

Discussion Questions

Prepare

What do you hope to get out of this series on the encounters Jesus had with people who came to him with their big, meaning-of-life type of questions?

Passages

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." "And The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory..."

John 1:1-3, 13

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."

⁴⁴ *Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. ⁴⁵ 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."*

⁴⁶ *"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked.*

"Come and see," said Philip.

⁴⁷ *When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."*

⁴⁸ *"How do you know me?" Nathanael asked.*

Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."

⁴⁹ *Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel."*

⁵⁰ *Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that." ⁵¹ He then added, "Very truly I tell you, you will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on' the Son of Man." John 1:43-51*

1. How does the Prologue to the Gospel of John fit in with this first encounter Jesus has with a group of students, some of whom were skeptical of Jesus?
2. Were you once skeptical of Jesus? What was behind your skepticism? Are you still a skeptic or have you placed your faith in Jesus already? How did you make the shift from skeptic to follower of Jesus?
3. What are common reasons people have for being skeptical of Jesus and/or Christianity? What could you tell someone who dismissed Christianity for a particular reason to help him/her get past their skepticism?

Encounters: The Skeptic

John 1:43-51

2/26/23

4. "Don't judge a book by its cover" we are told. Have you ever judged someone to be one way and were surprised to find they were nothing like you had perceived? Have you ever been misjudged?
5. What unmet spiritual needs did you experience before you came to Jesus by faith? What unmet spiritual need led you to Jesus?
6. What comfort does it give you to know that despite Nathaniel's loud, public assertions of skepticism about Jesus, there was a covert spiritual searching going on? Did you experience something similar?
7. Do our cultural answers to the big questions of life satisfy? What evidence do you have that they do or do not?
8. What does our culture teach about: the purpose of life, the problem with the world, what can make it right, how we can be a part of making it right, and where we should go for answers to these questions?
9. What did Jesus offer Nathaniel that touched his life and knocked him out of skepticism to faith? What does it teach us about how to talk to and treat those who are skeptics?
10. Have you ever seen anyone make such a radical change in his/her life like Nathaniel? One moment they are very dismissive of Jesus and the next moment they are an enthusiastic follower, perhaps an overly enthusiastic follower?
11. What danger is there in being forever skeptical? What danger is there in surrendering to the first idea that you hope will solve your deep emotional/spiritual needs?
12. What does Jesus' encounter with "Doubting Thomas" tell us about how to handle skeptics?
13. The last thing Jesus tells Nathaniel is: "*You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that....Very truly I tell you, you will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on' the Son of Man.*" (vss. 50-51)
Share ways Jesus became for you something far more than you had initially hoped for or expected.
14. Brainstorm ways we can gently relay the message Phillip relayed to his skeptical friend: "*Come and see!*" (v. 46) It's one of many ways we can "evangelize" those who do not know Jesus...yet!
15. Anything we haven't covered yet that you'd like to discuss?