

The Power of Your Story
Believe in the Power of God as You Tell Your Story
John 1:35-50

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Text Introduction: We are in a series of messages on the Power of Story—not just any story, but the story of God’s activity in our lives. We are examining New Testament stories of individuals sharing their story. We want to specifically see what God would teach us from these stories about sharing our own story. Today, we consider the witness of the very first disciples of Jesus.

Text: ³⁵ Again the next day, John was standing with two of his disciples. ³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look! The Lamb of God!”

³⁷ The two disciples heard him say this and followed Jesus. ³⁸ When Jesus turned and noticed them following Him, He asked them, “What are you looking for?”

They said to Him, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are You staying?”

³⁹ “Come and you’ll see,” He replied. So they went and saw where He was staying, and they stayed with Him that day. It was about 10 in the morning.

⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed Him. ⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon and told him, “We have found the Messiah!” (which means “Anointed One”), ⁴² and he brought Simon to Jesus.

When Jesus saw him, He said, “You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which means “Rock”).

⁴³ The next day He decided to leave for Galilee. Jesus found Philip and told him, “Follow Me!”

⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the One Moses wrote about in the Law (and so did the prophets): Jesus the son of Joseph, from Nazareth!”

⁴⁶ “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Nathanael asked him.

“Come and see,” Philip answered.

⁴⁷ Then Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him and said about him, “Here is a true Israelite; no deceit is in him.”

⁴⁸ “How do you know me?” Nathanael asked.

“Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you,” Jesus answered.

⁴⁹ “Rabbi,” Nathanael replied, “You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

⁵⁰ Jesus responded to him, “Do you believe only because I told you I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this.”

Introduction: A Sunday School teacher named Edward Kimball was concerned about the spiritual condition of one of his students. Kimball visited this young man at his work—a shoe store. The young man’s name was Dwight L. Moody who would go on to become one of the greatest evangelists of all time. Moody would speak in the church where Frederic Brotherton (F.B.) Meyer was pastor. When Moody told the story of how his Sunday School teacher led him to Christ, F.B. Meyer was inspired to become an evangelist like Moody. Meyer would preach in a church in Massachusetts where J. Wilbur Chapman heard him say, “If you are not willing to give up everything for Christ, are you willing to be made willing?” Upon the conviction of the Holy Spirit, Chapman responded to the call of God on his life. Chapman became a great evangelist. One of Chapman’s young volunteers named Billy Sunday would learn to preach watching Chapman. In 1924 Billy Sunday preached in Charlotte, North Carolina. A group of men so inspired by Sunday’s ministry began to pray for God to reach the entire city. Motivated by this prayer, they organized a crusade in 1932 and invited the evangelist Mordecai Ham. In one of those meetings, a young man by the name of Billy Graham went forward to give his life to Christ. Where did it all start? A Sunday School teacher going to the workplace of one of his students.

That’s exactly the kind of story that I think of when I read the text before us this morning in John 1. We considered the testimony of John the Baptist last week as a forerunner to Jesus. Today, we continue John the Baptist’s story to the first of Jesus’ disciples believing in Him.

A Clear Pattern

First, we see an incredibly clear pattern of evangelism—one person told one person who told another person. Amazing, isn’t it, that this very simple pattern was the launch of how initial word spread about Jesus? Look at the pattern: John the Baptist, with two of his disciples (which we later learn are Andrew and Simon Peter). Then there is this pattern beginning in verse 43: Jesus found Philip, and Philip found Nathanael. Do you see the pattern? The kingdom of God advancing not by miracles or messages from Jesus, but the kingdom advancing little by little, one by one.

Principles for the Church from the Pattern

From this very clear pattern of evangelism come a few principles for the church today.

- The Church needs preachers like Peter.

Among these first followers of Jesus is Simon Peter, Andrew’s brother. Peter became the earliest mass evangelist for Jesus. Listen to these excerpts from Peter’s first sermons—In these first Christian sermons, Peter calls for a response to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Listen to this sampling of the preaching of Peter.

- Acts 2:38—Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...”
- Acts 3:6—“Then Peter said, ‘Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.’”

- Acts 3:19—“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the LORD.”
- Acts 4:12—“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Before there was Paul, there was Peter. Daring, Decisive, and declaring Peter! The church needs preachers like Peter. But, this is not the whole story.

- The Church also needs people who are more personal and relational in their witness.

Personal and relational are the words that describe the witness of both Andrew and Philip. With the exception of the passages that indicate the calling of Andrew to be a disciple, the Bible only records three instances that mention Andrew.

- John 1:35-42—The passage we read today.
- John 6:1-14—The Feeding of the 5,000 which gives us the evidence that Andrew was the one who found the boy with the fish and the bread.
- John 12:20-26—Philip and Andrew approach Jesus because some Greeks indicate that they “want to see Jesus.”

Andrew is really only mentioned these three times in the New Testament. In all three instances, he is *bringing someone to Jesus*.

Keith Manuel, who is the Associate Evangelism Director for our Louisiana Baptist Convention, wrote what is to me a very encouraging piece in a column for *Baptist Press* a few years ago. I want to read part of this piece to you because it reminds us that we need laborers like Andrews. In part Keith wrote,

Evangelism is a process. Unfortunately, many people forget how important they are to the process. We often believe that if we weren't the one who actually invited the person to surrender his or her life to the Lord, we had no part in that person's salvation. But nothing could be further from the truth.

Did Grandmother Rose, who before she died sat in her rocking chair reading her Bible, have any part in the salvation of her grandson? When she told the story of Goliath to a wide-eyed three-year-old, was God using her maternal role to plant the seeds of the Gospel?

There's the tired, overworked church secretary who is in the middle of folding dozens of letters -- numbers 48, 49, 50. Most of them are thrown away without being read. Then there's letter 51. It's to Carol, a 38-year-old single mother, who is alone and overwhelmed. She wants adult company and people who will help her with her children. Her young boy needs a role model because there is no dad in his life. The letter invites her to be a part of the adult choir -- a "fun-loving group" that "prays together, laughs together and worships together." Classes for children and childcare for infants will be held during practice. Some classes have male teachers. Carol's mascara begins to run as tears fall quickly from her eyes. Three weeks later, she accepts Jesus as her Savior.

There are many people who engage the lost without the lost ever knowing their names. God knows their names. He is using their gifts, talents and time for a Kingdom purpose.

Sure, I think we should learn how to share our faith. I certainly think we need to find ways to be on the frontlines of the spiritual battle for the lost. But for everyone on the frontline, there must be equal support from the rear.¹

Personal Application

There are a couple of things that we need to keep close to our hearts as we consider this passage.

- **Expect Questions**—Don't be afraid of questions. Don't get mad at unbelievers when you get questions about Jesus—especially if the answers to these questions help lead them ultimately to Christ. Didn't you at one time have questions about Jesus? Better yet, don't you still have some questions? Faith is not the absence of questions; faith is the miracle of belief even when questions remain.
- **Expect the power and blessing of God**—At the question of Nathanael, Philip says the same thing that Jesus said to Andrew and Simon Peter: "Come and see." We should not be afraid to say to our skeptics, "Come and see." We should grow to expect the power and blessing of God when we witness in the power of God's spirit. When we say "Come and see," we should expect our great God to come through in revealing Himself.

Samuel Chadwick was a Methodist preacher who lived 1860-1932. At one point in his ministry he was a pastor in Leeds, Great Britain. A biographer wrote that in those days Britain was known for a great number of Secularist Societies. On a particular Sunday evening, the whole Secularist Society of Leeds showed up to cause a disruption in the service at Leeds. Instead, their leader was saved that night, and in just a few weeks, every officer of their organization professed faith in Christ.² What a contrast to some of our fear about the secularists of our day! What a contrast to how we view at times the antagonists of our day. Instead of preach against them, we are called to preach to them—not against them. It takes faith in the power of God to stand against the questions and oppositions of any day. We cannot trust in ourselves, but in the power of God.

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

(I plan to attempt to do this visual exercise.)

One way of evangelism is to be a personal witness. (Go to one side and touch about 10 people.)

Another way of evangelism is to preach to the masses and people are saved. (Have about 10-15 people stand up.)

Another way is to tell one person, then you and that person tell one person, then that group of people all tell one person. (The number of converts grow exponentially.)

Which is the most effective way for the Gospel to spread?

¹ Keith Manuel, "Does God Use Me," *Baptist Press*, posted on October 2, 2007.

² Warren Wiersbe, *50 People Every Christian Should Know*, Baker Books, 2009, 250.