

JOHN 1:35-51 | JESUS PLANTS A CHURCH

This guide is designed to be used for community groups discussions, but can easily be adapted for personal reflection. The focus of the guide is the text from last Sunday's sermon.

ENGAGE (15-20 MINUTES)

Real Biblical community involves people "doing life together." As much as we can, we want to create an atmosphere where people get to know one another, and feel comfortable sharing the ups, downs, and in-betweens of life.

So take some time for people to get acquainted. A possible icebreaker question: Share a high and a low from the previous week. Or, rate your week 1-10. Or, make up one of your own.

REFLECTION AND STUDY (30-35 MINUTES)

Opening: This week we're talking about church planting. In particular we want to think about Jesus' strategy for reaching the world, and how we can be a part of it.

Bible: John 1:35-51

1.) Read v. 35-40: What do you notice about Jesus' encounter with Andrew? Why do you think Jesus says what he says to these disciples ("What are you seeking?" and "Come and you will see.")

2.) Read v. 41-42: What is the first thing Andrew does after encountering Jesus? Does this inform our mission in any way?

3.) Read v. 43-46: How does Philip meet Jesus? How does Nathaniel first come into contact with Jesus? What does this teach us about mission?

4.) Read v. 47-51: How is Jesus referred to in these verses? What do you learn about his identity?

5.) Look especially at verse 51. What does this verse mean? What is Jesus saying about himself? (for help, look at Genesis 28:10-22)

Article: Read the sermon summary on the next page (or hand it out for everyone to read).

6.) Does anything stand out to you as helpful, challenging or confusing?

7.) Are there any people in your life you need to be building into? How can you do that in the midst of a busy schedule?

8.) Think of 3-5 non-Christians in your life that you can be praying for. How can you be intentional about developing a relationship with them? Would you consider inviting any of these people to come to church with you? (Hint: don't jump straight to thinking about an evangelistic conversation. Start by investing in the relationship and see where that goes).

9.) Where can we grow as a church in being a multiplying community?

PRAYER (15 MINUTES)

Break into men and women for prayer. Share prayer requests and pray for one another.

JESUS PLANTS A CHURCH

The Gospel of John is unique in its emphasis on personal encounters with Jesus. Whether it's Mary and Martha, the woman at the well, or Nicodemus, John is intent on showing us how Jesus interacted with and changed the lives of people who came into contact with him. John 1-2 focuses on the first week in the ministry of Jesus. In particular, we're focusing days 3-4 in this first week, where Jesus calls his first disciples to follow him.

To properly understand this passage, we must understand that Jesus is not just calling together a missionary band. He's planting a church (or more accurately, starting a church planting movement). We know this because there were originally 12 tribes in Israel, and now Jesus intentionally calls 12 disciples. He's calling a new Israel, bringing together a new people of God. Later in his ministry we see Jesus giving the disciples instructions in how to preach, baptize, perform church discipline, live in community, and he also tells them that they hold the keys of the kingdom. Jesus is not just training evangelists, he's starting a church planting movement.

Relational Strategy

Jesus doesn't begin his ministry by speaking to thousands. And even though he does speak to crowds later in his ministry, he often withdraws to train the 12, and he even spends more specialized time with three. We see Jesus' strategy play out here at the beginning of his ministry. Andrew and another disciple of John the Baptist get interested in Jesus. Jesus probes them with a question ("What are you seeking?"). Not "who" are you seeking, but what are you looking for in life? He then invites them to spend time with him "Come and see." Almost immediately Andrew brings Peter to Jesus. This is the way churches were planted in the first century. One person gets interested in Jesus, and then they bring another person. You see this again in the second half of the passage. Jesus "finds" Philip. And then Philip "finds" Nathaniel.

Focus on Jesus

The focus of any church planting movement should not ultimately be on any strategy or ministry idea. It should focus on pointing people to Jesus Christ. All strategies or ministry philosophies should serve the end of getting people to see and know Jesus. John the Baptist is a great model of pointing to Jesus (see John 1:19-34). John had a very successful ministry. But he recognizes the need to get out of the way and point to Jesus. Too often churches try and build their own kingdoms, rather than keeping Jesus as the focus of all we do in ministry.

Notice also how Jesus reveals himself in this passage. He responds positively when Andrew calls him the Messiah and when Philip suggests that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. He tells Nathaniel that he knows him and has seen him, though they have never met. He receives Nathaniel's worship as the Son of God and King of Israel. He calls himself the Son of Man (a heavenly being spoken of in Daniel 7) and asserts himself as the true Jacob's ladder (the link between earth and heaven).

Church Planting Today

There are several principles that are important for New City Church to keep in mind and implement in our desire to celebrate Christ and serve Cincinnati. First, like Jesus, we need to build the church one person at a time. We may have occasional big events, but most of the work of extending the kingdom will be done slowly and by personal relationship. This is the work of church members, not just the pastor. If our church is to grow and impact people, we all need to be committed to investing time in relationships and using our homes as a means of hospitality. Second, like Jesus, we need to build into a few people at a time. Jesus spoke to thousands, but most of his time was with the 12 (or even the 3). Robert Coleman wrote *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, an analysis of the ministry philosophy of Jesus. Coleman reminds us that the most dynamic ministries are those where each person commits to multiplying their life, looking for 2-3 people to build into. Last, like John the Baptist, we need to exalt Christ. New City isn't the hope of the world, Jesus Christ is. Our church will be valuable to our city in as much as we point people to Son of Man, the gateway between earth and heaven.