

Session 6

August 28, 2022

SHARE CHRIST WITH YOUR NEIGHBOR

John 1:40-49

Social networking is really nothing new; it's been going on ever since there were enough people to socialize with! And while individuals and churches have grown dependent on social media (especially through the pandemic), "networking" through relationships has never required electronic devices, Twitter accounts, or government oversight. In the New Testament, these connections were known as *oikos*. The word itself means household; but the meaning extended beyond the house to include friends and neighbors and those with whom there was familial contact. These relationships formed natural channels of communication. In my childhood, this network was known as "the grapevine." Now, it's called Facebook! Regardless of how we choose to do it, sharing Christ is still an intentional, one-on-one, person-to-person, relational event, best carried out in one's own *oikos*.

Share with the seekers (vv. 40-42). The story picks up after John the Baptist pointed out Jesus as the Lamb of God to some of his own followers (vv. 29, 36). At least four of the original twelve disciples were fisherman; two pairs of brothers: Peter and Andrew, and James and John. Obviously, John the Baptist had been proclaiming the coming Messiah to his own followers in such a way that they were earnestly seeking this Anointed One of God (v. 41). When John spotted Jesus along the seashore, he quickly identified Him. We know from the narrative that Andrew was one who followed Christ from that moment, but that his brother Peter was not present at the time. In a classic employment of the *oikos* principle, Andrew "first found his own brother Simon and told him, 'We have found the Messiah!'" The emphasis in the original is preserved here. Notice Andrew's *priority*: he *first* found his *own* brother. Next, notice his *proclamation*: "We have found the Messiah." Then we see his *presentation*: "He brought Simon to Jesus." For reflection: *What principles can you pick out of this "oikos adventure" that could be applied in our lives today?*

Share with the skeptics (vv. 43-46). Students often ask why I don't teach *apologetics* (a defense of the Christian faith). There are two reasons. First, we have Dr. Mark Rathel on faculty, and he is a certified apologist who can much better teach the course. But second, I honestly don't like dealing with skeptics! My missions experience was in a "harvest field," and I saw no reason to argue with skeptics when there were so many hungry seekers who actually wanted to hear the gospel. But the truth is, the gospel must be proclaimed to all people, and there is no excuse to avoid those who are particularly skeptical of its claims. But Nathanael was not only a skeptic; he was also a bigot! He heard the word "Nazareth," and immediately scoffed (v. 46). While Nathanael may have done so because he knew that the "real" Messiah would be born in Bethlehem of Judea (Micah 5:2), it is more likely that he held a very common prejudice against people from that region. Philip, however, handled the situation perfectly. Rather than argue against Nathanael's preconceptions or attempt to justify his own position, he said, in essence, "Come see for yourself" (v. 46). For reflection: *While we may not be able to physically take our oikos to Jesus, what are some ways we can emulate Philip's response to Nathanael?*

Share in the successes (vv. 47-49). Although Nathanael may have scoffed at the possibility of the true Messiah, Jesus turned the tables, offering him a sincere compliment (v. 47). As one commentator put it, Nathanael was *true*, “One who is really an Israelite - not by birth only, but one worthy of the name. One who possesses the spirit, the piety, and the integrity which become a man who is really a Jew, who fears God and obeys his law” (Barnes, ca. 1830). The validity of Jesus’ commendation was enough, and Nathanael professed Jesus as the *Son of God* (v. 49). For reflection: *Following the full chain of events, who was really responsible for bringing Nathanael to a saving knowledge of Christ? What applications can we make for our witness today?*