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Disciple making: *Jesus' five invitations*

Jesus spent three and a half years making disciples and then instructed them to do the same: “ ‘Go and make disciples’ ” (Matt. 28:19).¹ This is our commission: *to make disciples who make disciples for His kingdom movement*. Jesus followed a profoundly simple process, employing five invitations, each one followed by experiences and instructions. His invitations provide a frame for our task.

Come and see

John the Baptist was still at Bethany beyond the Jordan when Jesus approached. Just six weeks had gone by since Jesus had been baptized, and now He was back. Although He was exhausted² by His 40-day fast and Satan’s assault in the Judean desert, John recognized Him: “ ‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!’ ” He knew Jesus was this One, for he had seen “ ‘the Spirit come down and remain’ ” on Him. John declared that he had come baptizing to reveal Him, and went on to say, “ ‘I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God’ ” (John 1:29–34).

The next day John drew the attention of two of his disciples to Jesus, repeating, “ ‘Look, the Lamb of God!’ ” They followed Jesus, asking, “ ‘Where are you staying?’ ” (vv. 36–38). Then Jesus extended His first recorded invitation, “ ‘Come and see’ ”—a simple invite

that turned their lives upside down. Consistent with the culture of the time, this was an invitation to spend time, enjoy food and drink, stay, and talk. They went and spent the rest of the day with Him (v. 39).

What was the focus of their conversation into that evening? John’s introduction of Jesus as “ ‘the Lamb of God’ ” and “ ‘the Son of God’ ” had piqued the interest of His guests. At the end of their visit, Andrew went straight to his brother Simon Peter, telling him, “ ‘We have found the Messiah’ (that is, the Christ)” (v. 41). The next day Philip told Nathanael, “ ‘We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote’ ” (v. 45).

While at that stage Jesus was unable to draw attention to His miracles or teachings, for He had not yet done either, He could point to the *preparation phase* of His life, “about thirty years” (Luke 3:23), comparing this with what the prophets had said about the promised Messiah. He could speak of His childhood, young adult years, baptism, and temptations; and for His guests this was entirely convincing. Those *preparation years* for the movement He had come to cultivate became the first phase of their preparation as disciples.

Those making disciples for Jesus Christ today can draw attention to the whole life and ministry of Jesus, not just the *preparation years*. But making

disciples still starts with the invitation “Come and see.” There is little gained in rushing over this experiential phase, for most of those with whom we engage have no background story of Jesus: who He is, where He lived, when He lived, the circumstances of His time, what He did, what He said, where He is, what He is doing now, or how He could possibly relate to them today. Before people can follow or obey Jesus, they will need to meet Him, spend time with Him, experience who He is. Further invitations do not make sense unless people have responded to the invitation to “come and see.”

Follow Me

Having spent the evening with Jesus, Andrew immediately went and brought his brother to Jesus (John 1:41, 42). The next day Jesus found Philip and said, “Follow Me.” This was His second invitation: first He had invited the two, “Come and see!” Now “Follow Me.”

Philip immediately went to Nathanael to tell him they had found the one foretold by the prophets, and He was “ ‘Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph’ ” (John 1:45). Nathanael was skeptical. He came from the rival village over the hill to the north (John 21:2). He knew Nazareth, and the family of Joseph who lived there. There was nothing extraordinary about either. Philip repeated the words of Jesus, “ ‘Come and see’ ” (John 1:46)—the first

