# John 1:35-51 – Come and See…Greater Things

Szmuel Gelbfisz was a colorful character. He immigrated from Poland, by way of Britain to the United States, arriving in New York in 1899. Like many immigrants, he worked hard and saved money. By 1916, at the age of 37 he started a movie company with his friend Archibald Selwyn, combining their names to create Goldwyn Studios. Seeing an opportunity, he then had his name legally changed to Samuel Goldwyn, which he used for the rest of his life.

The company made many films, but is most famous for its Leo the Lion introduction. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PAprxJ7KvjY>. Goldwyn himself was known for making remarks which were a made people think twice. For instance, saying that “I don’t think anyone should write their autobiography until after their dead.” On another occasion, he said, “Television has raised writing to a new low.” Sometimes, his quotes were unintentionally self-deprecating, as when he said, “If I look confused, it’s because I’m thinking.” Some of his statements may not have had the desired effect, as when he said, “I don't want any yes-men around me. I want everybody to tell me the truth even if it costs them their jobs.”

As I understand his story, one of his movies was terrible, all of the movie critics hated it. It was so bad that one reporter had the temerity to ask him what made his movie so bad. Rather than be offended or shut down the interview, he was reported to have said, “Go see that turkey for yourself, and see for yourself why you shouldn't see it.” While the film didn’t become the most successful film he made, it did far better in the box offices than the critics ever predicted.

Some things are just so wonderful that you have to see them to believe them. I grew up hearing about Niagara Falls, and seeing pictures, but anyone who has been there can tell you the pictures are nothing compared to the power of being there. In pictures the Grand Canyon looks huge, but you cannot understand how deep it is until you stand at the rim and feel the vertigo of looking down to the bottom and realizing that the thin silver thread is actually a river 300 feet wide.

The same principle applies to knowing Jesus. You have to see Him to believe Him. The earliest disciples had read about the coming Messiah their whole lives. They knew he would be a descendant of David. They knew the Messiah would be both conquering King and suffering servant, but could not figure out how to reconcile these images, some even claiming there would be two Messiahs. It is to the people who knew the image, but had not seen the real person that Jesus goes when He calls his first disciples. In the calling of Jesus’ first four or five disciples, we learn that to become Jesus Disciple, we must come and see Him. I say four or five, because one person in here is unnamed, some believe he is John who wrote the book, others believe he was Philip who is talked about later in the chapter. To introduce Jesus to others, we must invite them to come and see Him. To overcome the denials of skeptics, we must help them to come and see Him. Finally, we see that when we come and see, Jesus promises that we will see even greater things.

## Becoming a Disciple John 1:35-39

“**35** The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. **36** When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" **37** ¶ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. **38** Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" **39** "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour.

When I hear the term disciple in the Bible, I generally think of one who is following Jesus, but that is not a complete picture of the word. The word describes a student learning from a teacher. In the 1st century context, school was not like today where you attend class and then go home. Your education in your younger years would be primarily at home, as you got older, you might attend some Torah classes at the local synagogue, but if you really wanted to learn, you would not find a good school, you would find a good teacher. Such a teacher would have daily classes, generally at his home, and he would invite his star pupils to live with him and learn from his life.

These two men decided to find a great teacher and began to follow John the Baptist. As they saw him work and live, they absorbed his teachings and his ways, but one day they were surprised when he said, “Look, the Lamb of God”. Likely they thought of Genesis 22:7-8 where God promises to provide himself as the lamb and Isaiah 53:7 where the messiah is described as a lamb being led to the slaughter. They also probably thought about the sacrifices of the Lamb in the temple, the ritual shedding of blood to remove the curse of sin. Immediately they knew that their time as John’s disciple was at an end, they turned to follow Jesus.

As they followed Jesus, a conversation started that seems a little unusual to us. Jesus asks what they want, they ask where He is staying in town and He tells them to come and see. What we miss is that they didn’t care about what hotel he used or room he rented. Asking a teacher where he was staying was a way of asking to become his disciple. It would be rude to just show up a the Rabbi’s door and seek to learn, but if he told you where he was staying, he was inviting you to come learn from him. But Jesus didn’t just tell them where, He said, “Come and see.” He invited them to go with him. Jesus was taking them straight from stranger to star pupil, giving them intimate access to His life.

Right now, we cannot see Jesus with our eyes, but one day we will see Him as He is, as the song says face to face, in all of His glory. Seeing Him physically was also not enough, the Pharisees and Romans saw Him, but despised Him. We need to start seeing Him with our hearts right now, but HOW? Isaiah 6 gives us a pattern. First, we choose to recognize that He is exalted as God and we are not. Second, we recognize that His holy while we are sinners. “Woe is me.” Third, we let His atonement touch us and cleans us. Finally, when He asks who will go, we say, “Here am I, send me.” Until we do all these things, we are not seeing Jesus as we could in this life, but how do we KNOW we have seen Jesus? We know when we are compelled to introduce others to Jesus.

## Introducing Jesus John 1:40-42

 **40** Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. **41** The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). **42** And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

As God asks us to go and we go, we will encounter others who need to know the Lord. Andrew saw Jesus and went to where He was staying at the 10th hour, 4p.m. The day was wrapping to a close, and yet Andrew went immediately to find his brother, Simon and tell Him they had found the Messiah. This is BIG news. And what does he ask his brother to do? To come see Jesus. Of course, the words are not recorded, but how else do you think he brought him, tie him with a rope and drag him? No, he convinced Simon to come see Jesus.

As Simon saw Jesus, Jesus also saw him, and he saw him not for who he was, but who he could be. Simon means the one who listens. The implication seems to be that other people tell him what to do. On the other hand, Cephas or Peter means a rock or boulder. This could be used equally as a compliment: you are a strong rock, or a put down: are you a rock head? Jesus sees Simon and says, you are a follower, but you will be a rock. There are many times in the life of Peter that he is a rock head, but eventually he becomes a strong rock for the cause of Christ.

Now imagine that Andrew had handled things a little differently. Instead of bringing his brother to Jesus with a come and see attitude, Andrew plops down on the beach next to Simon who is busy mending the nets for tomorrow’s fishing expedition. Peter asks Andrew about his day and is told, it was OK, I met an interesting teacher, you aught to check him out some time. Peter says, OK, I will and goes back to work, never again to think of Jesus.

The way we act when we show Jesus to someone makes a difference. We need to be excited, not nonchalant. What we are showing them is important and has transformed our lives. Obviously, we don’t drag them against their will, but as we share the gospel, we need to have enthusiasm as we ask them to come and see. Obviously the way they receive the message is up to God. But lets not scare them by looking like we were baptized in lemon juice.

## Answering Skeptics John 1:43-46

**43** ¶ The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." **44** Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. **45** Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote— Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." **46** "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip.

We don’t know much about Philip’s conversion. I presume that it was a similar come and see moment. It could be that Andrew or Peter cam and told him about Jesus. It could be that he was one of the two that John the Baptist pointed to Jesus. We know very little about him. But we know that Philip was excited enough about the gospel to go find his friend Nathanael. Nathanael was a skeptic.

When Philip invites Nathanael to see Jesus, he says that nothing good comes out of Nazareth. It would be like me telling you that I found the best source of fresh water in Michigan and that it is in the middle of Flint. Or maybe I found you a new home in the “life of riley” trailer park that was closed down for health violations a few years ago. Nathanael believed that Nazareth was a back-water slum. How could the King of the Jews come from a place like Nazareth?

Philip should have protested, brought out his charts of Jewish prophecy, parsed the Hebrew terms and referred to the scholars. Surely this would convince him, wouldn’t it? There are times that kind of confrontation is appropriate and convincing, but if Nathanael was like most people, his eyes would have glazed over as he was bombarded with the facts and figures. In the same way, if we try to share the gospel by overwhelming people with information, we often get confused, they get overwhelmed and no one is any closer to believing Jesus.

Philip wisely did not do this, instead, he said, come and see. How do we do this?

Here is a tactic that can work with both skeptics and those who are open to the Bible. In the pew are little white books. (COVID-19, I wore mask and gloves while distributing them from a new box). This is the book of John. I want you to find a friend who is willing to talk with you and lead a 3 question bible study with them. Ask them if you can get together with them for an hour each week. Tell them that you will pay for the coffee or soda and that you can talk about anything they want, as long as you get 15 minutes to go through a short reading and three questions each week.

Read a passage.

Ask: What does it say? When they start explaining the meaning or why it doesn’t apply, stop them and say, I know, we will get to that, but for now, what does it say? Repeat as necessary. After they have accurately paraphrased what it says, Ask: What does it mean? If they don’t know, coach them a little, but get them to answer for themselves. If their meaning is a little wrong, don’t worry. If it is totally off base, go back to question one. Once they explain the meaning, Ask: If you believed it, how would it apply?

It may be that in the process, you find some areas where you grow as well. If you are too scared to do it with another person, try going through the book of John this way yourself, you may find God gives you more courage than you expected.

When you experience skepticism, be like Philip, don’t fight, but invite them to see Jesus.

## Seeing with new eyes John 1:47-51

**47** When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." **48** "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." **49** Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." **50** Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that." **51** He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."” (Joh 1:35-51 NIVUS)

When Nathanael came to see Jesus, again, Jesus saw him first and talked about how fine Nathanael’s character was. Nathanael, suspecting some kind of trickery asks “How do you know me?” Jesus answers, that “I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.” Jesus was near Galilee. Nathanael had been in Bethsaida which is on the north shore of Galilee, Jesus was coming from Jerusalem, up the Jordan Valley (where John was baptizing) and into the region of Galilee…a 34 hour walk in three days. Nathanael knew that Jesus could never have seen him under the fig tree when Philip called him, so he knew there must be a miracle. His skepticism erased by seeing Jesus, he now declares Jesus the Messiah!

But Jesus promises him that he will see greater things. He promises that he will see heaven and see God’s angels interacting with Jesus! Now in this passage, I think the King James points out something important. In the NIV the passage reads, “I tell you the truth”. The King James says, “Verily Verily”. The Greek word is AMEN. It is used at the end of a prayer to ask God to let something be as we asked, it is not just a word to wrap up our conversation. When used at the beginning of a sentence it means something has happened or is real…it is TRUE. It is also used to indicate that God is faithful. So it could be “truly and by God’s faithfulness you will see heaven open.” You will see with new eyes…spiritual eyes.

I can talk about how great a relationship with Jesus is, but until you see Him and He sees you, you can never know the depth of love that God shows. He wants you to know now. On the screen, you see a picture of the Sea of Galilee, it’s gorgeous. But while I have never been there, I bet the sunset looks even better in person. When it comes to Jesus, God’s Son, He too looks better in person. Won’t you come and see?

# John 1:35-51 – Come and See…Greater Things

## Becoming a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ John 1:35-39

One day we will see Him as He \_\_\_\_

* Recognize that He is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as God and we are not.
* Recognize that His \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ while we are sinners.
* Let His atonement \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ us and cleans us.
* Say, “Here am I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ me.”

## \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Jesus John 1:40-42

The way we \_\_\_\_\_\_ when we show Jesus to someone makes a difference.

## Answering \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ John 1:43-46

Nathanael believed that Nazareth was a back-water \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

### Τhree question Bible Study

Read a passage.

1. Ask: What does it \_\_\_\_\_\_?
2. Ask: What does it \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?
3. Ask: If you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ it, how would it apply?

Invite them to see Jesus.

## Seeing with new \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ John 1:47-51

The Greek word for truly/verily is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.