

# Face to Face With Jesus

## Seekers

*John 1:35-51*

### Leaders Guide

The Gospel of John is a favorite of many believers. According to Thomas Wright, “At one level it is the simplest of all gospels; at another level it is the most profound. It gives the appearance of being written by someone who was a very close friend of Jesus, and who spent the rest of his life mulling over, more and more deeply, what Jesus had done, and said, and achieved, praying it through from every angle, and helping others to understand it.”

Let’s explore the eyewitness accounts and personal insights of a young man named John. A man who was there at the very beginning of Jesus’ ministry.

### Searching for Messiah

Most scholars believe that the author of the Gospel of John is the unnamed disciple of John the Baptist in today’s passage—specifically, John, the brother of James, the son of Zebedee. This is primarily because the author appears to be an eyewitness to private conversations and intimate events in Jesus’ life.

Read John 1:15-37.

Answer the following questions:

#### Level A

- What is John the Baptist’s relationship to Jesus? (Mark 1:1-11 and Luke 1:35-37, 57-66 can help) What was his purpose in God’s plan?
- How does John the Baptist describe Jesus in John 1:29 and 36?
- Why would two disciples of John the Baptist leave him and follow Jesus? What were they seeking?

## Level B

- What is John the Baptist's relationship to Jesus? (Mark 1:1-11 and Luke 1:35-37, 57-66) If he wasn't a prophet, what was he?
- How does John the Baptist describe Jesus in John 1:29 and 36? What does this phrase mean to you?
- Why would two devoted followers of John the Baptist leave him to follow Jesus? What were they seeking? What are you seeking?

## Level C

- We know that John the Baptist was Jesus' cousin and he had a purpose in God's plan. What was it about him that caused people to follow him? (see Matt 3:1-12, Mark 1:1-8, Luke 3:2-18, and John 1:15-28) What were they seeking?
- What is the significance of the title, Lamb of God? Check out these verses for clues: Ex 12:11-13, Ex 29:38-42, Is 53:7 and 10, Jer 11:19, Rom 8:3, Heb 10, 1 Pet 1:18-21.
- What would cause two devoted followers of John the Baptist to leave and follow Jesus instead? What were they seeking that led them first to John and then to Jesus? How does being a Christian relate to their search?
- John the Baptist could measure the success of his ministry by how many people left him to follow Jesus. What reasons might an individual give for leaving a church, a denomination, or a way of life to take another path? Has that ever happened to you? Share.

## Expectations

John the Baptist was preparing the way for the Messiah. **Messiah** is a Hebrew and Aramaic word that means anointed one. The Greek translation of Messiah is Christos from which we get the English word, Christ. It was only logical that those looking for the Messiah would follow John and when Jesus appeared would then follow him. The seekers would have been so excited to finally find the promised one. The Israelites had been under the oppression of the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks and now the Romans for hundreds of years. They were desperate for a savior to get them out of bondage and bring justice and peace to their world. Let's discover what they expected.

*Note to leaders: There is a wonderful chart of the Old Testament scriptures that describe the coming Messiah correlated with their fulfillment in the New Testament at the following website. You might want to print it out for yourself and/or share it with your group.*

*<http://www.amherstchristianchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/OT-The-Coming-Messiah.pdf>*

Read the following verses and write what the seekers of the Messiah were expecting.

Deuteronomy 18:15 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Samuel 2:35 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalms 2:6-7 \_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 9:1 \_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 9:6-7 \_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 35:5-6 \_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 42:1-4 \_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 61:1 \_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 23:5 \_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 23:6 \_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 31:31-34 \_\_\_\_\_

Zechariah 9:9 \_\_\_\_\_

## The First Disciples

Not only were the followers of John the Baptist seeking the Messiah, the Messiah was also seeking them. Think about that. It applies today. Jesus is always seeking us. The connection is made when we begin to seek him.

Read John 1:35-49.

Answer the following questions:

### Level A

- Who are the first two disciples to follow Jesus?
- Who does Andrew recruit? What is their relationship?
- What does Jesus do with Simon? Why do you think Jesus did this?

- Where did Jesus find Philip? What did Philip have in common with Andrew and Simon Peter?
- Who did Philip recruit? What do these verses tell you about Nathaniel?

### Level B

- What made it fairly easy to recruit the first five disciples? How do prior relationships factor into your willingness to invite others to join you at church?
- Jesus renamed Simon as Cephas which comes from the Aramaic word meaning stone. John helps us with the translation by explaining that the Greek word for stone is *petra* and the name it relates to is *Petros*. That translates into the English name Peter. Does your name have a meaning? Does the meaning suit you? If it does not, what do you think Jesus would choose for your new name? Why?
- Nathaniel was from Cana and the others are from Nazareth. These two villages were friendly rivals. What do you think Nathaniel meant by his comment in verse 46? How did Jesus convince Nathaniel that he was the Messiah?

### Level C

- Gilberto Ruiz explains that there is a double meaning to “follow” in verse 43. It can be an invitation to follow him to the place where he is staying and an invitation to approach him with the eyes of faith. How are both of these definitions significant in the calling of the disciples? In your personal calling to follow Christ?
- Jesus renamed Simon (which in Hebrew means “he has heard”) as Cephus (which in Hebrew means “stone”, in Greek stone is “*petra*” leading to the name *Petros* which translates to the English, Peter). Think of Simon’s new name and his old name. How do both suit him? Peter didn’t start out as the rock of the church; he was often a stone in Jesus’s sandal. How did he grow into his name?
- How was Nathaniel convinced to follow Jesus? What was Nathaniel expecting of the Messiah that made Jesus a likely candidate? How would you describe Nathaniel’s personality from this brief encounter?

### The Ladder

Nathaniel was impressed with Jesus’ ability to see events for which he was not present. Jesus informed all of those present (note: the word for “you” used in these verses is plural) that they would witness things even greater in the future.

Read John 1:50-51 and Genesis 28:10-19.

Answer the following questions:

### Level A

- How is verse 51 in John similar to Genesis 28:12?
- How is Jesus like a ladder from earth to heaven?
- Jacob named the spot where his dream occurred, Bethel. Beth El means House of God. He also called it the gate of heaven. Gates can be opened or closed. Read Matt 7:7-8. In your opinion, what is Jesus' role in reaching our heavenly home?

### Level B & C

- Jesus was drawing on the scripture knowledge of the new disciples. They would have been very familiar with the stories in Genesis. What picture might they have visualized when Jesus spoke the words in verse 51? How do you think they would have explained Jesus as the ladder?
- Some scholars have made a connection between the statement of Jesus in verse 51 and the ascension of Jesus (Acts 1:9-11 and Luke 24:50-51). Do you think this is what Jesus is referring to? Why or why not?
- Read Matthew 7:7-8, John 10:1, John 10:1-10, Ephesians 2:18. How do these verses help illuminate Jesus' image in John 1:51? What is Jesus' promise to those who become his disciples?

## Resources

### Books

- Bailey, Kenneth E., *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008)
- Bickel, Bruce & Jantz, Stan, *John: Encountering Christ in a Life-Changing Way* (Eugene: Harvest House, 2003)
- Brand, Draper, England, ed., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003)
- Strong, James, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance Of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996)
- Wright, Tom, *John for Everyone* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2004)

### Online

- Campbell, Mike, 2021, *Biblical Names*, The Etymology and History of First Names, [www.behindthename.com](http://www.behindthename.com)