

- *Try before you buy.*

or even better:

- *you can own it now. And if you're not fully satisfied, return it within 14 days for a full money-back-refund...*

For a consumer, it's very appealing to not have to make a firm commitment.

- *You can book a test-drive before you buy the car;*
- *They even let us use this building for 2 Sundays before we decided to buy it...*
- *At the Pistol Club, we're going to have a "Come and Try Day" in August... because you're not going to know if you enjoy it, unless you give it a go...*

But you know what:

There are some things you've gotta commit to, **before** buying in...

- Robyn's stuck with me now. There's no refunds on a husband or a wife;
- We can't take our kids back when you discover that they're too noisy, or too higher maintenance;

By God's design:

- One should not even take a sexual partner, until you commit to them in the covenant of marriage..

And with Christianity, we come to Jesus in faith.

There is no:

- Try-before-you-buy;

- Money-back-refunds;
- Test-Drive;
- ‘Come and Try Day;

Over the years, I’ve heard people say things like: “Yeah, I tried Christianity for a while, but it wasn’t for me...” or “I gave church a go, but it wasn’t my cup-of-tea...”

There is no such thing... That’s like saying “I tried marriage for a couple of weeks, but Nahh, not for me...”

You see: “To truly experience marriage, requires a life-long commitment to your husband/wife”,,, And to become a Christian requires a fair-dinkum commit to follow Christ and remain faithful to Him unto death...

To say “I gave the Jesus thing a go for a while”, is a non-sense. “Kicking the tyres of Christianity”, isn’t the same as the experience of “being a Disciple of Jesus”. If it doesn’t involve the lifelong commitment of faith, there is no true spiritual benefit.

You see, to be a Christian, takes **faith**. But, it is by no means, a blind faith. It is a faith based on truthful witness, and an invitation to “come and see”. (Not an invitation to “come and try”. An invitation to “Come and see”.) And when we **see** – when we **meet** Jesus, and believe, **that**, is when we make the commitment of faith.

When we began our new series on the Gospel of John (a few weeks ago), we went right to the end, because it's at the end, that He tells us its purpose. It was ^{20:31} ... written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

And we noted that every time in the Gospel of John, "Believe" is a verb – it's a doing word... And so, the whole point of the Gospel of John, is so that we will actively believe.

47 times, the word "see" appears in the Gospel of John. And 29 times, the word "witness" appears. Over and over again, there is an invitation to "come and see", or things are done "that you may see"... And over and over again, those who are in-the-know about who Jesus is, are witnesses – they witness/testify as to **who** Jesus is, and what He does.

And the first invitation to "come and see", comes in the very first chapter (in fact, several times in the first chapter).

So:

Last week, John the Baptist (JB/Bapto) said of Jesus: Look at Him – The Lamb of God Who takes away the Sin of the World. He's the one who will baptise in the Holy Spirit...

In today's reading, it's the next day. And Jesus is still hanging about, and as He walks by, JB said: "Look, the Lamb of God"... And two of Bapto's own disciples followed Jesus.

Alright, so, there's the witness. JB didn't know a whole lot about Jesus,
but he did know that:

- He was the Son of God; and
- Jesus is the atoning sacrifice, by which sins are forgiven.

And so he bore witness about what he **did** know.

Now, I want you and me to learn from that... When it comes to sharing **our** faith, all God wants us to do, is to tell people what we **do** know.

You might feel:

- way too inadequate;
- that you don't know enough;
- that you're not convincing enough...

But, you **do** know enough. You know more than what John the Baptist knew.

You know:

- Jesus is the Son of God;
- Jesus is the only one who can give us life;
- Jesus is the only one who can take away our sins;
- Jesus rose from the dead...

If that's all you know, that's plenty. So, let's be witnesses for Jesus with what we do know.

JB bore witness "Look, the Lamb of God", and from that very simple witness, came a response. Two of them followed Jesus.

Now, when Jesus saw them following, he said to them, **"What are you seeking?"** And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" ³⁹ He said to them, **"Come and you will see."**

Now that seems to be a strange interaction, but this is the way it happens. I suspect they didn't really know **what** they wanted. Or maybe they weren't confident to tell Jesus what they really wanted.

And so they said, "Err, where are you staying?"

The truth of the matter is, a person they trusted (John the Baptist) testified that Jesus is the Lamb of God who Takes away the Sin of the World. And they were moved by that simple witness, to put themselves into the vicinity of Jesus, to learn more.

And Jesus makes an invitation that we're going to hear a few times in the Gospel of John, "Come and see"...

Now, I don't for a moment believe "come and see" was about "coming to see the accommodation of Jesus" – it was about coming and seeing Jesus Himself (because that's what they really wanted)...

And that, is humanity's greatest need – to come and see Jesus....

- You might think you want Jesus to fix your family.

What you really need, is to be born again, and the forgiveness of sins. Jesus can fix you. And then you'll be a new creation, to make a difference in your family.

- You might think you want meaning and purpose and drive in your life...

What you really need, is a Saviour – a Lord to serve, and obey – to even die for...

You see, the Gospel isn't about lessons on life-improvement. It's about "Come and see Jesus, and be born again." – start a new life (in the Spirit), as a Disciple of Jesus.

The second scene:

One of the two Disciples of John, who followed Jesus and stayed-over with Jesus, was Andrew, the brother of Simon. We know him better as Peter – the Apostle (Peter {Simon Peter}).

And Andrew himself, becomes a witness to his brother Simon. Once again, Andrew doesn't know much about Jesus (he's only just met Him)... But he finds Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ).

He didn't try to convert him. All he said was, "We have found the Messiah". There's the witness. And there must have been some kind of invitation, because we're told that Simon brought him to Jesus.

You see, as Christians – as Disciples of Jesus, we long for others to come to know Jesus – to believe, and by believing in His Name, to have life (Right???).

We long this, for:

- our friends;
- our family;
- work mates;
- neighbours; and because we love them
- our enemies to come to know Christ...

But most of us feel terribly inadequate... We don't feel that we're capable of elucidating them with the great spiritual truths that are going to be needed, to convince them on the spot and make them fall on their knees in repentance, and so we say,,,,,, nothing...

We worry that we're not going to be successful in converting them, and so we say and do nothing...

But one of the most effective forms of evangelism, we see, right here. Witness and invite; Witness and invite; Witness and invite....

Witness about the most powerful thing you know about Jesus: "Jesus is the Son of God, and He rose from the dead. That's what I believe."

That's all the witness you have to give. You don't have to argue with them. You don't have to try and convince them. Just say, "This is what I believe: Jesus is the Son of God; He rose from the dead; and He's coming again."...

And **invite**: “Come and see”.

Invite them to:

- church;
- Bible Study;
- Scott’s men’s group;
- to dinner along with some of your Christian friends;
- Christianity Explored course...

Come and see...

So, Andrew brings his brother Simon to meet Jesus. **Jesus** looked at him and said, **“You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas”** (which means **Peter**).

Jesus sometimes did that – changed the names of His Disciples. His name was “Simon”, which means “listening”, but Jesus changed his name to (in the Aramaic) “Cephas” which means “Rock” In the Greek, it’s “Petros” (Peter)....

You know, in the life of Peter, at times he seemed like he was anything but a rock. He is the one who denied Jesus 3 times... But Jesus knew what Peter would become. After the resurrection, Jesus sent His Holy Spirit. And once Peter was empowered by The Spirit, he became the rock that Jesus had named him to be...

And we mightn’t see the changes in ourselves or in each other immediately, but know this: Just like what Jesus did for Peter,

He will transform **us** into the men and women He wants us to be.

The 3rd Scene: The next day, Jesus decides to go to Galilee.

He found Philip and said to him, "**Follow me.**" (There's the invitation)

Philip then found Nathanael. And what do you think Philip did? Philip bore witness: "We've found the one that Moses and the Prophets wrote about in the Scriptures. It's **Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.**"

And Nathanael was a bit sceptical about that. "**Can anything good come out of Nazareth?**"

I mean, Nazareth was a no-where sort of a place, and the Scriptures didn't really tell them that anything great was going to come out of Nazareth...

But did you notice, Philip didn't try and argue; he didn't try and convince Nathanael. He's already given the witness "We have found the one the Scripture foretold"... Now all he had to do, was to back up the witness, with an invitation.

And what **did** the invitation look like?

"Nathanael, we're putting on a special event this Sunday. There's going to be a free meal; We've got a special band coming, and a really engaging speaker who can answer all your questions..."

Was that the invitation? No.

Philip said to him, "Come and see."

And when Nathanael met Jesus, I would love to know what is behind this conversation, because Jesus knew Nathanael.

It becomes apparent, He knew his:

- heart;
- hopes;
- dreams;
- ponderings...

When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, he said, "Look at that: **an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!**"

And I love the way that Nathanael didn't put on a show of false modesty here (I'm not as nice as you think I am): "How do you know me?"

It seems like Nathanael was a pretty-good guy. Not sinless, because nobody is except for Jesus, but Jesus said of him: **an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!"**

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.**"

I would love to know what Nathanael was thinking about or praying about, or what he was doing, under that fig tree... From the things that Jesus said, that really hit home for

Nathanael, I think we could come pretty close, but it remains speculation all the same.

And the key is “Israel; Jacob; and Angels”.

You see, back in the Old Testament, God changed Jacob’s name to Israel. Jesus recognises in Nathanael, **an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!**

Jacob (the original Israel) was **known** for his deceit. Even his name (Jacob) means “supplanter”. He conned his brother Esau out of his birthright inheritance by trading it for a bowl of stew. And he tricked his dad Isaac into giving him the blessing by tying goat skins to his arms to trick his dad into thinking that he was Esau...

The original Israel was well known for his deceit. Nathanael (on the other hand), **an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!**

What was Nathanael thinking about under that fig tree? Was he thinking about how God is gracious to sinners? Was he thinking about how Jacob was deceptive, and how Jacob was blessed by God, while the righteous often go unnoticed????

And so, when Jesus said “**I saw you.**”, he knew Jesus had divine knowledge???

Or was he thinking about how God gave to Jacob a dream about the gateway to heaven???

Let me take you to Genesis 28:

Genesis 28:10-17 (ESV)

¹⁰ Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran.
¹¹ And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. 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. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. ¹⁴ Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵ Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."
¹⁶ Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it."
¹⁷ And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Was Nathanael thinking:

- about the gateway of heaven?
- “I hope I recognise when God is present and not miss it”?
- how it will be a descendant of Jacob, through whom all the families of the earth will be blessed?

It could be any/all/none of these things. ... We don't know... But what we **do** know, is Jesus did something supernatural, that revealed to Nathanael that He is indeed, the Son of God.

All we do, is

- we bear witness: “This is what I know about Jesus”; and
- we invite: “Come and see”...

Jesus then does His work (revealing Himself to an unbeliever), so that they might believe, and receive Him as their Lord. He doesn't **make** us believe; He doesn't **make** us receive Him as Lord; but He reveals enough, so that you and I are to blame, if we are the ones who reject Him.

You may remember, that right at the start of this chapter, we were told that “The Word” of God, came to the world He created, and the world didn't recognise Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him... What Nathanael discovers here, is YHWH is truly present...

Jesus said to him (and He's saying it to us too, because in the Greek, the word “you” is plural. He's not just saying it to Nathanael alone).

51 And he said to him, **"Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."**

Jesus is clearly building on the image of Jacob's dream, of the angels going up and down the ladder – the gateway to Heaven – the presence of God...

In Jesus Christ, God truly is present. Jesus, **is** the ladder/gateway to heaven...

The witness of John is true. Jesus is the Christ – the Son of God. The invitation we receive, is "come and see". The Lord reveals Himself. The Lord truly is present. Jesus is the ladder/gateway to heaven...

Will we believe? Will we receive Jesus, as the Lord that He is?

I'm not asking, "Will you give Him a go?" because there is no "Try before you buy".

I'm asking, do you have faith? In faith, will you receive Him as Lord, and commit to Him for life???

If so, you've entered the gateway to heaven, and in Him is life...

So, in faith, **we** become the ones who witness, and **we** become the ones who invite, “Come and see.” And my prayer, is that 2026 is going to be a year of witnessing and inviting, “Come and see”.

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father, we thank You,
for the way You reveal Yourself in Christ.
We thank You
for how you reveal Yourself in Your Word,
that these things are written,
that we might believe.
and that by believing,
we might have life in Jesus' Name.

Lord, we believe.
In faith, we receive You;
We trust You;
We commit to You,
as the Lamb of God,
Who takes away our sins.

And Lord, we pray
that You would help us to be witnesses.

Give us courage to tell,

the simplicity of what we know –
to proclaim that:

- Jesus is the Son of God;
- He is Lord;
- He is risen from the dead;
- He is coming again

And give us an unstoppable urge to invite
"Come and see" ...

Not "go and see" – "come and see",
that we would enter the journey
with the ones we invite...

"come with me, and we will see Christ together" ...

in Jesus' Name,

Amen.