesus when He began His ministry?
Luke 3:23a = About 30 years old, worked as carpenter until then
- What was significant about Jesus beginning His ministry at the age of thirty?
Numbers 4:3 = Levites began serving as priests at 30
- Who else began their ministry of God's calling at the age of thirty?
2 Samuel 5:4 = David became king at 30
- How did Jesus immediately celebrate His calling as the greatest man of all time?
Luke 4:1-2 = Went into the desert, fasted for 40 days and was tempted by Satan

Who Was John? (*John 1:19-28*)

- How effective was John's ministry? = Promised return of Elijah to prepare Israel for Messiah
Matthew 3:4-6 = Very effective, people came from all over
- Did the people understand who John was and what was the purpose of his ministry?
Luke 3:15 = No, they wondered if he might be the Christ, (Messiah)
- How did John respond when asked if he was the Messiah?
John 1:19-20 = Said he was not
- Who did he say he was? = Prophet – Jews sought a Prophet instead of prophets from Deut 18:15-22
John 1:21-23 = Quoted Isaiah 40:3 - The voice of one...preparing the way
- After he quoted Scripture, did the learned Pharisees understand what he was doing?
John 1:24-28 = No, he explained further about the greatness of the one to follow
- What was the purpose of John's baptism?
Acts 19:1-5 = To get the people to repent in preparation to receive the Messiah
- Why was it important for people to repent before the Messiah came?
Luke 1:16-17 = *...to make ready a people prepared for the Lord*
- How is this similar to preparations for Christ's second coming?
Revelation 19:6-7 = His bride (church) is to make herself ready; we are the church

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Jesus Returns (*John 1:29-34*)

How did John further clarify his statements the day after saying he was preparing for someone greater?

John 1:29-31 = He pointed out Jesus as the one he was talking about

If John didn't know Him, how was he able to point out Jesus as the Messiah?

John 1:32-34 = He had seen God's promise confirmed at Jesus' baptism

Jesus' First Disciples (*John 1:35-42*)

Now that Jesus was on the job and John had identified Him, was John's job done?

John 1:35-36 = No, there were others who hadn't prepared or seen the Lamb

How did John's two disciples respond to John's claim?

John 1:37 = They left John and followed Jesus

What did they intend to do, follow Jesus from a distance to see where He was going? = Arrived ~4:00

John 1:38-39 = No, they wanted to get to know Jesus - spent evening with Him

Who were these two disciples of John? = John always refers to himself in the third person

John 1:40 = One was Andrew, other believed to be John, author of this book

What did they do after talking with Jesus a few hours?

John 1:41-42a = Andrew brought brother Simon to Jesus (John took brother James?)

How did Jesus show His timeless wisdom when He met Simon? = Cephas - Hebrew, Peter - Greek

John 1:42b = He knew who Peter was & would become; named him *Rock*

A Couple More Disciples (*John 1:43-51*)

Where did Jesus go the next day and who did He meet (there or in route)?

John 1:43-44 = Went to Galilee (With A&P&J&J?), Called Philip (not Philip of Acts)

How did Philip respond to meeting Jesus? = Do we respond by bringing others?

John 1:45 = Went and found Nathanael and brought him to Jesus

Was Nathanael also from Bethsaida? = Nathanael called Bartholomew in other gospels

John 21:2 = No, he was from Cana, 4 miles north of Nazareth

What did Nathanael think about the Messiah coming from his neighboring town of Nazareth?

John 1:46 = Didn't believe anything good could come from Nazareth (rival town?)

Divine Insight (*John 1:47-49*)

How did Jesus show His knowledge of people's souls when He met Nathanael?

John 1:47 = Identified Nathanael as a faithful and righteous Jew

Did Jesus say this because Philip had told Him about Nathanael?

John 2:25 = No, *He did not need man's testimony about man, for He knew what was in a man.*

Did Nathanael believe that Jesus could know him that well at their first meeting?

John 1:48 = No, he asked Jesus how He knew who he was

Not uncommon for devout Jews to pray, meditate & study under shade of fig trees

How did Nathanael respond to Jesus' claims to seeing him praying under the leafy fig tree?

John 1:49 = It was enough to convince him, called Him God's Son, Israel's King

How did Nathanael's confession climax the names given to Jesus by these first disciples?

John 1:38, 41, 49 = Rabbi (teacher) to Messiah to Son of God & King of Israel

After being given many titles, how is Jesus identified in the climax verse of John's gospel?

John 20:28 = *Thomas said, My Lord and my God!"*

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Nathanael's Greater Thing to See (*John 1:51*)

Would this proof that Nathanael accepted be enough to convince others?

John 1:50 = No, Jesus said there would be many more amazing wonders

What great wonder did Jesus tell Nathanael he would get to see?

John 1:51 = Heaven open with angels *ascending & descending on the Son of Man*

What story would the faithful Jew Nathanael immediately remember?

Genesis 28:10-12 = Jacob's dream of angels climbing a stairway to heaven

What was the message Jacob received when he saw the stairway to heaven?

Genesis 28:13-14 = He was the heir to the covenant given to his forefather Abraham

How was that message brought also to us through Jesus?

Galatians 3:7-9 = We are children of Abraham by faith, we are blessed with Abraham

How are *all peoples on earth* blessed through the new children of Abraham?

Galatians 3:14 = Redeemed so Abraham's blessing comes to world through Jesus

What is significant of seeing heaven open?

Romans 5:18 = As Adam's sin closed heaven, Jesus' act opened heaven for all

What is significant of angels *ascending and descending on the Son of Man*? = Jesus is stairway to heaven

John 14:6 = Jesus is the way, truth & life under the new promise, the new covenant

To Galilee, Then Jerusalem (*John 2-3*) = Show travels on map on board – Will study stories in coming weeks

What significant event occurred in Nathanael's hometown three days after meeting Jesus?

John 2:1-2, 11 (1-11) = Jesus revealed glory in first miracle: water to wine (next week)

Where did Jesus then go that became the home base for His ministry?

John 2:12 = Capernaum, northern coast of Sea of Galilee

Where did Jesus travel to next and what happened upon His arrival? = repeated at end of ministry

John 2:13-16 (13-22) = Jerusalem for Passover, Cleared temple of money changers

How did word of Jesus spread from this visit?

John 2:23 (23-25) = Many from all over saw His miracles

Did only common people recognize Him as being sent from God?

John 3:1-2 (1-21) = Nicodemus, a Pharisee leader, saw God in Him

Back To Galilee (*John 4*)

Where did Jesus' ministry take Him next and what did He do there?

John 3:22 (22-36) = Ministered and baptized in Judean countryside

What did He do when people thought He might be competing with John?

John 4:1-3 = Headed back to Galilee - Disciples were baptizing, not Jesus

Who did He meet on the way? = Stayed 2 days

John 4:5, 7, 39-42 (4-42) = Talked with Samaritan woman at the well, many believed

What kind of reception did Jesus receive in Galilee?

John 4:43, 45 (43-45) = He was welcomed because they had seen Him in Jerusalem

Where in Galilee did He go and what happened?

John 4:46, 49-51, 53-54 (46-54) = Cana, Jesus healed official's dying son remotely

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Jesus in Galilee (*Luke 4:14-44; Matthew 4:12-17; Mark 1:14-15*)

Where is the next place Jesus went and what happened there?

Luke 4:16, 21, 28-30 (14-30) = Nazareth synagogue, read Isaiah, people drove Him out

Where did He go next and what happened there?

Luke 4:31, 33, 36-37 (31-37) = Capernaum, drove out demon, news about Him spread

Who else did He heal while there?

Luke 4:38-40 (38-41) = Simon's mother-in-law, many others who were brought

How did Jesus respond when the people of Capernaum tried to keep Him from leaving?

Luke 4:42-44 = Said He was sent to preach to other towns also

Fishers of Men (*Luke 5:1-11; Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20*)

What did Jesus do when people crowded too closely to Him at the Sea of Galilee?

Luke 5:1-3 = Taught the people from Simon's boat a little off-shore

How did Jesus show His power over nature after He finished speaking?

Luke 5:4-7 = Had Simon & crew catch a bunch of fish after a fruitless night

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Note: After nearly a year since meeting Jesus, they still fish and are only part-time disciples

How did these fishing disciples react? = Simon, Andrew, James & John - all partners

Luke 5:8-11 = Left everything to follow Him as fishers of men – now fulltime disciples

Jesus Appoints Twelve Apostles (*Luke 5:12-6:16; Matthew 9:9-13; Mark 2:1-3:19*)

How quickly did Jesus' number of disciples grow?

Luke 5:15 = News spread rapidly, many came and believed

What other apostle do we have a record of being directly called by Jesus to be a disciple?

Luke 5:27-28 = Jesus called tax collector Levi (Matthew), left all to become full-time disciple

As Jesus gained disciples, who did He select as His central apostles? = 1+ yr into ministry

Luke 6:12-16 = Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew (Nathanael), Matthew (Levi),

=

Thomas, James (Alphaeus son), Simon (Zealot), Judas (James' son, Thaddaeus), Judas Iscariot

What other disciples did Jesus specially appoint? = Had many other followers, disciples

Luke 10:1-3 = Sent out 72 in pairs to prepare towns to receive Him – full-time disciples

How does Jesus tell us to handle the responses we receive when we take His message out?

Luke 10:16 = *He who listens to you listens to Me, he who rejects you rejects Me*

Closing Prayer

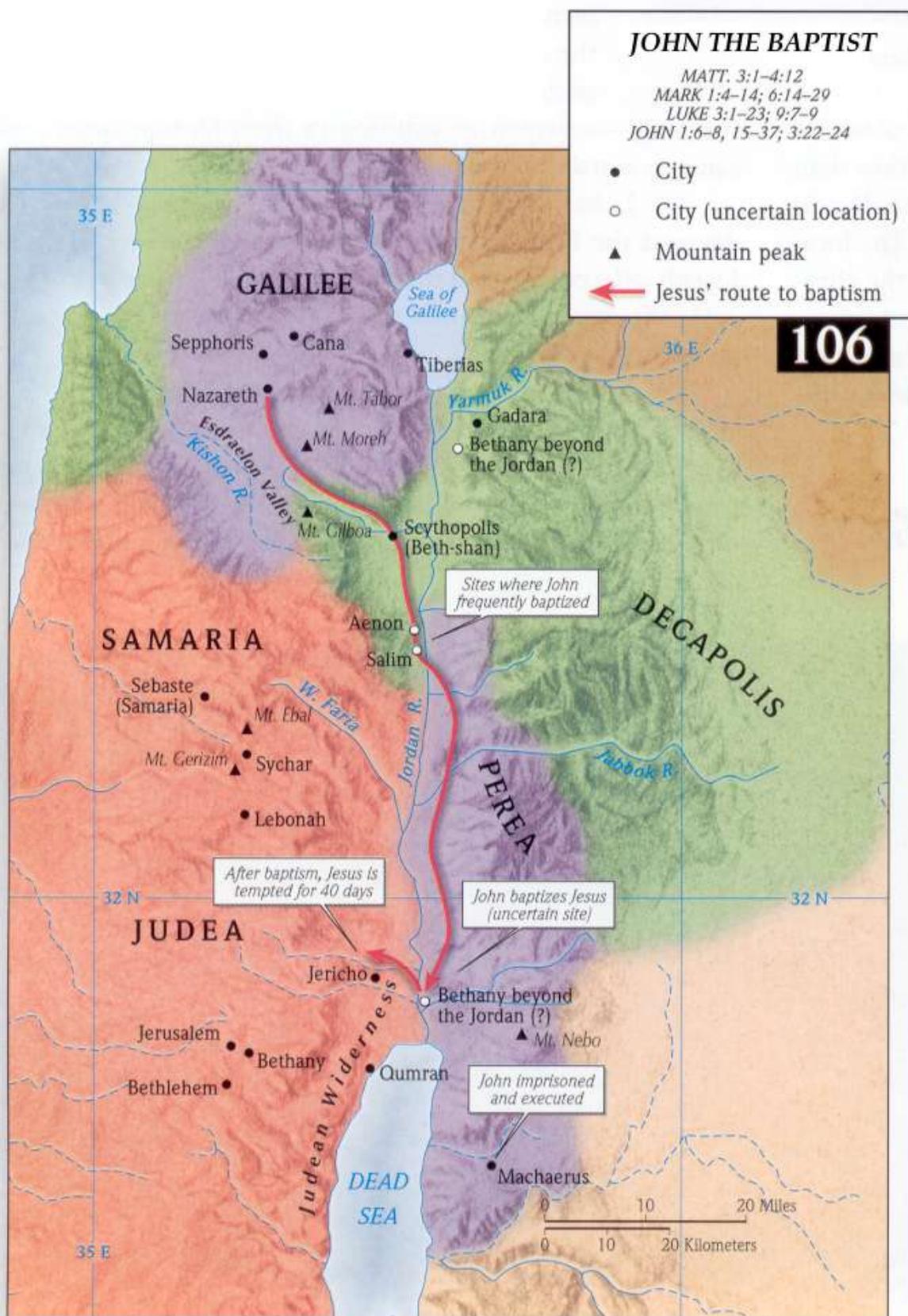
Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. Do I give the glory to God when He works through me or do I grab it for myself?
(*John 1:19-27; Psalm 44:8; Matthew 5:16; 6:1-18; 23:5-7; Acts 8:9-24; Romans 12:3; 2 Corinthians 10:12-18; Galatians 6:14*)
2. When have I pointed someone to Jesus – the Lamb of God?
(*John 1:29-36; 2:41, 45; 4:39-42; Mark 5:20; Luke 1:1-4; Acts 4:18-20; 8:4, 26-40; 10; 26:28-29; Ephesians 6:19-20; Revelation 5:9-14*)
3. What testimony do I give that shows others why Jesus is my Lord and Savior?
(*John 1:32-34; 4:28-30; 5:31-33; Luke 5:12-15; Acts 26; Colossians 4:6; 1 Peter 3:15*)
4. Do I follow where Jesus leads or do I try to make Jesus follow where I try to go?
(*John 1:37-39, 43; 10:27; 14:1-7; Matthew 19:27-30; Luke 5:27-28; 9:23, 57-62; Revelation 14:4*)
5. Is my relationship with Jesus based on faith or proof?
(*John 1:48-51; 20:24-31; Matthew 12:38-40; Mark 15:32; Acts 17:31; Hebrews 11:1; 1 Peter 1:8-9*)

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Short Biographies of the Twelve

Simon, Peter

Born in Bethsaida in Galilee, he was a fisherman and was named by Jesus Christ "Cephas" (in Greek, *Peter*), and called to be a fisher of men, an Apostle. In all lists of the Twelve he is named first, and belonged to the inner group of Apostles. He was present at the Transfiguration and at the Agony of Christ. When he professed his belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Lord promised that "Thou art Peter and on this rock will I build My Church", meaning on the rock of faith in the Savior. Peter's confession of faith was soon followed by a sharp rebuke, from the Lord. Peter said that he would never leave his Lord, and was answered by the prediction of his triple denial, which later took place. Later, Peter made reparation for his triple denial by a triple prostration of love.

After the Ascension, Peter took the leadership of the Apostles. He spoke on the day of Pentecost and was the first to perform a miracle in the name of Jesus. He accepted Cornelius for baptism and thus opened the Church to the Gentiles. His authority is evident at the Apostles' Council at Jerusalem, although Paul rebuked him for giving in to the demands of the Jewish Christians to disassociate himself from the Gentiles.

Peter is the founder of the Church in Antioch. He probably went to Rome and was crucified head downward during the reign of Nero (54-68).

Andrew

A disciple of John the Baptist, Andrew heard him refer to Jesus as the Lamb of God. Andrew asked for an audience and saw Jesus for a day, then proclaimed, "We have found the Messiah," in itself a creed and confession for the Christian faith. He brought his brother, Simon-Peter, to Christ. Although not one of the inner circle, he played the first role in several events which are recorded. Eusebius in his Church History states that Andrew later went to Scythia. According to tradition he was martyred at Patras, Greece, crucified on an X-shaped cross, which since has become known as St. Andrew's Cross. He is regarded as being connected with the writing of St. John's Gospel. According to tradition, he is the founder of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

James (The Greater)

He was the son of Zebedee. He, with his elder brother John and with Peter, constituted the privileged group - the inner circle of the disciples. James was present at the Transfiguration and the Agony in Gethsemane. His zeal was ardent and he and his brother were named by the Lord "Boanerges", which means "sons of thunder". James was beheaded by Herod Agrippa I in A. D. 44, the first of the Twelve to suffer martyrdom. A theory that he preached in Spain is counter to the tradition of the Church and the Epistle to the Romans, 15:20 and 24, which concur that he did not leave Jerusalem. According to an old Spanish tradition, the body of St. James was transferred to Santiago de Compostela, Spain, where St. James was one of the most revered Spanish saints during the Middle Ages.

John

He was one of the inner circle with Peter and James. The son of Zebedee, he and his brother James were named the "sons of thunder". John is the author of the fourth Gospel, the Book of Revelation and three Catholic Epistles. He was imprisoned with Peter and later appeared in the Sanhedrin. John also was sent with Peter to Samaria, where they prayed that the converts might receive the Holy Spirit. In Jerusalem, he was present at the Council of the Apostles. John was "one of the two" with Andrew who first had an audience with the Lord. He was the one "whom Jesus loved" and who reclined on his bosom at the Mystic Supper.

Jesus from His cross entrusted His mother to John at the foot of the cross. He was the one who ran with Peter to the tomb on the morning of the resurrection, and who recognized the Risen Lord at the Sea of Tiberius, where our Lord spoke to him the words that he would not die (John 21:7).

According to tradition, he went to Asia Minor and settled in Ephesus. Later he was exiled to Patmos, an island.

Phillip

He is the Apostle from Bethsaida who obeyed the call of Jesus and led Nathaneal to Christ. At the feeding of the 5,000 people, Jesus said to Phillip to buy bread, and Phillip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." Phillip on another occasion asked Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father" and Jesus retorted, "Yet you do not know me Phillip?" Phillip the Apostle should not be confused with Phillip, one of the seven Deacons. The Apostle Phillip preached the Gospel in Asia and suffered crucifixion, according to tradition.

Bartholomew

His name is patronymic, meaning "son of Tolmai". Sometimes he is identified with Nathaneal whom Phillip led to Christ. According to the historian Eusebius, when Pantainus of Alexandria visited India between 150 and 200 A. D., he found there the Gospel according to Matthew left behind by Bartholomew one of the Apostles. According to tradition, Bartholomew was flayed to death at Albanapolis in Armenia.

Matthew

He was the evangelist who was a Jew and a tax-collector referred to as Levi before he was called by Christ, Whom he followed. He is the author of the First Gospel. In his genealogy of Jesus Christ, he emphasizes the Lord's human nature and origin. Therefore, in Christian symbolism, Matthew has been represented by the figure of man (cf Rev 4:7). The icon of Matthew in the Orthodox Church is to be found in one of the four triangles which are formed by the arches connected to the dome of the Church.

Thomas

He was called the Twin. On the way to Bethany He offered to die with Jesus. He interrupted the last discourse of Jesus with the question "We know not whither thou goest; how know we the way?". Thomas doubted the resurrection of Christ unless he were to touch the wounds of the Risen Lord, but later confessed his faith in Him: "My Lord and My God" - the first to confess so explicitly the Lord's divinity. According to tradition, Thomas evangelized the Parthians. The Syrian Christians of Malabar called themselves "Christians of St. Thomas" and claimed they were evangelized by the Apostle Thomas, who was martyred and buried at Mylapore near Madras.

James (The Lesser)

He was the son of Alphaeus. Was he the Lord's relative? This is doubted. Was he James the younger (or the "lesser", Matt. 15:40)? There are insufficient reasons to establish this either. Nothing is known of him.

Simon

He was called Cananaean and Zealot, two terms of the same Hebrew word. According to the Apocryphal "Passion of Simon and Jude", both of them preached and underwent martyrdom in Persia. In the New Testament, Simon, one of the brethren of the Lord, was identified with Simon the Apostle. There were many others bearing the same name in the New Testament.

Jude

He is the Apostle referred to in the Gospel as "Judas of James", "Judas not the Iscariot". He also is known as Thaddaeus or Lebbaeus. Jude was the brother of James (or the son of James RV), the "brethren of the Lord" - the Lord's relative. Jude is the author of the Epistle of Jude. The Apocryphal "Passion of Simon and Jude" depicted them in Persia where they preached and underwent martyrdom.

Judas Iscariot

A selected Apostle, one of the Twelve, he betrayed Christ to the Jewish Sanhedrin - the supreme council and highest court of justice in Jerusalem - and kissed the Lord at the time of the arrest. He later committed suicide. The title "Iscariot", meaning in the Hebrew "man of Kerioth", a place in South Palestine, implies that Judas was from Judea. He was the only one from there, whereas the other Apostles were from Galilee. After his suicide the Apostles elected Matthias to replace him as one of the Twelve Apostles.