

# BRINGING THEM TO JESUS

## John I:35-42

Rev. Richard D. Phillips

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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. *John I:38-39*

Some of the most valuable Christians are not those with the greatest gifts, but those who bring gifted people to Christ. An example is the English monk named “Little Bilney,” so-called because of his short stature. Bilney had been influenced by Martin Luther’s books and had joined the Protestant Reformation. He re-a-lized that he was not well-educated and or greatly gifted, but he had noticed a priest named Hugh Latimer who possessed great learning and ability.

Bilney began praying about how he might witness the gospel to Latimer, and came up with a strategy. Priests were required to hear confessions of sins. So one day, Bilney went to Latimer, tugged at his sleeve and asked him to hear his confession. After they entered the booth, Bilney confessed the gospel. He told Latimer how he was a sinner and knew his good works could not save him. But he also confessed that Jesus had died for him and that now, by faith, the righteousness of Christ had been imputed to him apart from good works. Hearing this confession of the gospel, Latimer was converted. He became one of the great preachers of the English Reformation, and his martyrdom for Christ was one of its great inspirations. It all began with Little Bilney, who though short in stature and little known to history, did much for the kingdom of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cited from James Montgomery Boice, *Acts: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 316

The Gospel of John introduces us to a similar figure, the disciple Andrew, who brought his more famous brother, Simon Peter, to Jesus. His is one of three witnesses the Gospel of John records on the third and fourth days of the first week of Jesus' ministry. One was given by John the Baptist, another was given by Andrew, and the third was given by Jesus himself.

## JOHN THE BAPTISTS' WITNESS: BIBLICAL PROCLAMATION

There is always much discussion as to the best method of evangelism. Some emphasize a very direct approach, in which people – even strangers – are addressed with an aim to discussing their eternal salvation. Others would emphasize a more relational approach in which Christians seek to establish a personal connection, out of which might grow a receptivity to the gospel. Some people hand out tracts or other printed material, and others engage in open-air preaching. In my opinion, there is a great need for all of these approaches to evangelism. In John 1:35-42, we see elements of these various approaches. Instead of picking and choosing between them, we can best profit by considering all of these approaches and making use of them as God gives us opportunity.

First is the witness of John the Baptist: “John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, ‘Behold, the lamb of God!’” (Jn. 1:35-36). John is a great example to us in evangelism. Being a prophet, John gave his testimony in public, calling all people to repent and believe that the Savior had come. John is also outstanding in that he was not interested in acquiring followers for himself; his chief desire was to direct others to follow Jesus Christ.

Moreover, John is a strong example of using *biblical proclamation* in our witness. Many Christians wonder what to say to others about Jesus. John shows that we should always be ready to state what the Bible says about him. Someone may ask, “What is it about Jesus that so fascinates you Christians?” You might reply, “The Bible says that Jesus is the Lamb of God, the sinless Savior who died for our sins.” From there you might go on to explain more of the gospel. Or, as we are studying John's Gospel, you might make note of its famous “I am” sayings. Jesus is the bread of life, the light of the world, the gate, the good shepherd, the way, the truth and the life, and the true vine. You

might point these out in the Bible and explain what they say about Jesus. I once taped these to the inside of a Bible to help me witness, and found them to be extremely effective.

Another famous approach to proclaiming the gospel is to learn the so-called “Roman’s Road.” This is a short-hand way of following Paul’s gospel proclamation in the Book of Romans. It starts by stating that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Next comes the statement that “the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). You then explain how our sins are forgiven by reading, “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). The question then is “How can that be true for me?” You answer, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved... For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom. 10:10, 13). When I was first converted, I marked those pages so that I could have others follow the Romans Road and understand the basic gospel message.

We need to have this kind of biblical proclamation ready at hand to tell people what the Bible says about Jesus. We may have to repeat these things, as John the Baptist repeated his witness to Jesus as the Lamb of God. But we should always emphasize the actual teaching of the Bible in our witness, since it is the Word of God that brings people to faith. Peter wrote to believers, “You have been born again... through the living and abiding word of God” (1 Pet. 1:23), so we need to witness to Jesus by presenting the Bible’s teaching about him.

#### ANDREW’S WITNESS: PERSONAL TESTIMONY

The second witness we see is Andrew’s. Andrew is usually listed as one of the first four disciples (see Mt. 10:2; Mk. 3:16-18; and Lk. 6:14), but he is much less known than the other three: Peter, James and John. Andrew’s contribution was similar to that of Little Bilney. It is for bringing people to Jesus that he is most noted: the three times he is singled out in John’s Gospel it is always for this reason. In our passage, he brings his brother Simon to Jesus. Later, when Jesus wanted to feed the five thousand, it was Andrew who brought the boy with five barley loaves and two fishes to Jesus (Jn. 6:8-9), and shortly before Jesus’ death, Andrew and Philip together

brought a group of Greeks who wanted to meet the Lord (Jn. 12:20-22). Peter might be called “the Rock,” James and John might be dubbed “the Sons of Thunder” (Mk. 3:17), but Andrew’s notoriety was the most excellent: he was the one who brought people to Jesus.

Andrew’s example is instructive for the topic of evangelism. First, we note his willingness to take a back seat if only he could bring others to the Lord. John MacArthur says, “[Andrew] did not seek to be the center of attention. He did not seem to resent those who labored in the limelight. He was evidently pleased to do what he could with the gifts and calling God had bestowed on him, and he allowed the others to do likewise.”<sup>2</sup> Those who are greatly concerned about their own place and the importance of their own ministry are seldom effective evangelists. Like Andrew, we must most of all desire simply for people to come in faith to Jesus Christ.

Next, we note Andrew’s zeal to share what he had found in Christ. John 1:41 says, “He first found his own brother Simon.” This indicates that the first thing Andrew did was witness to his brother. Many of us find it hard to speak to those who are closest to us about our relationship with Jesus. It is a sad reality that many Christians do not witness to their family and closest friends. But Andrew was too zealous for that to be true of him. It was the very first thing he did after he left Jesus’ presence.

This is how it ought to be with new converts – they should not be able to contain themselves from talking about Jesus. But the same should be true for every Christian: our excitement about the Lord should inspire a zeal to share what we have found. For many of us, Andrew’s example provides a much-needed rebuke. Alexander Maclaren writes, “This man, before he was four-and-twenty hours a disciple, had made another. Some of you have been disciples for as many years, and have never even tried to make one.”<sup>3</sup> If that is even partly true of you, you should draw near to Jesus for forgiveness and ask for a love for others that will make you more like Andrew.

Andrew’s witness to Peter took the form of a *personal testimony*: “We have found the Messiah” (Jn. 1:41). Our witness should always include a biblical explanation about Jesus, but it is also important for

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<sup>2</sup> John MacArthur, *Twelve Ordinary Men* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 63.

<sup>3</sup> Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, 17 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 10:64.

us to speak of our own experience with the Lord. Peter knew what “the Messiah” meant. John tells his Greek readers that this means “the Christ” – that is, the “Anointed One” who would come to save and lead Israel. But Andrew also shared his personal experience. Maclaren comments, “The mightiest argument that we can use, and the argument that we can all use, if we have got any religion is us at all, is that of Andrew, ‘We have found the Messiah.’”<sup>4</sup>

What kind of things should we tell others about Jesus? We should tell them what caused us to believe. We should tell what we have experienced in our hearts: the joy of knowing our sins are forgiven, the peace that comes through the Holy Spirit, the love we feel as children of God, and the excitement of seeing the truth with new eyes. If you have a good doctor, you tell your friends that they should see him when they are sick. Are your friends not sick of soul? If you find a store with a great sale, you call your family members and friends to let them know. But here are blessings that money cannot buy – that are, in fact, available to all by God’s free gift of grace – and that never perish or fade. Tell people what it has meant to you to turn away from sins that had dragged you down for so long, and to have a power within you that enables you to walk in faith with God.

Our personal testimony does not replace a biblical proclamation about Jesus, but it is an important complement. And it requires that we have a close relationship with the Lord. If we are not excited about God’s Word, if we are not warmed by close fellowship with God, and if we are not humbled by Christ’s suffering on the cross for our sins, we will not be very effective witnesses. Yet it is essential that we be able to give such a witness. John MacArthur is right when he says:

Most people do not come to Christ as an immediate response to a sermon they hear in a crowded setting. They come to Christ because of the influence of an individual... In the overwhelming majority of [new believers’ testimonies], they tell us they came to Christ primarily because of the testimony of a coworker, a neighbor, a relative, or a friend... There’s no question that the most effective means for bringing people to Christ is one at a time, on an individual basis.<sup>5</sup>

Between these two brothers – Peter and Andrew – we see the two main kinds of witnesses God provides in the church: the public

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>5</sup> MacArthur, 68-69.

preaching of the Word and the personal testimony of individual Christians. Every church needs a Peter who will publicly preach the gospel, and God greatly uses faithful preaching. Peter's sermon at Pentecost, when 3000 people believed on Christ, is one such example. But important as preaching is, it is at least as important – if not more so – that a church have a whole legion of Andrews: those who bring people one-by-one to Jesus through their heart-felt testimony.

Moreover, when you lead someone to Jesus, it may be that God will use that person in a mighty way. That was the case with Andrew; his bringing Peter to Jesus was a great moment in Christian history. Another such example was the witness of Edward Kimball to a shoe salesman he had met. Kimball was a timid, soft-spoken man: the very opposite of a bold evangelist. The shoe-salesman was a crude and illiterate person, but God laid it on Kimball's heart to speak with him about Jesus. So Kimball headed to the shoe store, uncertain if he should be going there during business hours and unclear as to what he would say. He was so preoccupied that he walked right past the store! But realizing this he determined to get it over with and dashed right in. He found the young man shelving shoes in the stockroom. As he later remembered it, he spoke with "limping words:" "I never could remember just what I did say: something about Christ and His love; that was all." It was, in his judgment, "a weak appeal," but God used his witness so that the young man gave his heart to Jesus Christ.

The reason this was so memorable an event was that the shoe-salesman was Dwight L. Moody, who went on to be one of the greatest evangelists in history. Moody's ministry had a massive impact in America and in Britain. He founded the famous Moody Bible Church in Chicago, along with the Moody Bible Institute, from which the gospel is heard today on the Moody Christian radio network. Millions of people have been reached over the decades through the ministry of Dwight L. Moody, once an illiterate unbeliever, and it all began when one Christian man was faithful to bring another person to Jesus.

That is what Andrew did, and what we are all called to do. I have noted that Andrew is overshadowed in the Bible by more famous disciples like Peter, James and John. But there are no more glorious words written about anyone in the Bible – apart from Christ – than the words spoken of Andrew in John 1:42: "He brought him to Jesus." If we really care about people – especially those closest to us – then it

should be our most fervent prayer and most ardent desire that this could be said of us as well: “He brought them to Jesus.”

## THE WITNESS OF JESUS: HIS PERSONAL INVITATION

I said there are three witnesses in this passage. The third comes in the form of a *personal invitation* from Jesus Christ. Jesus saw the two disciples coming to him, and asked, “What are you seeking?” They answered, “Rabbi, where are you staying?” Then Jesus said, “Come and you will see” (Jn. 1:38). This is a great invitation to you: “Come and you will see.” With those words Jesus invites everyone to discover personally the Savior that he is.

Jesus’ invitation is couched in the form of a promise: “If you come, then you will see.” This invitation and promise is still valid today. If you will sincerely seek to learn about Jesus, he will show you who he is. Many times I have suggested to someone who was not certain about Jesus that he or she should read the Gospel of John, sincerely seeking to learn about the Christ. Time after time, I have later found that they came to Jesus and that he did reveal himself to their heart so that they became his disciples.

Stan Telchin was a traditional Jewish father, whose daughter, Judy, informed him that she had come to faith in Christ. A friend at college had given her a Bible and helped her to study it with the result that she believed. Despite knowing that her family would bitterly oppose her conversion, she nonetheless spoke to her father in words similar to those used by Andrew in his witness to his brother Simon. She said, “I believe that the Bible is the Word of God, and I believe that Jesus is the Messiah.”<sup>6</sup> Telchin felt utterly betrayed. It was worse than if she had gotten pregnant or kicked out of school! But he loved his daughter, and he and his wife could not help noticing the positive changes in her life. She gave them New Testaments, saying, “Read the Bible for yourself and find out whether it’s true or not.”<sup>7</sup> Judy Telchin combined all three kinds of witnesses we have studied: biblical proclamation about Jesus, her personal testimony, and Jesus’ own invitation. Her father took up the challenge, determined to prove her false. Instead, he found that Jesus’ invitation is true. As he

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<sup>6</sup> Stan Telchin, *Betrayed!* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 1981), 12.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

studied the Bible, his eyes were opened by the Lord and he saw for himself that Jesus is the Messiah. He went on to have a powerful evangelistic outreach to other Jews, and today, Stan Telchin and his book, *Betrayed*, have been used to lead many Jews to Jesus.

If you will come to inquire about Jesus, honestly seeking in the Bible who he is and what he has to offer, this will happen to you. You will be faced with the power of God's truth in the good news of salvation. If you seek Jesus he will reveal himself to you by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, as he illuminates the Scriptures to your mind and heart. If you find that hard to believe, take Jesus at his word: "Come," he says, "and you will see." And when you have found him, you will also find a new life with God, a life of light and love and truth.

### BRINGING THEM TO JESUS

What a blessing it is for believers to have these simple and straightforward examples of a Christian witness. There is John the Baptist, who boldly proclaimed the biblical testimony regarding Jesus Christ. Every Christian should be able simply and directly to lead another person through the biblical teaching regarding Jesus. Peter wrote in his first epistle, "Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15). Christianity is not a blind leap into darkness; we are to believe based on the compelling witness of the Scriptures, and we are to be able to present that witness to others.

Then we have the witness of Andrew, who is a model to us all in so many ways. Like him, we must take an interest in individual people: Jesus builds his church one person at a time through the kind of relationship evangelism Andrew modeled. We must experience the blessings of the Lord for ourselves, and we must then simply and caringly share what we have experienced of Jesus to others.

Lastly, and most importantly, we must realize that Jesus stands before the world today, just as he did in the time of those first disciples. He still is calling men and women with his gospel invitation. "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," he says (Mt. 11:28). "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink," Jesus cries. "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water'" (Jn. 7:37-38). "I am the

way, and the truth, and the life,” he said. “No one comes to the Father except through me” (Jn. 14:6).

Therefore, our witness must always have this aim: not to win arguments, not to present an interesting philosophy or a helpful lifestyle, but to bring people to Jesus. Jesus is the only who truly can save the sinner’s soul, and if we simply bring people to him, he will do the rest. “The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost,” Jesus said (Lk. 19:10). He is seeking and saving the lost today, and he does so through our witness that brings people to him.

Can that happen through your witness? Yes! Andrew brought Peter and Jesus saved him. Little Bilney entered the confessional booth and spoke of the cross to a high-minded scholar, and Jesus saved Hugh Latimer. Edward Kimball stammered about Christ’s love in the aisle of a shoe store, and Christ made an evangelist for himself. Judy Telchin tearfully told her Jewish father that she had found the Messiah, and through his love for her and her challenge for him to seek the truth, Stan Telchin found the Savior, too. It is not our witness that saves. But we must witness! And if we will only bring them to Jesus, he is the Savior who will do the rest.