

## A summary of John 1:39-51 (Oct. 19, 2017)

1. When the disciples asked Jesus where He was staying, Jesus replied "Come and see" (John 1:39). When Nathanael was sceptical about anything good coming out of Nazareth, Philip's response to him was also to "come and see" (1:46). In both cases, the Greek word for "see" is *eido* which means a "subjective knowing." It is actually the same word for *know subjectively*. When we come to the Lord, we need to have a subjective vision of who the Lord is. How can we have such a vision? By abiding with the Lord (staying with Him) and by abiding in the church life.
2. Andrew followed Jesus (1:40). Philip also followed Jesus (1:43). The Greek word for follow is *akoloutheo* which does not just mean to follow behind or imitate, but to accompany, to go alongside as a disciple. To follow Jesus is to accompany Jesus and to accompany brothers and sisters who have Jesus Christ living inside of them. We can never get away from the matter of accompanying people. Many times we may say that we follow only Jesus. But if we never accompany people (believers and unbelievers), our following of Jesus may be from afar, or from behind, not as disciples. Jesus is the best example of someone who accompanied or followed people (eg. He found Philip (1:43)).
3. The word *find* or *found* is used several times in this passage. Andrew found Simon his brother (1:41), Jesus found Philip (1:43), and Philip found Nathanael (1:45). The Greek word is *heurisko* which means to get, to obtain, to perceive, to see. Barnabas hunted for Saul in Tarsus and found him (Acts 11:25-26). The same Greek word is used there. To "find" someone is not easy. We may think that it was easy for Andrew to find his brother Simon. After all, were they not close to each other? Actually, it is the hardest thing to find someone. It requires labor, diligence, perseverance and submission to God's speaking. Do we go to find the lost ones? Are we able to connect with them? How do we reach them? Philip introduced Jesus to Nathanael. Nathanael's reaction must have been a damper to Philip's enthusiasm in announcing the Jesus whom they had read about in the law and the prophets (1:45-46). Often, we come across the same reaction. However, Philip did not argue with Nathanael or try to persuade him. He simply said, "Come and see." That is a very good response. We do not need to try to explain or expound this or that. We simply need to introduce people to Christ, and let Christ speak to them and touch them.
4. Andrew's first reaction was to tell his flesh brother Simon (later Peter). The first gospel that we preach should be to those who are closest to us, in most cases our own family.
5. In fact, all the following and beholding of the Lamb of God, and abiding with Him, must be realized and experienced by the preaching of the gospel. If we do not preach the gospel, everything will remain theory and doctrine. We may say that we have faith in the Lord and in His word. However, it is only when we reach out to others that our faith begins to grow and become real.
6. Did Jesus find Philip, or did Philip find Jesus? This is a very interesting question. Upon first reading of the verses, it seems that Jesus found Philip (1:43). Upon a more careful examination of the text, we learn that Philip knew the Old Testament quite well (1:43). He knew the prophecies and he was looking for the Messiah. Therefore, we may say that he was looking for Jesus. Indeed, he found Jesus first. Then Jesus found him! This means that if we have a heart to seek and follow the Lord, the Lord will respond to us by finding us. Here, we take the initiative to find Him, and He will respond by finding us.
7. Nathanael knew the Bible (the Old Testament at the time) (1:49). In fact, he was the first to realize that Jesus was the Son of God. He, like Philip, was already seeking and knew God somewhat before Philip brought him to Jesus. When we preach the gospel to people, many of them have already been looking for God before we find them. This shows us that it is not a matter of how well we can preach the gospel. We have nothing to boast about.
8. Jesus changed Peter's name to *Cephas* or *stone* (1:42). The Greek word for stone here is *petros* which means a loose stone, or a piece of rock. The same word *petros* is used in Matthew 16:18, where Jesus identifies Peter as *petros*. However, Peter is not, as many claim, the *rock* on which Jesus is building His church. The Greek word for *rock* is *petra* (the feminine form of *petros*) which means a mass of rock, a cliff, a precipice, in other words, a solid, immovable and unshakable rock. The same word *petra* is used in 1 Corinthians 10:4 to refer to the rock, Christ, which followed the children of Israel during their journey in the wilderness. Therefore, Peter could never have been the first "pope" or first "head" of the church, as some absurdly claim. Rather, he, like all of us, was a loose stone because he was given the revelation of Christ (the *petras*), and it is this revelation of Christ that would transform him and perfect him and shape him to become a *petros* fit for God's building, the church or the body of Christ. When we have a revelation of Christ, God will test us through many dealings, experiences and sufferings so we can know the crucified Christ in our living. Is our life and our living founded on the revelation of who Christ is? We will be tested again and again. It is through this process that we become living stones (1 Peter 2:4-5).
9. Ironically, Peter in John 1 was not following Jesus when Jesus changed his name! The Lord spoke to him, but apparently elicited no reaction from him. Why? Perhaps because it was his brother who brought him to Jesus! Many times, the Lord speaks to us but we continue to live our life as if nothing had happened. The Lord has to speak to us again and again, often through many brothers and sisters, and even in our environment, until we respond to Him. In John, chapter 1, we have four positive reactions (the apostle John, Andrew, Philip and Nathanael) and one negative, or at least neutral, reaction (Peter).