

The meanings of words change drastically over time.

For instance, we know that the word **Christian** ...

was first used to describe the disciples of Jesus way back in middle of the first century AD. As Paul went out from there (preaching) the word Christian quickly became a **label** for all of Jesus' **disciples**.

A disciple is (by definition) a devoted LEARNER....

So a Christian was (originally) someone who followed Jesus by **orienting their lives around His teaching**.

In 380 AD, however, Emperor Theodosius officially made Christianity the religion of the Roman Empire. Therefore, to be a Roman citizen was to be a Christian.

- What about today?

What is a Christian ....in America?

According to the summary of polls conducted by Pew Research:

**76%** of Americans identify themselves as Christians...

.... that must make us a Christian nation...right? Well, let's take a closer look at some more data

**58%** **Pray** once (or more) per week ( to say it another way 42% rarely pray at all)

**40%** Attend church regularly (avg. of once / week)

**35%** believe the **Bible** is the literal Word of God.

**9%** Would say that their faith is **the most important thing in their life**.

Seems like, when we compare what Scripture presents as a Christian... compared to what how Americans now define it..... we have a great deal of **disparity**....

A Christian... in Scripture.... is someone who... when they learn of Who Jesus is.... they begin to FOLLOW Him ... in order to LEARN to walk in His ways and become His disciple....

A Christian = someone who **FOLLOWS** Jesus.

It is an **ACTIVE**... **present tense** activity.....

Like Sheep FOLLOW their Shepherd.....

Like loyal citizens FOLLOW their King....

Like slaves FOLLOW their Masters.....Christians FOLLOW Jesus.

The narrative we are about to read from the Gospel of John.... teaches us (from the example of the first disciples) what it looks like to be ...

## Followers of Jesus

### John 1:35-51

" The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he **looked** at Jesus as he walked by and said, "**Behold**, the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and **they followed Jesus**.

Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "**Come and you will see.**" So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak and **followed Jesus** was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "**We have found the Messiah**" (which means Christ). He **brought him** to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "**So**, you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "**Follow me.**" Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "**We have found him** of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is **no deceit!**" Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You (*all*) will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Truly, truly, (*be fully assured*) I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.""

The true church is made up **exclusively** of people who actively believer FOLLOW Jesus Christ.

What we have in these verses is the history of the **very first** FOLLOWERS of Jesus....**this is** ...the beginning of the church.

Much like we study the stories of the First settlers of our country..... in order to better understand the foundations upon which our nation was built....

Studying the Way God worked in the hearts and lives of these first disciples can reorient us around the **simplicity** and **purity** of devotion to Christ.

## Followers of Jesus

### 1. Follow Him by Faith

Part of what I do at the office is seek the Lord about what music He wants us to sing during this gathering. Often I will search for a song by a particular artist on the internet. I have noticed a very interesting **pattern** among Christian vocalists who have become **popular**. As you follow the history of their recordings on YouTube..... you find them in the earliest ones (usually in a church) where they are dressed modestly and with very little hype. But by the time their songs hit the radio stations.... they are in concerts with smoke and special lighting and dressed in a way that seems to focus all of the attention on themselves....

And the groupies who follow them.... eat it up. They follow the LOOK....the vibe.... the coolness of the sound...

Jesus, on this day, and in fact throughout His life... had **none** of that. He **COULD** have... God could have formed in Mary's womb the coolest dude who ever lived.....

But it was God's intention (both then and now) that people follow Jesus (the incarnate Word)... by faith.....not by sight.

This text gives us the indication the Holy One of Israel was right there in their midst.... and no one even knew it.... no one was (as yet) following Him.

That is **UNTIL**.... John the Baptist spoke the Word of God into the ears of two guys who had learning from him....

#### John 1:35-36

" The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!""

The pattern that God uses to draw these two men to Jesus... is the same one He used in your life.... and actually, in the life of almost everyone in the KOG.

the Word is **spoken**.. the Word is **Heard**....the Word is **Followed**...

Write that pattern down..... so that you can be a part of God repeating what happens **here** through you....

We are not sure if (as they were standing there) John had been teaching them about Jesus. But from all of what IS recorded, that is most likely what he had been doing....

As they stood there.... JTB... notices Jesus as he walks by (alone)...

Behold the Lamb!

That's all it took for the Holy Spirit to draw these two men to follow Jesus!

**John 1:37**

"The two disciples heard him say this, and they **followed** Jesus."

**followed** – in aorist tense (one time action with an abiding result) = "they became His followers"... (or they began to accompany Jesus)

We know from other contexts that **Andrew** was a fisherman. Yet, he and this other man with him MUST have been taught the OT Scriptures as children....

Their **response** to JTB's teaching, showed that God was using the Word already planted in their souls... to create a DESIRE for their Messiah....

They weren't joining a **bandwagon**.....

They were simply responding to the Word of God spoken by JTB...

"Behold the Lamb" – were the word which became like a sickle that harvested the fruit of decades of faithful sowing by someone....

**Romans 10:17**

"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."

Pattern -

the Word is **spoken**.. the Word is **Heard**....the Word is **Followed**...

The action of obedient following of the Word is evidence you believe the gospel.

Jesus today has the same DISPOSITION towards all who seek to follow Him by faith. (as we see here...)

**John 1:38**

"Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, **"What are you seeking?"** And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?""

**Tone** makes all the difference in communication. Many of you know, that emails or texts are often misunderstood because people can not hear the tone of your voice...

It would be one thing if Jesus were responding to these men who chose to follow him.... Can I **help** you?

Quite another...if he was speaking with the kindness of a Chick-Fila hostess: "How Can I serve you? I suggest **that** is the tone..."

Jesus **KNEW** what they wanted... and was glad about it... but it was important for them (as it is for you) to express what and WHO they were after....

So He says.....Whom do you **SEEK**....?

They respond by identifying Him with a term of **respect**.... but also one with prophetic significance... for Isaiah had predicted that Israel's TEACHER would come...

They sheepishly inquire if they could possibly hang out with him apart from these crowds...

Jesus' response ought to encourage you (esp. if you are wondering how Jesus feels about **you** drawing closer to Him....)

#### **John 1:39**

"He said to them, "**Come, and you will see.**" So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour."

**4 pm** was quitting time in Israel.... people were getting off work in the fields and headed home...

Jesus openly and warmly invites them to come along... and hang out with Him...

And He is still offering that invitation to all of you this morning....

"Come on, I'll show you..."

These two men **knew** that they were in for an evening of interaction with the future KING of Israel!

But like the Israelites of old who had discovered booty in the enemy camp and wanted to go back to the city to tell others about their good fortune.....

**One** of these guys wanted his brother to **not** miss out on this:

#### **John 1:40-41**

"One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the **Messiah**" (which means Christ)."

“One of the two...” we are not ever told the name of this other man... but scholars all believe it is John (the author of this Gospel)...

**Seven** other times in this Gospel John withholds his name....when describing an event he was involved in....

Here we find out that this is an eyewitness account not only of what happened... but of the **Day** of John’s conversion... when He became a follower of Jesus!

The other guy... Andrew...is mentioned 3 other times in this Gospel... and each time he is bringing someone to **DISCOVER** JESUS.... for themselves.

From members of his family - to a little boy with a **lunchbox**;- to Greeks in the crowd.... Andrew is all about helping others DISCOVER the treasure of knowing Christ....

Followers of Jesus

## 2. Discover Him through Others

I love to hear people’s **testimonies** of how God brought them to faith in Christ. In fact, I would contend that you don’t really **know** another believer (at the level you should)....until you know a little about how they came to know Jesus....

Until you know how the cross... and the gospel became real to them....

I know that some of you here have come to Christ simply by reading a Bible by yourself....

Certainly, God does sometimes save people that way.... Great work of grace when He does.....But more often than not....

- People DISCOVER Jesus **through** someone who is already His follower...

If you and I had an opportunity like Andrew and John did here... to spend an evening alone with JESUS... face to face... asking Him questions.....

Seeing the glory of God perfectly embodied... FULL of grace and truth...

It would be **natural** to not think of anything or anyone else.....

But **Andrew**... goes and finds his brother Simon and says: We have found HIM!

“Remember all that Mom taught us... and we learned in the temple about the Messiah! He is **HERE!** ... (No, this is NOT one of my jokes!).....Come meet Him!”

**Messiah** – Hebrew word meaning “Anointed One” (Christ is the Greek translation of that word)

The word comes from the practice of Prophets (in the OT) consecrating Israelite Kings by means of anointing their head with oil....in the presence of the people...

It symbolized that the Spirit of God was upon him to carry out his duties....

But with Andrew calling Jesus **THE** Messiah.... He is declaring THIS is the One to whom all of that pointed to....

**THIS** is the King of Israel....who is anointed by the Holy Spirit...

- Andrew did not convert Simon..... Jesus did.. But Andrew was the **MEANS** through which the Word about Christ came into Simon's hearing...

That is how this plan of **Speaking** the Word.... and others **Hearing** the Word... so that some will **Follow** the Word.... is carried out...

Andrew brought his brother to Jesus.... and **Jesus did the rest...**

#### **John 1:42**

"He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "So, you are Simon the son of John? - You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter)."

Cephas – Syriac (or Aramaic) for a stone or a portion of a rock.

Petros = same thing in Greek....

Jesus knows all things.... He already knew that this man (like some of you) was naturally impulsive... often he spoke before he thought about what he was saying.... he followed the desires of his flesh....

Jesus is saying.... my grace is going to make you into a man who is built on the **ROCK**.

Peter is not A Rock...he is a portion of **THE** Rock. –so are you if you are a follower of Jesus.

God was going to use Peter to bring many others to Jesus ....

If fact, He was going to use every one of these **ORDINARY** guys (that He was calling to Himself) to turn the **WORLD upside down** through the gospel!

- Many say there is no stronger attestation to the **power** of the gospel than the fact that Jesus chose to found the church on such humble and unlearned men....

J.C. Ryle notes that Christianity **must** be from God, because such results from men like these could not possibly be accounted for on natural principles...

- Think about your life?

After you have passed away.....as people reflect on your life.... will they say....oh he / she was a pretty decent person.....

Or will they say... you know what?.... they absolutely **HAD** to have the risen Christ in His heart.....

For **such results** could not possibly be accounted for on natural principles.....

Northern Va. is populated by what the world would call movers and shakers..... but lest any of you might possibly be thinking too highly of yourself.....

Paul wants to remind you that (if you are a Christian) the **NORMATIVE** choice of the man or woman God uses in His Kingdom....

Are **ORDINARY** people.... who are not exactly special in the world's eyes...

### **1 Corinthians 1:26-29**

"For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God."

Andrew and Peter were ordinary... run of the mill..... Yet, they were instruments in the **HANDS** of the Lord Jesus.....

Look at how this pattern continues...

### **John 1:43-44**

" The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "**Follow me.**" Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter."

Jesus will later tell us that He only does what He sees the Father doing.... and it is certain that Jesus **knew** He would find Philip there in Galilee....

But it is not inconsequential that Philip just happens to be from the same town as Andrew and Peter....

I don't think it is out of the question that they encouraged Jesus to go find their friend.... so he too could follow Jesus and continue the pattern of being used to bring others in....

**John 1:45-46**

"Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "**We have found him** of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

Phillip knew his Bible too! He was among that **remnant** of God's people that had been waiting for the consolation of Israel!

He was familiar with the truth that as **Moses** was about to die.... he had prophesied that God would raise up another prophet like him... and that Israel should LISTEN to Him....

.... and said **THIS** is indeed HIM!

But Nathaniel didn't **buy** it.....

Maybe you have been witnessing to someone at work.... or in your family....

(like Nathaniel) they are **doubting**.... they are casting up every objection they can think of.....

Nathaniel said -"**C'mon** – aint no King comin from **Nazereth**... anybody knows that!"

Phillip's response was the same yours should be.....

"Just come **look** at the Word with me.... Come closer and just see what He says..."

**Get them** to the Word of God..... in it, they will hear the voice of Christ! By His Spirit He will interact **personally** with THEM!

**John 1:47**

"Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "**Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!**"

Remember... these ordinary men... **knew** the Scriptures....

When Nathaniel heard these words... He readily understood that Jesus was referencing a Messianic Psalm.... one that pointed forward to the coming of Christ....the Lamb who takes AWAY our sin....

so that we can be **FORGIVEN**...and our sin not be counted against us....

Here it is:

**Psalm 32:2**

"Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is **no deceit**."

**Happy** is the man! who does not try to be one person at church....and another in secret..... in him there is **no deceit!!**

**That** is what Jesus prophetically declared about this man who stood before him....

And it took Nathaniel back quite a bit.....

**John 1:48**

"Nathanael said to him, "How do you **know** me?" Jesus answered him, "**Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.**""

The doctrine that God knows **ALL** things = **omniscience**.

Omniscience is a attribute that is peculiar to God. (no created being knows all things only God does...)

Does that amaze you that not only does God know where you are right now.... but every thought and intention of your heart... at this moment....

He knows the number of hairs on your head..... He knows how many more days you have to live.....

Every time Jesus shows people His omniscience in Scripture... they realize He must be GOD.

Here Nathaniel's doubts about Jesus being the Christ are **erased** by his experience of Jesus **KNOWING** him even before they are introduced.....

Nathaniel responds to Jesus with a confession of faith:

**John 1:49**

"Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are **the Son of God!** You are the King of Israel!"

What GRACE! When someone moves from a disrespectful **cynic** to bowing before their King as the Son of God!

This is his pledge to FOLLOW Jesus!

Jesus says.... you think my omniscience about some little detail like that is impressive.... something greater is coming.....

**John 1:50** Jesus answered him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You (*all*) will see greater things than these.”

I am going to be your gateway to Heaven..

**John 1:51** And he said to him, “Truly, truly, (*be fully assured*) I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.””

Jesus used the Hebrew words Amen, Amen... (rest assured this is TRUE) to emphasize how much we can BANK on what He is about to say....

In Me... you are going to see the GAP between heaven and earth bridged forever...

Jesus is quoting a passage that these men would have been readily familiar with. For when Jacob (Israel) was coming into the land after going to get a wife.... God opened the windows of heaven and met him in a vision...

**Gen. 28:12-13**

**12** And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! **13** And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac.

Jacob woke up astounded.... He said this is none other than the house of God!!  
Beth-el I can connect with God here!!

Jesus is now saying... I am the fulfillment of what this pointed to...

Followers of Jesus

### 3. Have Direct Access to the Father

Most world religions have Places of worship. Whether it is a mosque or a temple or a shrine or even a cathedral.. Religious people seem to prefer to meet their god at a certain holy place.

There at Bethel, Jacob saw angels going up and down a ladder that bridged heaven and earth....

Angels are messengers. All thru the OT we see God sending messages to His people through angels....

This ladder symbolized that communication..... that commerce between heaven and earth...

It is TWO -way communication ..... (prayer)

The disciples (Jesus says) are going to see the Power of Heaven brought to earth through Him.... they are going to see miracles that only God can accomplish happen before their eyes. The first one he is going to see the very next day in Nathaniel's hometown of Cana.

All of this they will see because they believe....

If you are a follower of Jesus..... you too have DIRECT access to God the Father in Heaven...

Jesus is your Mediator.... your LADDER.....

God has made a way for you to have a portal to the Most High.... so that you can experience the POWER of heaven... on earth....

through Christ.