

## Come and See *John 1:35–51*

It's already the third Sunday of 2026. How are you doing with your New Year's resolutions? I know that most resolutions don't even last ten days. But here's one thing I hope you won't stop doing: the promise you made at the beginning of the year—to pray every day for that one person you want to share the gospel with this year. Please don't give up on that.

Our church's focus for this year is “prayer and evangelism.” Through prayer, we experience God—the source of life—more deeply. And through evangelism, we share the breath of life we have received.

But when you hear the word “evangelism,” what comes to your mind? Honestly, it feels heavy. It feels uncomfortable. Juhee Lee also chose “evangelism” as Haven Church's ministry focus for this year. And when she brought it up at the leadership seminar earlier this year, she said that many people felt uneasy and reacted negatively to the word “evangelism.”

Why is that? It's because of the misunderstandings we carry about evangelism. When you hear “evangelism,” what image pops up first? **[PPT]** Maybe you picture someone standing on the street, shouting with a sign that says, “Turn or burn!” Or maybe you think of people knocking on doors, ringing doorbells, and suddenly saying, “You need to believe in Jesus.” But if that is what evangelism means, then of course evangelism feels hard. Holding a “turn or burn” sign and shouting at strangers not only threatens our neighbors of different faith traditions—it also makes us lose sight of the heart of Christianity: God is love.

And if evangelism is only about going door to door or preaching at people on the street, then someone like me—an introvert—would struggle to do it. Honestly, if my job was to knock on strangers' doors, I would probably knock like this... (mime a very quiet, tiny knock)... and I would be secretly praying, 'Please don't be home, please don't be home, please don't be home.'

We often think evangelism means doing whatever it takes to bring people into church, or forcing someone to convert to Christianity. But evangelism is not that. Today, through this Scripture passage, I want us to think again about what evangelism really is.

### **What Is Evangelism? Behold Him!**

Let me ask you a question first. When you think of an “evangelist” in the Bible, who comes to mind first? Most of us would probably say the Apostle Paul. Through four missionary journeys, he preached the gospel all the way through Asia Minor and even to Rome, and he planted many churches. A truly great evangelist. If you think of another evangelist, who else comes to mind? Peter and the other apostles. After receiving the Holy Spirit, they went out into the streets, preached boldly, and many people turned to God. But who is the very first evangelist in the Bible? It is John the Baptist.

**[PPT]** Let me show you a painting. This is the *Isenheim Altarpiece*, painted by the German artist Matthias Grünewald. Do you see the person on the right side of the painting? That is John the Baptist. Historically, John the Baptist had already died before the crucifixion took place. But the artist included him on purpose—to express a deep theological meaning.

Now look closely at John the Baptist. What stands out? It's his finger. His index finger is painted unusually long and large—almost strangely so. And with that long finger, he is pointing directly at Jesus on the cross. So what does that long finger mean? It's saying, “Don't look at me. Look only at Jesus, hanging on the cross.” This painting clearly shows the message we heard in

today's Scripture: "Behold, the Lamb of God." That long pointing finger of John the Baptist teaches us exactly what evangelism is.

What is evangelism? It is simply telling people, "Look at Jesus." Evangelism is not me persuading people and changing them by my own power. We are simply called to become a pointing finger—showing people the direction, so they can turn their eyes toward Jesus.

### **An Old Signpost Is Still Okay**

But here's the problem—we keep hesitating. We say to ourselves, "Maybe I need to be more successful and put-together before I can share the gospel." "My life is already a mess—who would listen to me?" But let me ask you this: Does a signpost have to be fancy and impressive to do its job? Not at all. When I go hiking, sometimes I see a clean, well-made signpost—nicely painted and perfectly placed. But other times, I see an old signpost—weathered by wind and rain, worn out, even chipped and faded. And honestly, I feel more grateful when I see the old one. More than the shiny new sign, the worn-out sign feels like a mark of someone who has already walked that trail before me. It feels like proof that this path is real.

And our lives are the same way. When someone who has wandered, failed, and fallen—someone who carries scars—says, "I was weak too. I was struggling too. But I met Jesus, and I got back up," people listen more closely. So don't try so hard to be perfect. Even if you feel like an old, broken signpost—as long as you are pointing in the right direction, you are doing exactly what you are called to do. It's not about me. It's all about Jesus—and Jesus' love for all humanity.

### **Without Love, It's Just Noise**

So when it comes to evangelism, the most important thing is not technique—it is love. *The Great Commandment precedes the Great Commission.* In other words, the command to love God and love our neighbor comes before the mission to go and make disciples. Evangelism without love for God and love for neighbor becomes nothing more than a tool to grow the church. And the people on the receiving end can sense that immediately.

When I was pastoring a small rural church in Korea, I used to go every Wednesday to the senior center to offer acupuncture and foot massage. The first time I went, I brought rice cakes. But one elderly lady looked at me with deep suspicion. She wouldn't eat the rice cake. She wouldn't let me give her acupuncture. She probably thought, "If I take this, he's going to tell me to come to church." So I didn't say a single word like, "You should come to church." Instead, I kept showing up—week after week. Quietly, faithfully. Massaging tired legs. Offering acupuncture. Sitting and listening. And after a few months, that woman slowly came over—acting like it was nothing—and she held out her hand. Later, she even brought her daughter-in-law with her.

Here's what I'm trying to say: Evangelism without love and sincerity is meaningless. Our genuine heart has to reach people first—that's when their hearts begin to open. Evangelism, at its core, is sharing the love of Jesus we have personally encountered, sharing the love of God we have personally experienced. So yes, like John the Baptist, we can guide people with our words to look to the Lord. But we can also guide people through our service and our daily lives, so they can actually *see* and *experience* the love of Jesus.

Think about the Food for Soul ministry. We started this ministry because we remembered Jesus' teaching about loving our neighbors—and we wanted to serve those who were suffering during the COVID-19 pandemic. And now, this year marks five years of that ministry. Under Jill

Rowe's leadership, and with your commitment, Asbury has been showing the love of Jesus through real, lived-out service. In the beginning, hardly anyone came. So we carried soup out to the main road and gave it away ourselves. But now, many people come looking for it.

As our neighbors taste the food you prepared with care, and as they receive your warm smiles, they are being given a chance to see Jesus. You became a pointing finger—helping your neighbors look toward Jesus. In fact, you have already been that pointing finger. You have already been showing people Jesus through your life.

### **Come and See**

Living the gospel is important, but sometimes we must open our mouths to invite. Not strangers on the street, but the people closest to us. Look at the chain reaction in today's passage. John tells Andrew. Andrew tells his brother Peter. Philip finds Nathanael and invites him with one simple sentence: "Come and see." Evangelism begins just like this—sharing Jesus with the people we already know.

Think of it this way: Imagine a new restaurant opens, and the food is amazing. What do you do? You tell your spouse, your friends: "You have to try this place!" You don't need a long explanation. You just say, "Come and taste it." After that, the rest is up to the chef. Inviting someone because you want to share the joy you experienced—that is evangelism. Come and see.

There will always be friends who don't believe you. Nathanael was one of them. When Philip introduced Jesus, Nathanael responded with sarcasm: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Nathanael is what we call a 'skeptic.' In 2026, Nathanael would be the guy who gives everything a one-star review on Yelp or Google review. 'The Messiah? I doubt it. Service was slow. One star. Would not recommend.' Today, we may have many "Nathanaels." They ask, "What's the point?" But Philip didn't argue or get defensive. He simply said: "Come and see." He knew it was faster for Nathanael to meet Jesus personally than to hear a hundred explanations. And when Nathanael did, he changed. This is evangelism: a confident invitation.

My Asbury family, for us to invite someone with that kind of confidence, we first have to taste the life-giving water and experience its saving power. There has to be a flame inside us first. Last fall, at a gathering, a pastor handed us unlit candles and said, "Share your light." We pretended to pass the flame, but nothing happened. Why? Because our candles weren't lit.

Then the leader reminded us, "If there is no flame in you, you can't share it." To say "Come and see," we need to remember our own experience of being forgiven and made new. So this week, reflect: When did you meet Jesus deeply? If that flame feels weak, pray: "Lord, meet me again." The Lord who promised to be with you always will kindle that flame of joy in your heart once more. Amen.