



WOODLAND HEIGHTS

CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Christmas Unwrapped Series Part #1 – When God Changes Your Plans

Small Group Discussion Guide on John 1:43-51

Woodland Heights Christian Church Core Value Connection

This sermon on John 1:43-51 aligns with the core value of **Outreach** at Woodland Heights Christian Church. We are committed to fulfilling the Great Commission by intentionally reaching lost people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, making disciples who make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20).

The sermon's call to respond to God's divine interruptions – finding us where we are, calling us to follow, and redirecting us for His mission – echoes the heart of true outreach: living sent lives that carry the Gospel beyond our comfort zones. This message challenges us to deepen our outreach beyond Sunday gatherings, aligning with our church's mission to "Reach, Teach, and Serve others for the Cause of Christ" as we train disciples who glorify God by stepping out from under fig trees, following without hesitation, and expecting heaven to break through as we take the Gospel to the nations.

Section #1 – ENCOUNTER

"Observing God's Word"

Imagine a skeptical soul lounging under a shady fig tree – dreams deferred, questions piling up like autumn leaves, cynicism whispering "Can anything good come from there?" – yet pausing to heed a friend's urgent invitation, declaring wonder amid the doubt. Suddenly, perspective shifts; hesitation fades as the heart anchors in the unchanging call of the Savior. In John 1:43-51, the narrative's raw encounter echoes like a divine whisper, reminding us that God's interruptions endure forever, turning honest skepticism into a powerful act of mission. Let's dive into this passage and discover how God invites us to experience the transformative power of obedience in our own lives.

Let's start our study by anchoring ourselves in Scripture. Read John 1:43-51 (ESV) as a group, family, or an individual, letting God's Word sink in. Picture the scene: Jesus finding Philip, Philip rushing to Nathanael, calling God's people to respond to His faithfulness with expectant obedience.

Core Questions

- What do you notice about the words and instructions of Jesus and the disciples in this passage? Why is this relevant?
- What are key words, phrases, or themes that grab your attention in this text?

- What is the main lesson or lessons that you learn about the character of God from John 1:43-51?

Section #2 – EXPLORE

“Understanding the Passage and Sermon”

Let’s unpack the disciples’ divine interruptions with questions that connect the sermon’s insights to our lives. Discuss these as a group or reflect on them as an individual. We’ll dive deeper into the three moments of God’s redirection, exploring how they challenge us to shift from ordinary plans to extraordinary mission, drawing from historical examples, cultural context, spiritual insights, and practical applications.

Quote – “If God wanted to save the nations, He would do it without the help of a young shoemaker.” – Missionary leaders to William Carey

- What does this dismissive quote teach us today? Why is this an important lesson to remember, especially in a culture where people feel stuck in life?

Moment #1 – When God Finds You... Expect the Extraordinary and Listen to His Voice (John 1:43-44)

Jesus decides to go to Galilee and finds Philip, saying: “Follow me.” This is mission in motion—God seeking the seeker, interrupting the predictable with a personal call to reach others. The sermon highlights how this divine finding shifts our focus from life’s routines to God’s pursuit, revealing that obedience anchors the soul for outreach. The context of Galilee—a backwater town—emphasizes God’s steadfast choice of the ordinary to reach the world.

- How does the emphasis on God finding Philip challenge your perspective in seasons where you feel stuck?
- How does this passage encourage Christians facing cultural pressures or distractions to choose obedience over comfort in reaching lost people?
- Have you experienced how responding to God’s finding equipped you for outreach? How can this inspire you today?

Moment #2 – When God Calls You... Expect the Extraordinary and Follow Him Without Delay (John 1:45-46)

Philip finds Nathanael and declares, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth.” Nathanael’s skeptical “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” transforms into a response to God’s call. The sermon notes that in our culture, where doubt and delay dominate worldviews, this mindset shifts focus from hesitation to haste, making every act of following a counter to complacency in evangelism.

Spiritual insights from Matthew 4:19 support this: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men,” reducing resistance pathways and boosting missional renewal, with reflections showing regular obedience lowers anxiety and enhances purpose. This illustrates how heeding the call renews the spirit, combating skepticism and restoring direction for outreach.

- What does the phrase “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” reveal about the eternal value of God’s call? How might viewing doubt as “a fig tree moment” change your daily approach to sharing the Gospel?

- The sermon shares William Carey’s story of redirection. Share a personal example of hesitation—how can following without delay bring renewed purpose and impact lost people around you?

Moment #3 – When God Gives You a New Direction... Expect the Extraordinary and Follow Where He Leads (John 1:47-51)

Jesus sees Nathanael and declares, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” leading to the promise: “You will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” This honest exchange reminds us that our true Guide is the God who redirects all, providing victory with eternal promise. The sermon illustrates that following in the unexpected, like Brother Andrew smuggling Bibles, brings the downpour of greater things for the nations.

- What does the title “Son of Man” reveal about His unshakable authority and boundless pursuit? How does this encourage you when facing redirection or uncertainty in ministry?
- Have you had a moment where obedience renewed your direction in pain? What steps can you take to follow with greater expectation for Gospel impact?

Section #3 – EMBRACE

“Applying God’s Word”

Go deeper into the Word of God by applying what you’ve learned to your life today. Reflect on these action steps and discuss how you can live out the truths from John 1:43-51.

- **Identify Your Fig Tree:** Think of an area in your life where routine overshadows mission—perhaps doubt or comfort. Write down one specific step you can take this week to pause and listen to God, like Nathanael, to rewire your perspective for outreach.
- **Practice Immediate Obedience:** Inspired by Philip’s haste, start a mission journal. Each day, note three ways God might be interrupting your plans, thanking Him for His pursuit. Spend a moment in prayer, asking God to reveal how this builds expectation in your soul for reaching others.
- **Share Your Redirection:** Obedience renews purpose, as the sermon notes. Commit to one act of following this week that impacts lost people, such as inviting a friend to church or sharing your faith story. Discuss with the group how you can support each other in living this out.
- **Memorize and Reflect:** Memorize the sermon’s memory verse, Philippians 1:27a (HCSB): “Just one thing: Live your life in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ.” Reflect on how this transforms your view of life’s interruptions and invites God’s power into your daily outreach. Share with the group how this verse challenges or inspires you.

Closing Challenge and Prayer

Friends, the God who found Philip on a dusty road, who saw Nathanael under the fig tree, and who turned a shoemaker’s bench into a launchpad for missions is the same God who meets you right here. This week, take the next step: identify one divine interruption, respond without delay, and watch the heavens open with greater things as you carry His Gospel. Then gather again next time ready to testify how His redirection flooded your soul with purpose and reached lost hearts.