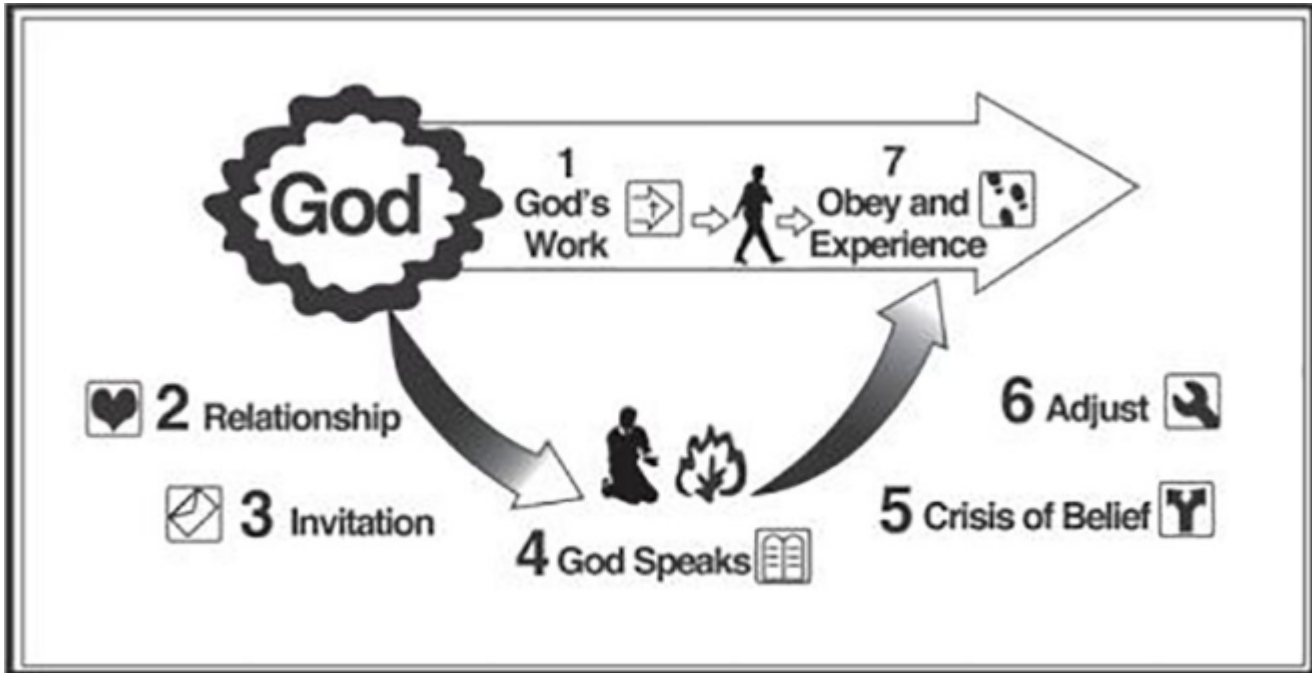


Jesus Changes Everything

John 1:32-51

Today we set out on an exciting adventure! It was 30 years ago this year that Henry Blackaby introduced the Bible study called *Experiencing God*. Some of us went through this material in the '90s, so it will be familiar. The rest of us will become familiar with this diagram over the next three months:

[Show 7 Realities image]



These are the 7 realities - the 7 principles that undergird this study and that we will unpack in detail.

1. **God is always at work** in you and around you. He never stops. You and I have to stop. We are very limited. But God never stops working and He has no limits whatsoever.
2. God pursues **a love relationship** with us. This is His primary desire. He wants to know you personally and for you to know Him personally.
3. **God invites us** to join Him in His work. Sometimes this may be a MAJOR life changing invitation. Most time it will be a small thing. But it is GOD'S invitation directly to you and to me.
4. **God speaks to us**. We'll see many examples in the Bible when God spoke to people. Sometimes we know He did it through a dream or a personal visit or an angel. But many times we don't know HOW God spoke. We just know THAT He spoke and the person UNDERSTOOD. The same thing is true today. God speaks to us through the Bible and His Holy Spirit makes sure we understand what God is saying to us.

5. When God speaks and invites us - it always leads to **a crisis of belief**. It forces you to a crossroads. Will you respond to God's voice and invitation, or will you ignore or reject it?
6. The key to responding is in this one big word: **ADJUST**. You cannot keep doing what you've always done and follow your own agenda and plans. When God invites you - He calls you to something NEW. The crisis of belief moves you to TURN by adjusting things in your life to live more in line with GOD and His purposes and plans.
7. It is when we **OBEY the voice of God**, responding to the clear leading of the Holy Spirit, that we experience God.

And when we step out in faith-filled obedience, we enter a new world of possibility because God is then able to work in ways only HE can and we are no longer limited to results we can produce on our own. Here is **our theme verse** for January and for the whole series.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5

Jesus is the vine. He is the source of life and power and holiness and love and grace - and everything else. Jesus is the vine. We are just branches - you and me. If we stay connected to Jesus, His power and love will flow through us and we will bear fruit. If we grow distant from Jesus or fall away from Him, our lives will be fruitless and we will begin to shrivel up and die.

We primarily bear fruit for Jesus by bringing people to Jesus so He can transform them. Our faith goal for this year is **30 CONVERSIONS**. 30 new believers.

- Who are you praying for?
- Who are you reaching out to?
- **Who is your ONE** person you most long for to come to Jesus?

We are praying for 30 but our desire is to see 60, 100 or more people in our immediate circles of relationship come to Jesus in faith. **Because JESUS changes everything**. We can't change anything or anyone.

But JESUS can. In fact, **Jesus is the ONLY ONE who can**. This is what Jesus does. He changes us completely. You've experienced it. So have I. John 1 shows us Jesus' first encounters with the men who would become His disciples. He changed their lives completely. Let's walk through those first encounters with **FOUR WORDS from Jesus**: a question, an invitation, a command and a promise. Jesus directs these same words to each of us today. Here is the setting:

"The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus." John 1:35-37

John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus. His job was to prepare the way for the Messiah - and he did his job very well. For 400 years there was no prophet in Israel. From Malachi to John four centuries went by and there was no word from the Lord. It was a dark time in Israel. They fell to Roman rule. They were an occupied state. They had no king. **And they had no prophecy.**

Until John. Suddenly that old prophetic message of warning and repentance was back! The whole region of Judea responded and Jews by the thousands poured out by the Jordan River to hear John. He introduced the practice of water **baptism as a sign of REPENTANCE.** He called people to leave their lives of sin and come back to the Lord their God. And they came!

Two of the young men who responded and became disciples of John were there the day Jesus came out and was baptized himself. John's mission was to point people to Jesus and that's what he did here - sending two of his most promising young followers after Jesus. Andrew and his friend approached Jesus. This brings us to the first word from Jesus in verse 38:

A QUESTION:

"Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, 'What are you Seeking?'" John 1:38

We know **Andrew was a fisherman.** He had come out to learn from John - so he was interested in God's Word and wanted to serve the Lord. Hearing from John that Jesus was "the Lamb of God," and the One who would baptize with "the Holy Spirit and with fire," Andrew and his friend responded to the direction they had from God and took their next step of obedience. And this brought them face to face with Jesus.

He stopped and asked them their intentions: "What are you seeking?"

Jesus asks all of us the same thing today. **"What are YOU seeking?"**

- All of us are here today because **we want SOMETHING from Jesus.**
- The question is: **what?**

Jesus offers so much!

A QUESTION: about the Gifts Jesus offers

"Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, 'What are you Seeking?'" John 1:38

- **Wisdom, healing, forgiveness, purpose, power, eternal life**

Andrew and his friend call Jesus "Rabbi," so they were certainly looking for his wisdom and instruction. They wanted to try him on as a potential mentor. Maybe you're the same today - you're looking for **wisdom and direction** from Jesus to improve your life. He absolutely offers that.

Throughout Jesus' ministry he **healed** hundreds, probably thousands of people. Maybe you are here looking for a special touch from the Lord. Maybe something physical or financial that you are hoping God will fix. Maybe a relationship that has been damaged and you are praying God will bring healing there. Maybe a deep hurt from your past. Jesus offers healing - complete healing of body, soul and mind.

The main thing Jesus came to offer was **forgiveness and eternal life**. You can't have eternal life without being forgiven - which is why Jesus died. He died so we could live. He experienced ultimate death, being punished under the wrath of God, so we could experience ultimate LIFE. Jesus offers forgiveness for sin, freedom from the power of sin and eternal life in heaven.

Maybe you're looking for **meaning and purpose** in your life. Maybe you're looking for power and joy. Jesus offers all of these things and more. These are the wonderful gifts He offers.

Jesus looks around the room today and asks each of us -

- **"What are YOU seeking?"**
- What do you want me to do for you?"

What are YOU seeking from Jesus? Do you want Him to bless your life and your plans? Do you want Him to fix one thing in particular?

A QUESTION: about the Gifts Jesus offers

"What are you Seeking?" John 1:38

- Wisdom, healing, forgiveness, purpose, power, eternal life
- Or **JESUS HIMSELF?**

Are you asking for GIFTS FROM JESUS? ***Or are you seeking JESUS HIMSELF?*** Jesus can give you wisdom, healing, forgiveness and eternal life. But He can only give you those gifts if you come to Him in faith. All of these gifts are a package deal that comes with a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

That's the question. And it sets up the second word: an invitation.

AN INVITATION:

"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, for it was about the tenth hour." John 1:38-39

Notice: **they called Jesus Rabbi** - which means Teacher. Yes, Jesus was a Rabbinical teacher. But was that ALL that He was? Were they seeking a Rabbi to instruct them in the Law of Moses? Did they just want wisdom and instruction or did they want a whole new life?

Then **they asked where he is staying** - which at first seems like a throw-away question like “whazzup?” You don’t really mean it as a question but as more of a greeting – filler. But underneath the “where are you staying” is **a very practical concern**: what kind of housing comes with this Rabbi? What will it look like to follow this Jesus? If you ARE the Messiah - the KING of Israel - What kind of perks have you got, there, Rabbi?

Jesus must have smiled when he said, **“Come and you will see.”** Oh, they would see all right. Did Jesus have a place to stay? Sure. If you like rocks and rivers and trees and hills. For the next three years they saw what this Rabbi had to offer. And there were no palaces to sleep in, very few lavish banquets, a lot of danger, a lot of cold nights outdoors, a lot of opposition. It was not a comfortable life Jesus invited them into – **but it was a life WITH HIM.**

Jesus extends this same offer to each one of us. **He invites us to come in** - to enter His world - to see **who He is and what He is about**. His world is not a world of great earthly comforts. **Jesus did not advertise health and wealth**. He did not say, “Come, follow me and you will be comfortable and happy all the time.” In fact, he said, **“In this world you will have TROUBLE. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”** In other words, Jesus said, “I don’t promise you health and wealth and happiness in this world – but I do promise you MYSELF – and with me, you will overcome everything in this world.”

So the “Come and see” invitation from Jesus is **an invitation to get to know HIM** - and once you start to know him you can see that the gifts he offers only begin to scratch the surface of what Jesus offers.

Do you see the progression here?

- “What are you seeking?” is Jesus’ way of helping us explore our motives. Are we after Jesus’ gifts or are we after Jesus Himself?
- **Do YOU want the gifts or the Giver?**
- Do you want forgiveness and heaven and healing and practical tips for successful living - but not the Lord Himself who brings these gifts?

When you had your **Christmas celebration** hopefully there were some gifts given and received. Imagine you really hunted this year for **the perfect gift** for your son or grandson – you daughter or granddaughter. I mean, you worked for this one. You combed through page after page on Amazon, clicking through tricky pathways like “gifts for boys” or gifts for teenage girls.” And in the end, you lifted your finger and pressed “proceed to checkout.” Phew. You made it.

Imagine you get that perfect gift, present it to your loved one – and they take it, open it, their eyes light up and **they run off to their bedroom**, where they stay for the rest of the day. You’d be glad they liked the gift, but you’d be a little hurt, wouldn’t you? You were all together for Christmas –

the gift was an expression of your RELATIONSHIP. You gave the gift without expecting anything in return. But the gift is connected to YOU – and your desire for your loved one is to be more connected to you, too.

Oh, how often do we do this to the Lord? We pray and pray for some specific thing. And one day, He answers that prayer – He provides the job or the financial means or the physical healing – and what do we do? **We rejoice in the GIFT and forget about the GIVER.** And when do we come back around to the Lord? The next time we need another gift from Him...

So here the point of the invitation from Jesus - **to come and see who He really is.** We have to see past the material questions - where will we stay, what will we eat, what will we wear? - to get to the questions that matter most: **who will we be with?** We have to realize it's not about the gifts – it's about the One in whom all the gifts are found. This is what Andrew realized.

AN INVITATION: to learn who Jesus is

“And they said to him, ‘*Rabbi*’ (which means Teacher), ‘where are you staying?’ He said to them, ‘Come and you will see.’ ...He found his brother Simon and said, ‘***We have found the Messiah.***’”
John 1:38,41

In just a few hours with Jesus Andrew's understanding of who Jesus was grew *from Rabbi to Messiah*. This is a monumental change! There were lots of Rabbis through the centuries. But there was only one Messiah!

Andrew was so excited that he raced home to find his brother and tell him, “We found him. This is the One. We found the Messiah! He is here! He's right down by the Jordan River!”

AN INVITATION: to learn who Jesus is

“He found his brother Simon and said, ‘***We have found the Messiah.***’ He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, ‘...You shall be called Cephas.’” John 1:41-42

Jesus changes everything. In Peter's case Jesus literally changed his name from Simon to Peter. Saul became Paul after an encounter with Jesus. Andrew kept his own name, but after this day his life was never the same. An encounter with Jesus can change you completely - because of who Jesus is.

Once you realize who Jesus is, it changes the game entirely. Many people see Jesus as a Rabbi - a **great moral teacher**. But what does a great moral teacher do for you? Plato, Aristotle, Ghandi, Oprah... What do they provide? Wisdom. Information. Some thoughts or advice for you to ponder. Some principles to improve your life. You watch a TED talk to learn something practical that will help you in some way.

But a moral teacher doesn't change your life - not in a deep and lasting way. They just give you a little something to think about. And that is exactly how lots of people treat Jesus and church and the Bible. I'll take that and it'll give me something to think about.

But when you check Jesus out you quickly see that ***He is WAY MORE than a good moral teacher.*** Infinitely more. Just in chapter one of the gospel of John we learn four titles of Jesus - the first one is here, Messiah or King or LORD, since these are going to be "L" words. The word "Messiah" means Christ or King. It was a reference to the Anointed One who would reign on David's throne. It was a title of Lordship, authority, glory and power. This is how John first presents Jesus in verse one of this book:

AN INVITATION: to learn Jesus is the Lord

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:1

We'll see why John uses the title WORD for Jesus next. But for now notice that last phrase, "the Word WAS God." Jesus - "the Word of God that became flesh and dwelt among us" - eternally existed with God, the Father, and always was and always is ONE WITH THE FATHER. "The Word was God." **Jesus Christ is LORD.** That is the essence of the Gospel we believe and proclaim. Jesus is the Lord - Yahweh - the Covenant-keeping God who called Abraham and gave the Law to Moses and established David's Kingdom and protected Daniel in Babylon. The LORD of all things. Jesus IS the LORD.

AN INVITATION: to learn Jesus is the Light

"In the beginning was the Word... The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world." John 1:1,9

To say Jesus is the Word of God is to say Jesus is the full and final revelation of God's SPEECH. ***What you SAY is an expression of YOU.*** What comes out of your mouth is a revelation of what is in your heart. Jesus is the WORD that overflows from the heart of God. Jesus is the light that reveals - once and for all - what God is like and what God demands.

If you want to know what God is like - look at Jesus, listen to Jesus. Study Jesus. Anywhere else you look you are feeling around in the dark. Jesus is the light. Listen to his teachings. Study his life, his ministry, his death and resurrection. Then the light will come on for you about God. Study secular philosophy, Darwinian evolution and big bang theories of the origins of the universe - and it's like trying to find your keys without a flashlight. You're just groping around in the dark. But in Jesus, the light of truth is flipped on and suddenly we see what it means that God is holy, God is love, God is merciful, God is just. Jesus is the light. Third - the testimony of John the Baptist:

AN INVITATION: to learn Jesus is the Lamb

“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” John 1:29

Jesus is the ultimate sin-bearer. Just as the Israelites would place their hands on the head of a one year old, ***unblemished lamb to carry their sin***, so we place our hands on Jesus so He can carry our sin for us. When you call on Jesus to save you, your sin – past, present and future – is transferred from you to Him. God transports all of your sin through time and it is nailed to the cross with Jesus.

Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away all of our sin by taking it upon Himself. 2 Corinthians 5 says, ***“He became sin for us!”*** Jesus took our sin INTO Himself and died for that sin – taking our sin into death itself, buried and sealed away. So our sin is GONE. It is not on US anymore – Jesus took it away. He is the Lamb! One more:

AN INVITATION: to learn Jesus is the Life

“All things were made through him... In him was life, and the life was the light of men... ‘this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’” John 1:3-4,33

Jesus is the giver of all life – ***the One who created all things***. He is the restorer of life – taking us who were dead in our sins and bringing us to new life, causing us to be BORN AGAIN as a new creation. At the moment you trusted in Jesus, God raised you from the grave you were lying in and brought you to life with Jesus, even more – He raised you up and seated you with Jesus in the heavenly places.

And look again at the testimony of **John the Baptist**. His job was to point to Jesus – the Messiah – the Greater One, the One John wasn’t even worthy to tie his shoes! And John knew that baptism with water was only a symbol. What people need is ***to be baptized – immersed – in the Holy Spirit*** of the living God! And only Jesus can give you that. By filling us with His Spirit, Jesus is giving us HIMSELF – the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ. Father, Son and Holy Spirit – eternally divine and perfectly united.

This is what you discover when you start getting to know Jesus. Does He offer a thousand amazing gifts? Of course! But every one of those gifts is bound up in HIM. And you don’t get a single one apart from being united with Him.

Think of **little orphan Annie**. She had nothing. She was one of several dozen little girls, trapped in a grubby little orphanage with a mean old, bitter supervisor. She met Daddy Warbucks and was amazed at all of his wealth. She ate a few meals and enjoyed a few nights in the big house. But think of what happened when Annie was officially adopted! In that moment that she legally became a daughter of Daddy Warbucks – all that was HIS became HERS. She became the heiress of his estate.

The same thing is true for us in Christ. You can ask for some of His gifts – some of His love and attention, healing power. But until you are legally adopted, you don't really have anything. The same John wrote this in his first letter:

If you don't have Jesus, you have Nothing

“And this is the testimony, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son of God has life; *whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.*” 1 John 5:12

If you have been united with Jesus in faith, then you have EVERYTHING.

If you have Jesus, you have Everything

“And this is the testimony, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. *Whoever has the Son of God has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.*” 1 John 5:12

You get all of Jesus' gifts at the moment you are bound to Him in faith. It's like we talked about a few weeks ago. The relationship with Jesus is a COVENANT relationship like marriage. You're not married to Him until you have said your vows. Only after you pledge yourself to love and honor and serve Him FOREVER do you become one with Him. That's what it means to “HAVE” the Son of God, and thereby have life.

We've heard the question and the invitation, now we will close with the command and promise.

A Command:

“He found Philip and said to him, *'Follow me.'*” John 1:43

Jesus invites everyone to come and see who He is and what He's about. ***But eventually He calls for the question.*** You can't flirt with Jesus for long. You have to commit or walk away. You have to pledge yourself to Him and follow Him as your Lord – or you have to refuse His invitation and go your own way.

Lots of people who came to Jesus took one or two of His gifts and they walked away. They didn't want Jesus, they just wanted a healing from Him. They didn't want Jesus, they just wanted some wisdom and insight. They didn't want Jesus, they just wanted to see a miracle.

This is why Jesus used the expression, “Follow me.” He moved around a lot. If you wanted to listen to him and learn from him, you had to track him down. Commitment had a cost. You couldn't download his podcast. You couldn't sign up for his daily email devotional. You had to walk and ask around and find him.

But notice who found whom here. Jesus FOUND Philip. And He did the same thing for you and me. He found you. He called your name. He said, "Come, follow me." And it isn't a suggestion. It's a command. Listen to Acts 17.

A Command: Turn from your path to judgment

"The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now *he commands all people everywhere to repent*, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed." Acts 17:30-31

That man is Jesus – a fact proven once and for all by his resurrection from the dead. Every person on earth will one day **stand before King Jesus in judgment** and they will answer for how they obeyed this command. Did they repent – did they turn away from following their own path to death and destruction? Did they follow Jesus in obedient faith? Here is what the command "follow me" entails, as Jesus explained later in his ministry:

A Command: Commit Everything to Jesus

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Mark 8:34

Salvation is a two step process but both steps happen at the same time. Jesus invites everyone to follow him and be saved, but in order to follow Jesus you first have to turn from the way you were going and in that same moment you have to commit everything to Jesus. There is no halfway, no partial commitment. You can't have Jesus as Savior while rejecting Him as Lord. To follow Jesus is to kneel before Him as your Master. For all who turn from their sin and commit all they are to Jesus – to them His promise applies, back in John 1:

A Promise: for this life and for Eternity

"Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? *You will see greater things than these...* you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." John 1:50-51

For all who do commit everything to Jesus, ***He promises EVERYTHING.*** If you don't have Jesus you don't have anything. But if you DO have Jesus, you have every spiritual blessing in Him. Once you are bound to Jesus in faith you have His forgiveness, His power, His Spirit, His love, His mission. Once you belong to Jesus you WILL SEE greater things. You will see the glory of God.

For Jesus IS the glory of God fully and finally revealed. He is the Lord of heaven in the flesh of a man. He is the light of the world, revealing all truth. He is the Lamb of God who takes away our sin. And He is the LIFE – the true vine. If we remain in Him we will bear much fruit!

Let's pray!