



The Nourishing Vocation Project
Near and Now:
Discernment as a Way of Life: Phillip & Nathaniel

Warm-up Question

What are some of the preconceived notions people have about God? Give specific examples.



["Come and See."](#) by [eperales](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

Discussion Questions

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

Come and See

Read [John 1:43-51](#)

Bible Story Reflection

The idea of a messiah for Israel isn't a new idea when we meet Phillip and Nathaniel in this passage. Like the generations before them, Phillip and Nathaniel are both waiting for the day when Israel's messiah arrives to make all things right for the nation. And like many of their fellow Israelites, the two disciples had a very clear idea of what it meant for the messiah to finally come rescue Israel.

But then Phillip and Nathaniel encounter Jesus. And while Phillip seems to quickly believe and respond to Jesus' call, we see that it takes a little more "convincing" for Nathaniel to respond to Jesus' call. Why? Because Nathaniel is stuck on his long-held ideas about what a messiah should look like. When he asks, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Nathaniel signals that—in his mind—saviors of Israel can't come from a place like Nazareth: a small, unimportant, backwater town. Messiahs are supposed to be powerful, commanding figures. Messiahs are supposed to be from prominent cities.

As we discuss ideas like "vocation," and "calling," it can be easy to create and bolster our own ideas of what those words in action should look like. Over time, those preconceived ideas become our internal litmus test for determining what we *think* we should or shouldn't do. But we're called to serve and follow a God who doesn't always fit neatly into our preconceived ideas of God. As a matter of fact, the witness of Scripture points to a God who actively *upends* our preconceived notions and refuses to reside within our fabricated categories. And if we're not careful, we run the risk of missing both who Jesus is and what Jesus calls us to, all because we'd rather hold on to what we think *should* be.

Discussion Questions

1. Share about a time where your preconceived ideas about another person, group, or idea were challenged. Share what your preconceived idea was and what happened when you let go of that idea.
2. Share about a time where somebody's attitude or behavior towards you was shaped by their own preconceived ideas. What was that like for you?
3. Why is it hard to let go of preconceived ideas?
4. What helps you relinquish your preconceived ideas in order to do what God calls you to do?
5. In what ways do you identify with either Phillip, Nathaniel, or both?
6. Share an experience where your preconceived notions about God were challenged.
7. How would Philip or Nathaniel tell their stories?
8. How would Jesus tell this story?
9. How does this story call to you in your own discernment right now?



Activity Suggestions

Take some time to listen to the song [“Dear Me.”](#) by Nichole Nordeman. What are some of the preconceived ideas she mentions in her lyrics? What helps her move beyond those preconceived ideas?

One way to work through preconceived ideas is to learn history. Consider the history of your church. If you do not know it, take time to learn it. If you are familiar with your church’s history, have a conversation with someone who might think differently about your church’s history than you do. How long has the church been in this community? How has the congregation changed over time? How has the community engaged with (or failed to engage) the community throughout its existence?

Ask someone in the surrounding community who *does not* attend your church what they think of your church.

Prayer Concerns

Those who need to hear God’s call, those who need to respond to God’s call, those working through preconceived notions.

Closing Prayer

Guide me daily to come to you, O God, that I might see and hear anew your call for my life. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

