

LifeWay Family Bible Series for Dec. 12: Enthusiasm for Christ should be contagious_120604

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Enthusiasm for Christ should be contagious

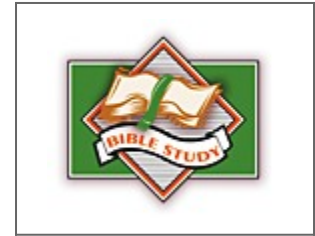
John 1:35-50

By Leroy Fenton

Baptist Standard, Dallas

Jesus called his army of disciples, and the fountainhead of the Christian movement began its historic march around the world. The day after John the Baptist identified Jesus, he pointed him out again, saying, "Look, the Lamb of God!" (John 1:35-36).

Immediately, two men, Andrew (v. 40) and probably John, the writer of this Gospel, became the first two to follow Jesus. These two probably had responded to the preaching and prophecy of John the Baptist, had repented, were baptized and eagerly awaited the arrival of the messianic age.



Church folk have a problem with the word “follow,” preferring its simplest external sense, “to follow after,” “to go along” or “to accompany,” which equates to little more than church attendance. The church conveniently has become attending consumers more than working servants. When one walks down the aisle to unite with a church (if he or she walks down an aisle), the pastor says, “Fill out this card, and sit here.” Walking is over, and sitting begins.

Even Webster's dictionary defines “follow” with more intensity and complexity, such as “to seek to attain,” “to accept as authority,” “to copy or imitate,” “to engage in as a calling” and “to understand.”

The New Testament use of the word is more than figuratively “going after” Jesus. It is a word of serious learning, deliberate action and strict obedience as a disciple in the fullest sense of total commitment intellectually, morally and spiritually, regardless of the personal cost. “To follow” means the development of an exclusive and dynamic relationship with Jesus, who is both teacher and Lord. These earliest followers had to mature to a deeper understanding and faith.

Learning

Seeing the two disciples, Jesus asked, “What do you want?” (v. 38). Finding Jesus friendly, open, hospitable and receptive, they went and “spent the day with him” (v. 39) to learn more about his mission. There is no memo about that conversation, but it was informative and persuasive. Andrew was convinced and became the first to call Jesus “the Messiah (that is the

Christ)" (v. 41). Christ, or Messiah, means "the anointed one."

In ancient times, oil was poured on the king's head, symbolizing the transfer of authority from the people to the chosen leader. Jesus is now perceived as more than a prophet. He is the one anointed, chosen by God to act on God's mission and in God's power. However, the Jewish Messiah is a righteous, national, military leader expected to break the bonds of foreign domination, to conquer Israel's enemies and to bring peace ("son of Joseph," v. 45; "King of Israel," v. 49). The learning process, begun in earnest, must continue. They will come to understand the full meaning of the title, "Son of God." Learning about Jesus and the Christian lifestyle is a lifetime pursuit.

Witnessing

Andrew is one of the less-prominent disciples and is famous for being the first to bring someone to Jesus. The "first thing" Andrew did was to rush out, find his brother, Simon, and say to him, "We have found the Messiah ..." (v. 41).

Andrew means "manly." His name implies he was a rugged, hard-working fisherman. He did not know everything about Jesus, had not studied soul winning and was not a graduate of the seminary, but he wanted his brother to know Jesus as he knew him. Perhaps he had some of the characteristics of Peter. His bold personality bounds to the forefront on this occasion. Andrew was left out of the inner circle of Jesus, but note the unashamed enthusiasm of his testimony rather than his notoriety.

Enthusiasm is derived from "en theos," meaning "possessed by a god." Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Every great and commanding movement in the annals of the world is the triumph of enthusiasm." The enthusiastic desire to tell others should mark the life of every believer. When Andrew brought his brother and fishing partner to Jesus, Jesus promptly changed his name

from Simon to Cephas or Peter (both mean “rock”). Peter was to become the most outstanding and prominent witness of the 12.

Multiplying

The three quickly became five. Jesus touched their lives, and one lighted torch lit another. To Philip, Christ said, “follow me,” the fourth (vv. 37, 38, 40, 43) use of that word in these verses. Philip followed, but not before he told Nathanael that Jesus was the one about whom Moses and the prophets had written, “Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (vv. 41-45).

This may give us a clue as to the content of the conversation Jesus had with Andrew and John. Nathanael was a willing skeptic who questioned Philip's assertion with “Can anything good come from” Nazareth (v. 46). Nathanael immediately switched from a doubter to a believer when Jesus revealed knowledge about his character and whereabouts through his supernatural ability and awareness (v. 48). Nathanael now gives his declaration, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel” (v. 49). His knowledge of us should prompt our own positive response in faith to his leadership. Later, there were seven more disciples (Mark 3:13-19). Greater things were to come (v. 50).

Discussion question

- ◆ Do you have an enthusiasm about sharing Christ?

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.