

Nathanael, the Prejudiced— March 3-9

GAMECHANGERS

To prepare for discussion each week, group members should use the **Discussion Guide** to complete the **GOD’S WORDS** and **MY WORDS** columns using the scriptures at the bottom of this page. You will notice that we are continuing the pattern of your discussing scripture *after* the Sunday message on that passage.

Background for John 1:45-49

Little is known about Nathanael. The Gospels and Acts contain no details about Nathanael’s background, character, or personality. Nathanael is listed as Bartholomew in all lists of the twelve disciples. Bartholomew is a Hebrew surname meaning “son of Tolmai”. Nathanael is only mentioned in John 1 in his call, and John 21:2, where he is listed among the twelve. However, John 1:45-49 (his call) gives us great details into his personality.

In John 1:45-49, Nathanael first encounters Jesus. Philip, who appears to be his close personal friend, immediately finds Nathanael to introduce him to Jesus. Though Philip’s argument is compelling, Nathanael has some reservations.

According to John 21:2 where Nathanael is listed among the twelve disciples, he came from a small town in Galilee named Cana. In fact, Cana was very close to Jesus’ own hometown, Nazareth. Both towns during this time were seen as uncultured, full of evils, corrupt, and populated with all kinds of sinful people. So though both were probably not headed for the “best small town in Galilee” award, residents of each would have looked down on residents from the other. (Perhaps, think back to the days of cheering for your high school football team).

So though Nathanael had some prejudices which he makes clear to Philip (John 1:46), his prejudice did not stop him from going. And when he goes, his prejudice does not get in the way of what Jesus shares with him. When God changes the world, he uses common people from common places with the baggage and prejudice that comes from their small-town mindset.

Possible points of confusion:

V41: Moses and the Prophets is a reference to the Jewish scriptures (OT). Philip is saying, “For generations we have been reading and talking about this promised one, haven’t we? Well, I have found him.”

V49: Nathanael’s response to Jesus confirms what Philip promised—that this is the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, the King of Israel—the one they have been waiting on for generations and generations

V51: After affirming Nathanael’s response to Him in v50, Jesus promises greater things to come.

Scriptures for the upcoming weeks:

March 10	Matthew – <i>The Half-Hearted</i>	Matthew 9:9-13
March 17	Simon the Zealot, Thaddaeus, James the Less – <i>The Unseen</i>	Mark 3:13-19, 31-35
March 24	Thomas – <i>The Doubter</i>	John 20:24-29
March 31	Judas – <i>The Traitor</i>	John 12:1-6; Matthew 26:14-16
April 7	Peter – <i>The Performer</i>	Matthew 16:13-18, 21-23