



# CONNECT GROUP NOTES

## Sunday 28.04.2024

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**“Called to Discipleship”**

### **Preacher**

Ps. Nathan Bean

### **Scriptures**

*“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.*

*47 When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.”*

*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[a] because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that."<sup>50</sup>

[...]

<sup>3</sup> Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. <sup>2</sup> He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."

<sup>3</sup> Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."

<sup>4</sup> "How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"

<sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit[b] gives birth to spirit. <sup>7</sup> You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You[c] must be born again.' <sup>8</sup> The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."<sup>51</sup>

John 1:43-50, 3:1-8

## Thought

What does it look like to become a disciple of Christ? In today's passage, we read about two very different people who encountered Christ, and entered their journey of discipleship in two different ways.

First we find Nathaniel, who was actively studying the scriptures and was seeking to become a disciple. He was waiting for the promised 'messiah' to arrive on the scene. He wasn't looking for the latest idea or information or theory, he was diligently and authentically seeking God, and it was in this journey that Jesus' path crossed His in a remarkable way.



We read that in their first encounter, Jesus states that he saw him 'under the fig tree'. Clearly this was more significant than face value, because when Jesus said this, Nathaniel fell to his knees and committed his life to following Christ. It's clear there was an incredible personal meaning, a connection between the fig tree and Christ that changed Nathaniel's life and started him on the discipleship road.

Then we read about Nicodemus. He was an educated and renowned teacher of religion. He adhered to the law and did everything to draw close to God through ritual, but something still drew him to Jesus. For all the status that Nicodemus had, something was missing. Yet Jesus didn't answer his questions, at least on surface value. Rather, Jesus talked to a much deeper need, by stating "You must be born again". Jesus, the relative outsider, tells the renowned teacher, Nicodemus, that to truly find life, he has to start over again - lay down all his goodness, all his adherence, all his rituals, and start his journey again like a baby being born again. It flawed Nicodemus, and it flaws us to this day - the challenge to lay it all down and follow the spirit's leading.

Like Nicodemus, we may have knowledge, we may be spiritual, but Jesus speaks to our heart. He calls us on, He draws us forward, into a new step of obedience and faith. Not to add another layer of adherence, not to pile one more ritual to the list, but rather an unravelling, a laying down, a restarting.

Like Nathaniel, we may be seeking God earnestly but feel like we haven't fully found him. We might have questions - yet, Christ sees us under our fig trees, whatever they may be. He sees us in our desperate moments, He sees the deepest need of our hearts, He sees us when no one else is there, and He longs to invite us to join him on the road of discipleship.

And so, Jesus calls you and me. He calls us into relationship with Him - His very presence, able to cause the questions in our minds to fall silent before a saviour who sees us. He calls us to humble ourselves and start again, following the lead of a loving saviour who knows us deeply, loves us completely, and who will lead us on in this journey of love toward Himself. He calls us to unfurl the sails and let the wind of the spirit carry us wherever He wills.

## **Becoming Christlike**

### **BEING, THINKING, AND DOING**

**Conviction of a Disciple:** Humble and Teachable

*Curiosity and openness to new insights into the truth of Jesus.*

### **Thought**

Jesus challenges our concepts and disrupts our comfort. Following Him will always result in change and growth as we become more Christlike. This requires us to be willing to lay down our intellect, our preconceptions of who God is, our questions, our pride - and go on the journey of discipleship with Him, wherever that may lead. The Christian walk necessitates a constant re-assessment of our hearts to ensure that we are always curious and open to new insights into the truth and character of Jesus.

### **Practice**

Step 1 - **Reflect:** What stood out to me in this message?

Step 2: **Assess:** Which story do I relate to more (Nathaniel or Nicodemus), and why?

Step 3: **Act:** What might God be calling me to (a greater trust in an area of life, a re-considering of a particular thought/conviction, or a challenge to step out into something new), and what practical action can I take this week in relation to this?

## **Prayer**

Dear Lord,

You always make time for those who seek you. Thank You that You see me and You know me, and You perceive the deepest needs of my heart, even when I don't. Call me on, Lord. Challenge me where I need to be challenged, and call me forward where I need to take a step of faith. Show me who You truly are, renew my mind, restore my spirit, and lead me on.

Amen.