

THE FREEDOM STUDIES | PART ONE: ENCOUNTERING JESUS

Come and See

Meeting Jesus personally - not merely learning a religious system.

A Grace-Centered, Spirit-Led Journey with Jesus

KEY SCRIPTURES | NIV

John 1:35-51 | Matthew 11:28-30 | John 4:4-42
John 14:6-11 | Hebrews 1:1-3

AN INVITATION

Before We Begin

Following Jesus begins with Jesus Himself. It does not begin with joining an organization, completing a list of requirements, or proving that we are worthy. It begins with an invitation: Come and see.

This study is not designed to tell you what you must say or pressure you toward a predetermined response. It is an opportunity to encounter Jesus in Scripture, ask honest questions, and notice what the Holy Spirit may be revealing to you.

Opening Prayer

Jesus, help me come to You with an open and honest heart. Quiet the voices of fear, pressure, and past experience. As I read, help me see who You truly are. Holy Spirit, guide me into truth and show me what You want me to understand today. Amen.

READ SLOWLY

What Are You Looking For?

Read John 1:35-39 (NIV)

Two disciples begin following Jesus. When He notices them, His first recorded words to them are a question: "What are you looking for?" They ask where He is staying, and Jesus answers, "Come, and you will see."

Jesus does not begin by giving these men a test. He asks a question that reaches beneath their actions and touches their desire. He wants them to recognize what they are truly seeking. Then He invites them to spend time with Him.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

1. If Jesus asked you, "What are you looking for?" how would you answer today?
2. What have you been taught to expect from God?
3. Do you approach Jesus with curiosity, hope, fear, distrust, or a mixture of these?
4. What do you notice about the way Jesus responds to these first disciples?

AN INVITATION THAT CAN BE SHARED

Come and See

Read John 1:43-51 (NIV)

Philip encounters Jesus and then tells Nathanael that he has found the One spoken of in Scripture. Nathanael is skeptical. Philip does not argue or pressure him. He simply says, "Come and see."

Nathanael is allowed to bring his doubts with him. Jesus is not threatened by his questions or skepticism. When Nathanael comes, he discovers that Jesus already sees and knows him.

Healthy faith does not require us to pretend that we have no questions. Jesus invites us to bring our questions into His presence and discover His character for ourselves.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

1. What questions, doubts, or disappointments are you carrying?
2. Have you ever felt pressured to hide your questions in a religious setting?
3. What is different about Philip's invitation from an attempt to convince or recruit someone?
4. What might it look like for you to "come and see" before reaching every conclusion?

THE HEART OF JESUS

Come to Me

Read Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV)

Jesus invites those who are weary and burdened to come to Him. He promises rest and describes Himself as gentle and humble in heart.

Many people have experienced religion primarily as pressure: do more, try harder, never question, and never fall short. Jesus does call us to learn from Him, but He describes His leadership as gentle. His yoke is not the crushing weight of earning God's love; it is the shared life of walking with the One who already loves us.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

1. What burdens are you carrying emotionally, spiritually, or relationally?
2. How does Jesus describe His own heart?
3. Does the Jesus you have been shown resemble the Jesus in this passage?
4. What could receiving His rest mean for you right now?

GRACE AND TRUTH TOGETHER

Known and Not Condemned

Read John 4:4-30 and 39-42 (NIV)

At a well in Samaria, Jesus speaks with a woman whom others may have judged or avoided. He knows her history, yet He treats her with dignity, speaks truth without humiliation, and offers her living water.

Jesus does not ignore the truth about her life, but neither does He use that truth as a weapon. Being fully known by Jesus does not lead her deeper into shame. It opens a door to freedom, testimony, and new hope.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

1. What do you notice about the way Jesus speaks to this woman?
2. What is the difference between conviction that draws us toward God and shame that makes us hide?
3. Is there a part of your story you are afraid Jesus will reject?
4. What does this encounter suggest about how Jesus sees you?

SEEING GOD CLEARLY

Jesus Reveals the Father

Read John 14:6-11 and Hebrews 1:1-3 (NIV)

Jesus tells His disciples that anyone who has seen Him has seen the Father. Hebrews describes the Son as the exact representation of God's being.

Our view of God can be shaped by parents, leaders, churches, suffering, and past experiences. Some of those influences may have reflected Him well; others may not have. Jesus is our clearest picture of the Father. When our assumptions about God do not resemble the character revealed in Jesus, we are invited to look again.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

1. Which qualities of Jesus have stood out in these passages?
2. How have people or experiences influenced your view of God?
3. Is there anything you may need to separate from the true character of God?
4. What does Jesus reveal about the way the Father receives people who come to Him?

NO PRESSURE - ONLY HONESTY

Your Response

Encountering Jesus often awakens a response, but that response does not have to be manufactured. Take a few quiet moments. You may want to write, pray, speak with someone you trust, or simply remain with what you have read.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. What have you seen about Jesus that you want to remember?
2. What is one honest question you still want to explore?
3. Is there an invitation from Jesus that feels personal to you today?
4. What would one small response of trust look like - not to earn His love, but because He is drawing you closer?

You do not need to rush. Jesus' invitation is relational: come, remain, listen, and learn who He is. Faith grows as we keep turning toward Him.

A PRAYER YOU MAY MAKE YOUR OWN

Closing Prayer

Jesus, thank You for inviting me to come and see. Help me know You as You truly are, not only through what others have said about You. Heal the places where fear, shame, disappointment, or religious pressure have distorted my view of God. Give me courage to bring You my honest questions. Holy Spirit, continue to guide me into truth and help me recognize the voice of Jesus. Teach me to receive His grace, trust His heart, and take the next step You are inviting me to take. Amen.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

A Note for Anyone Walking Alongside Another Person

Listen more than you speak. Do not answer for the other person, correct every thought, or use these questions to move them toward a decision on your timetable. Make room for silence, uncertainty, and disagreement. Your role is not to replace the Holy Spirit, but to create a safe space in which someone can encounter Jesus in Scripture.

Continue when you are ready: Hearing His Voice - Learning how Scripture and the Holy Spirit work together to lead us into truth.

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