

Jesus and His Disciples

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[0 : 00] We're going to read together from John's Gospel. We're in a series on John. We've been looking at Jesus and his glory,¹ Jesus and John the Baptist. And now we're looking at Jesus and his disciples.

The reading is on the screen from chapter 1, verses 35 to 51. It would help if I had my Bible open there.

Here we go. Verse 35. The next day, John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, Look, the Lamb of God.

When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, What do you want? They said, Rabbi, which means teacher.

Where are you staying? 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.

[1 : 05] Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what Jesus had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, We have found a Messiah.

That is the Christ. 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.

The next day, Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, Follow me. Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida.

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.

Nazareth? Can anything good come from Nazareth? He said. Come and see, said Philip. When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, Here is a true Israelite in whom there is nothing false.

[2 : 12] How do you know me? Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, I saw you while you were still under the fig tree, before Philip called you. Then Nathanael declared, Rabbi, you are the son of God.

You are the king of Israel. Jesus said, You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that. 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. Amen. And the Lord will bless to us the reading of his holy word.

There's a lot of come and seeing, and a lot of follow me here. You might have noticed that. And so we're talking about discipleship.

For discipleship is essentially the following of Jesus. It is the following of Jesus. Have you ever met someone who changed your life?

[3 : 15] There have been some very famous examples, as you can see on the screen. John Lennon met Paul McCartney at a party.

Well, it was actually a garden fiat. It wasn't really much of a party. In 1957. And they were introduced to each other, and Paul McCartney let on to John Lennon that he could play the guitar.

And so John Lennon agreed to hear him out because he wanted a guitarist for his band, the Quarrymen, they were called. And so he heard him play.

He was suitably impressed. And then he invited him to become part of the band. And the rest was history. To that point, they hadn't known each other. He met somebody. Who changed his life.

They changed each other's life for the better. The middle picture is Thomas Edison and Henry Ford. Now, Henry Ford, you will probably know as the first manufacturer of Ford cars.

[4 : 19] The Model T car. And Henry Ford was a great admirer of Edison. Edison, for all the work he did in the scientific field and in the world of invention, and so he went to work for him.

And eventually he got an opportunity at a convention to speak to him, and they became great friends. But the very first time he spoke to him, he just quickly told him about a new idea he had for a gasoline-powered quadricycle.

Gasoline-powered quadricycle, which became a car. He shared this idea, of course, with Edison, and Edison thought it was a very good idea, so he said, keep at it.

That's all he said. Keep at it. And, of course, the rest is history, keeping at it, that led, in the end, to a complete change as to how you and I do travel together.

And then the other picture, of course, is Wallace and Edward, Wallace Simpson and Prince Edward, as he was then. And they first met in 1931.

[5 : 39] 1931. And when they met, they met at a hunting lodge, at a party. Wallace Simpson was American, of course, and she had been previously married to a U.S. Air Force pilot.

And she was a social climber, as they were called. Nowadays they would call them influencers, I guess. She was a social climber. And she had some quite wealthy friends, including a lady called Thelma Thurness.

She was a lady. And she was hosting the party, so she invited Wallace to the party, and there she met Prince Edward. And they talked, Prince Edward and her talked about central heating.

That was exciting, wasn't it? They talked about central heating, which must have been a relatively new concept back in 1931. And Wallace Simpson famously said to him, you are a bore, which is kind of a way of calling somebody, you'd call somebody today maybe a loser or something.

But to call somebody a bore was pretty much an insult. But he was quite attracted to her because she was so bold to speak to a prince like that. And much to Thelma's disgust, because she was the mistress of Prince Edward at the time, the prince found another mistress.

[6 : 57] And eventually, of course, he married her, caused such a scandal that he had to abdicate, before he married her, he had to abdicate from the throne.

People who you meet who change your life, sometimes for the best, but sometimes for not so good a reason. So I wonder again, let me ask the question, have you ever met anybody who changed your life?

Let me show you another picture. For those who know their films, this is Chris Pratt. Chris Pratt is a very famous Hollywood actor.

You may have seen him in Jurassic Park, or you may have seen him, as I have in The Avengers, because I'm not fond of dinosaurs. So he's a famous actor, and he is a very famous Christian.

And he speaks very openly about his faith. He talks about why it's important for him to be a follower of Jesus. Now, he came to faith when he was a young man of 19, and he was working in Florida, and he, it was maybe a hot day, who knows, but he wanted a drink of beer.

[8 : 14] So because he was too young, and in America you have to be 21 to buy, because he was too young, he'd asked a friend to go and buy him some beer from the shop. And while his friend went off to buy the beer, a strange-looking man, a Messianic Jew, as he turned out to be, came up and spoke to him, and said to him, what are you doing?

And he says, well, a friend of mine's just gone in, I'm working here, he said. He was actually living in a caravan at the time, so he wasn't particularly well off.

And he said, a friend of mine's just gone in to buy a beer. And this is his story. He says, a guy named Henry came up and recognized something in me that needed to be saved.

He asked what I was doing that night, and I was honest. I said, my friend's inside buying me alcohol. You going to go to a party? Asked Henry.

Yeah. You going to drink and do drugs? Meet girls? Fornication? Pretty bold. I was like, I hope so.

[9 : 25] It should have made me nervous, he said. But it didn't. I said, why are you asking? And he said, Jesus told me to talk to you.

At that moment, I was like, I think I have to go with this guy. He took me to church. Over the next few weeks and months, Chris Pratt's life began to change.

In 2018, when he won the equivalent of an Oscar at an awards ceremony, he spoke very openly to the audience.

And this is what he said. God is real. God loves you. God wants the best for you. Believe that. I do. Everybody cheered.

You can watch it. It's still on YouTube. The actor then added that it is his job to be a light and focus on what's important. What's important to me, he says, is talking about Jesus.

[10 : 34] What's important to me is talking about Jesus. That's what Chris Pratt discovered. And he's not alone.

We read a passage from John chapter 1 about people who thought it was important to talk about Jesus. And it's quite staggering, really. They meet Jesus, and then at once, they began to talk about him.

They can't help themselves because their lives are changed by an encounter with Jesus. And that's what makes Christianity true. When we encounter Jesus, our lives are changed.

Maybe not immediately. In Chris Pratt's example, it took many weeks, perhaps many months. And that is true for me, too. It wasn't immediate. It took weeks and weeks of searching, of trying to understand, of discovering and finding.

But there came a point when I could say, Jesus is my Lord and Savior, and then I was compelled. I had to tell others.

[11 : 47] It became important for me to talk about Jesus. And I want to ask you a question today. Is it important for you to do the same?

See, John has already told us that Jesus came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. And so the general trend of chapter 1 of John is that people are rejecting Jesus.

The light is shining, but the darkness is not understanding it. But here are some exceptions to the rule of the general rejection. We are introduced to five men who are introduced to Jesus and whose lives are changed, and then it became important to them to talk about him.

And we're going to look at these men individually, except we're not looking at one of them because he's not named. And the one who is not named is probably, we think almost certainly, the writer of this gospel.

So it's John. He doesn't name himself. The nearest you get to that is he talks about himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. But otherwise, the people are named.

[12 : 58] And the first time they get into contact with Jesus is when Jesus, when John the Baptist, as Richard reminded us last week, points Jesus out to two of them and says, behold the Lamb of God.

Because James and John are followers of John the Baptist. They're already disciples. They already know what discipleship means and involves. It means you follow your rabbi.

Literally, you are behind your rabbi and you follow them. So, there is James and John and they're following John the Baptist and then Jesus points, sorry, John the Baptist points Jesus out to them as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and then they think, oh, we better begin to take notice.

And that's often how following starts. Somebody says something to you. Something that is intriguing. Something about Jesus as the Savior of the world.

Something about the forgiveness of sins, etc. Something is said and then things begin to change. They begin to follow.

[14 : 07] In chapter 1 and verse 35, John points Jesus out again. Follow me. Or sorry, he says to him, look, the Lamb of God. And again, they begin to follow.

And at first, it's just kind of like a tentative hiding in the background, observing, listening, following. Eventually, it leads to something much more important, much more life-changing.

but it always begins with a word. Somebody suggesting something, something moving on, etc. And then there's an encounter with Jesus.

And when the encounter happens, Jesus makes a call. And the call always seems to be, follow me. Follow me.

Because essentially, as I've said, that's what discipleship includes, the following of Jesus. So let's look at these people who are called. The first example we're giving is Andrew.

[15 : 13] If you look at verse 37, it says, when the two disciples heard him saying this, they followed. Jesus said, turning around, Jesus turning around, saw them, and said, what do you want?

And they said, Rabbi, which means teacher, where are you staying? Come, he replied, and you will see. So they went and saw where he was staying and spent the day with him.

It was about the tenth hour. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, we have found the Messiah, that is the Christ, and he brought him to Jesus.

So here's Andrew, the first of the followers. With John, they become followers of Jesus. And Andrew, we're told, immediately goes from there once he responds to Jesus' call to follow him, and then he finds his brother, Simon, we'll talk about him in a moment, and Simon also becomes a follower.

Now, if you think about Andrew, he's interesting. If you were Andrew, you would find him a little annoying. Why? Because Andrew, you would, sorry, be a little annoyed because Andrew is always known as his brother's brother.

[16 : 39] Yeah? It's like when I was a little lad, I was called Little John. And that's because my dad was Big John. And so I would get introduced by my mother as Little John.

Oh, this is Little John. It's always annoying when you're only known because of your father. Or if I was getting into trouble at school, and the teacher was annoyed with me, he would say, you're just like your brothers.

Frustrating. Not to be known by your own name, but to be known by somebody else's name because of your association with other people. And so it was with poor Andrew.

He very rarely gets a mention because of his much more august and important in the eyes of the readership's brother Simon Peter.

But here he is, and he goes and finds his brother. And he goes and tells his brother about Jesus. So there's something really very instructive about this.

[17 : 39] When Andrew becomes a follower of Jesus, he immediately wants to tell other people about it. So where do you start? Well, like charity, you should start at home.

You should start at home. When I became a Christian in 1981, the first people I told about that were not my family. They were people at work.

And I did that the next day. And I did that not because I wanted to, but because I was rather forced into that moment. by a friend called Philip. Now, Philip is really important to me because Philip was the first person to tell me about Jesus that I ever met.

At least I can remember. He was the first person that really shared the gospel with me. And what he said to me sometimes was challenging. Sometimes I argued with it. Sometimes I found it frustrating and so on.

But Philip was important. He was an Andrew figure who I became very grateful for because he told me about Jesus and that led me to become a Christian.

[18 : 47] He encouraged me to follow Jesus. So the first people I then spoke to, not by my own choice, but because I was forced to do it, were people at work. But the people I wanted to speak to first were my family.

And there was a very good reason for that. When I became a Christian, I discovered that I was lost and that I needed to be found.

When I was found by Jesus, I discovered something really important, that Jesus gave me eternal life and told me that I shall never perish. But that also told me something really important.

It told me that people without Jesus would perish. And perish means go to hell. And I didn't want anyone in my family to go to hell. So I had to tell them, hadn't I?

And I was motivated by this one thought. I had got to 18 years of age without anybody telling me the gospel. 18 years of age.

[19 : 47] And if it was true that if I died without Jesus I would go to hell, I was astounded that the church wasn't more motivated to tell me that story. Absolutely astounded.

It was Matthew Paris, the journalist, who was a skeptic, a very well-known skeptic of the Christian faith. And this is what he said.

He said, he wrote a letter in the Times, I can't remember word for word anymore, but it really shook me when I was first new to the faith. He said, he was talking about Easter and the impact of Good Friday and Easter Sunday and Jesus dying for the sins of the world.

And he said, if I believed that, I would crawl over glass all over Britain to warn people against that danger.

But his argument was this, even if the church claims to believe that, it quite evidently does not. And there's a real challenge, isn't there?

[20 : 59] When you encounter Jesus, you encounter the truth and reality that the gospel of Jesus is all about. And it should create an urgency to share the gospel, not to be all hellfire and damnation, but to tell people the truth of what we've discovered in Jesus.

I have found the Christ. I have found the Messiah. I have found the promised one of God. I have found Jesus, the Savior of the world. And I need to start with my family and tell them how they too can find him.

That's Andrew. What a man Andrew is. We meet him twice more in John's gospel. We meet him at the feeding of the 5,000.

And we meet him again in, with the Greeks in John chapter 12 when some Greek men came to Philip and said, sirs, we would see Jesus. And he takes him to Jesus.

He takes them to Jesus. Andrew is portrayed in John's gospel as one who is always bringing people to Jesus. I'd quite like to be like Andrew, wouldn't you?

[22 : 06] There's a person who is always bringing somebody to Jesus. Wouldn't it be good if we were Andrew types? The church needs Andrew types.

People who are so clear about the urgent need of discovering Jesus that we will take people. We will bring people to him.

So that's Andrew. The next one is Peter. We've already met him because of Andrew. And Peter at first is called Simon. And he is a fisherman.

We know that. And he's brought to Jesus. And when he's brought to Jesus in verse 42, this is what Jesus says to him. Jesus looked at him and said, you are Simon, son of John.

You will be called Cephas. And that is translated from the Aramaic into Greek as Peter. And it means stone or rock. Cephas.

[23 : 04] Stone or rock. You might have come across the place Petra in Jordan. In the Jordan. Petros is rock. So Peter is going to be a stone or a rock.

Jesus changes his name. Now I often think if I was Simon, I might not be terribly enamored with that. If somebody's going to come along and say, you're not going to be called by the name your parents have given you, I'm going to change it.

So why did Jesus do that? Not because he didn't like his name, but because Jesus was pointing out that no matter what Simon was in this moment, he was going to become something very different.

He was going to become a rock upon which other people would depend. He was going to exhibit a rock-like faith that other people would follow and upon which Jesus says he would build his church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it.

And this too is an important lesson here because what Jesus is saying to us is that when you encounter me, when you come into close association with me, when you become a follower of me, you are going to change and you are going to change for the better.

[24 : 19] You cannot encounter Jesus and remain the same like Chris Pratt. When you encounter Jesus, he changes your life and he changes your life for the better.

Now you need to know as well that in the Bible a name is not kind of given randomly like because it's popular on Neighbors. There was a time when everybody was called Kylie, wasn't there?

If they watched Neighbors. Or was it Charlene, her other name? And so, you know, whatever was popular at the time you got that name. You know, I'm just glad that when I was brought up in the 1960s and 70s I wasn't called Edna or Stanley or something after somebody in Coronation Street.

Names have become nicer, haven't they? But names are not just labels in the Bible. You think of the name Jacob. We're going to mention Jacob in just a moment. Jacob means supplanter or deceiver.

It represented his character. But his name was changed and it became Israel. It meant he wrestled with God. It meant something. Take the name Jesus.

[25 : 30] Jesus means Savior. The Lord saves. It means something. Your name means something. It tells you something about the character of the individual that's being described.

So, Simon, he's one thing. Peter, the name means something. This is what you're going to become. And there's something really encouraging about that when we think about this in relation to Jesus.

Jesus does not receive us on the basis of who we are. He receives us on the basis of what we are going to become. He doesn't kind of look around and say, well, I'll have him because, well, he's potentially a really powerful witness for me.

Or he's a very good musician. He'll be great on a stage. He'll be able to lead lots of people to Jesus. Or he's a very good speaker, so he's going to become a very fine preacher. He doesn't choose us as it were because there is any good in us.

He receives us, not on the basis of who we are now, but on what he sees in us in terms of what we become.

[26 : 37] And thank God he does that. Because there are people who often have really low self-esteem who tell us that they cannot become Christians because, well, if you knew their story and you knew about their life, you knew the kind of person they've been, the kind of things they've done, that you would never welcome them, nor receive them, nor accept them.

They will tell me, I am too bad to be a Christian. And Jesus says, no, no, no, no. Nobody is too bad to become a Christian. Arguably, some people think they're too good.

They will say, I don't need you because I'm fine. I'm a very moral and good person. I don't need my sins forgiven. There are people like that. Jesus says, well, they're healthy people. They don't need a doctor. But those who are sick, those who are sinful, those who know that they need a Savior, there is never anybody too bad for that.

For Jesus sees not who we are, but what we will become. And what will we become? Well, John tells us, when He appears, we shall become like Him, for we will see Him as He is.

He is doing a work in us to completely transform our lives so that one day in the future you'll be able to look back at yourself and think, well, I don't recognize me anymore. And I don't recognize me anymore because by the grace of God I have become what I was not, a sinner saved by grace.

[28 : 09] For when you encounter Jesus, He changes you from the inside out, and He cleans you up, and He gives you a new heart, and He gives you new desires and new motivations in life.

He gives you a desire for godliness and for truth, and for love, and for grace, and for kindness, and for compassion. He gives you all of those things. He changes you from the inside out.

You may be a Simon, but you become a Peter by the grace of Jesus Christ. So that's Simon. The next one is Philip. Now, Philip was probably a Jewish man, yes, certainly a Jewish man, but he was probably of Greek origin, because his name is Grecian, Philip, after you've heard of Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, perhaps.

So he's from the diaspora, not a native-born Jew, but one born outside of Israel and brought into the country. That was quite common, particularly if you lived in the north in Galilee.

It was quite common to have that kind of movement. We don't know very much about Philip at all, except what is found in John's Gospel. Again, we meet him at the feeding of the 5,000. Jesus said to Philip, where do we get all the food to feed all of these people?

[29 : 27] Thanks, Jesus. I really wanted that question. That would really, really make me feel better about myself. I've got nothing here, and you're asking me to feed 5,000 people, because Jesus actually said, you go and feed them.

Philip's presented with that problem. That's a challenge to his faith, isn't it? But Philip quite rightly said, well, you know, Lord, I've not got a clue.

And he was involved with Andrew in chapter 12. The Greeks came to him, probably because he spoke their language and understood them very clearly, and then he went back to Andrew, and Andrew went to Jesus, and he introduced people to Jesus.

Now, Philip's great story is here in chapter 1, when he goes and finds Nathaniel. Nathaniel must have been a very good friend of his, and he was the first one he thought about to go and see.

And then he goes to see him, and he sees him under the fig tree, we'll come back to that in a moment, and he says, we've found a Messiah, the one that Moses spoke about in the law and all of that.

[30 : 32] And Nathaniel's immediately skeptical and said, where's he from? Oh, Nazareth, nothing good can come from Nazareth. And Philip just says, come and see. That's quite interesting.

He doesn't argue with him. Now, I suggest there are two reasons why he doesn't argue with Nathaniel. One reason is Nathaniel is clearly a scholar. He is sitting under the fig tree, which is the Jewish way of saying he was a follower of a rabbi.

You sat under a fig tree, believe it or not, to meditate upon the Old Testament scriptures. And rabbinic teachings. And it's almost certain too that Nathaniel was meditating or reading Genesis chapter 28, or a scroll that contained that, because Jesus refers to that story when he speaks to Nathaniel.

So, Philip might think, I can't argue with this guy, he's very knowledgeable. And when he says, nothing good can come from Nazareth, Nathaniel, who knows the scriptures, knows that the Messiah doesn't come from Nazareth, he comes from Bethlehem, Micah chapter 5, verse 2.

So, there's all kinds of interesting things going on here. But what Philip does really well is he says, I don't need to convince you by my words, I just need to bring you to Jesus.

[32 : 02] Philip, in other words, was so confident of his faith that Jesus was the Messiah, that he knew that all he had to do was introduce him to Jesus and Jesus would do the rest.

And that's a really important lesson when it comes to personal evangelism, by the way. When we seek to win others as followers of Jesus, we don't have to do it ourself.

We don't have to think, I need lots of clever arguments, and it does not depend upon us as to whether or not a person will accept or reject that message.

What we need to know, however, is that we just need to introduce him to Jesus, and then he will do the rest. See, I told you about a Philip, my Philip, who told me about Jesus, but he never converted me.

I insulted him, I called him names, I thought he was weird, you name it, I did it. But what he did was, he brought me a Bible, he put it in my hands, told me, go and read it, and that's what I did.

[33 : 11] And as I began to read about Jesus, Jesus introduced himself to me, and I saw, I saw.

You see, personal evangelism is really important because the majority of people who are ever converted to Jesus are not converted by listening to preachers like me, they're converted by an encounter with Jesus, and often it's a result of a friend or a member of the family who told them their story.

And that's why it's essential by the way that we do it. Because you might say, well, I don't have many words to say, and I'm not sure what to do. Philip didn't have many words either, he just said, come and see. You see, what people see in their friends or family members is often something in their life that they admire.

They see how that person has changed, and they will say, what's changed you? What's happened to you? And when they see that something has changed you or something has happened to you, then they begin to ask questions, and you can say, well, look, it wasn't because of me, but let me take you to see somebody who changed me, and that's Jesus.

You can still bring people to Jesus by putting a New Testament in their hand, or some Christian literature in their hand, or bring them along to an Alpha course, or just sharing your testimony.

[34 : 33] There's still ways of bringing people to Jesus, and when you do, it's the most important thing that you could do. Here am I, Jesus says, and the children you have given me, or that wonderful passage in the Psalms where it says that we go out weeping, scattering seed.

What do we do? We come again rejoicing, bringing our sheaves with us. Jesus, it is a desire of my heart that when I get to heaven, I will meet somebody in heaven who I didn't expect to see, but I remember speaking to them on a train.

I think of a Muslim man I spoke to on a train up to Edinburgh. I took the opportunity just to share Jesus with him, and I sent him a Bible. He gave me his address, and I sent him a Bible. I never, ever heard any more.

I pray they live in heaven. I went on a plane with a lady when I was scared, and I was so scared to go on a plane because I'm frightened of heights. I've told you this story, and then when I was walking down, she said, are you nervous?

I said, no, I thought I would be, and I said, no, I'm not nervous because a verse of Scripture has been going around my head, and I shared that verse of Scripture, and then months later she wrote to me to tell me she'd become a Christian.

[35 : 45] You never know what dropping a seed in does. You know, Ken at the hospital telling all the nurses and doctors about his faith. You know, that's what Jesus can do, just a seed, and it makes a difference.

That's Philip. And all right, lastly Nathaniel, just briefly Nathaniel. I've already told you much about Nathaniel. He's a student. He's used to following a rabbi.

He's sitting under a fig tree meditating on Genesis 28, and that's important because it's a story of Jacob, and it's a story of how Jacob sees a vision of a ladder that comes down from heaven, and he sees the angels of God ascending and descending on that ladder.

And he's thinking there, and Jesus says to him, when he's, when, sorry, Philip brings him to Jesus, Jesus said, here is a true Israelite in whom there is nothing false.

And Nathaniel says, how do you know me? And then Jesus says, I saw you under the fig tree before Philip spoke to you. I saw you. And Nathaniel is just blown away for two reasons.

[36 : 52] One, because Jesus knows him, and secondly, because Jesus knows where he is. Jesus knows all about him, and he knows where he is. There is nothing that Jesus does not know about us, and there is nothing that Jesus does not know about our circumstances.

Jesus. And Nathaniel was to discover that. If he was merely a man, he could not have known, he could have maybe guessed at his character, but he could not have known that he was sitting under a fig tree speaking, meditating on scripture before Philip spoke to him.

He could not have known what he was reading or what he was thinking about. But do you notice what Jesus says at the end of chapter one? He says, you believe because I told you, I saw you under the fig tree, you shall see greater things than that.

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. In other words, Philip, sorry, Nathaniel, I knew exactly what you were reading.

I knew what you were thinking about. You were thinking about that ladder that came down from heaven, and I knew what you were thinking about. And I want you to know that I am the ladder that those angels of God ascended and descended on.

[38 : 08] Now, what's the point of a ladder? The ladder between heaven and earth, the point of that ladder is to make access from earth to heaven, from heaven to earth.

In other words, a way is being opened, and Jesus is saying to Nathaniel, as he does in chapter 14 to Philip, I am the way, the truth and the life.

No man comes to the Father except through me. That's what you're going to see, Nathaniel. You skeptic. You doubter. You who says nothing good can come from Nazareth.

You are going to see heaven opened and a way made for man to get to God and for God to get to man, and that is through me.

Nathaniel is blown away, for here is one who knows everything about me, and here is one who knows all of my circumstances, and yet he calls me to himself.

[39 : 21] Have you ever met anyone who has changed your life? Have you ever met anyone who has changed your life for the better? I've told you that in 1981 I met Jesus.

He changed my life for the better. These men met Jesus. He changed their life for the better. And if you meet Jesus today, he will change your life for the better.

And you might say, Jesus wouldn't want me. But Jesus demonstrates here that even though he knows everything there is to know about you, he will not reject you.

For he says, if you will come to me, I will never drive you away. And not only does he know everything about you, he knows exactly what your circumstances are, exactly what you're going through.

And he's saying to you, in these circumstances, now, in this very moment, you may come to me. Don't let your circumstances get in the way. Jesus and his disciples.

[40 : 24] For this is what discipleship is. We become a disciple when we encounter Jesus. When we encounter Jesus, he changes our life for the better. Once we become followers of Jesus and we feel this transformation, we continue to follow him.

And then, just like Chris Pratt, we find it necessary to tell others all about him. And so, my final question to you today is this.

Are you a disciple of Jesus? Are you a follower of Jesus? Not just somebody who turns up and attends church, but one who truly follows and tell others about him.

Let us pray. Let us pray.