

Monday
John 1:43–51

While Jesus was traveling to Galilee, he found Philip, who came from the town of Bethsaida. Jesus said to him, "Follow me."

Philip was so excited about meeting Jesus that he hurried to look for his friend Nathaniel. He wanted to tell Nathaniel that he had found the one about whom Moses and the prophets had written. Philip discovered his friend Nathaniel sitting under a fig tree.

When Philip told Nathaniel that he believe the promised Savior they'd been waiting for was this Jesus of Nazareth, Nathaniel asked, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Nathaniel did not expect that anyone important could come from such a little town.

Philip invited Nathaniel to "come and see."

When Jesus saw Nathaniel, he called him "an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."

Nathaniel was surprised! How did Jesus know that he was an Israelite and a truthful man before they had ever even met? Nathaniel asked, "How do you know me?"

Jesus told him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

Now Nathaniel was even more amazed! How could Jesus have seen him or known that he was sitting under a fig tree? Nathaniel said to Jesus, "You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Nathaniel was right!

Jesus replied, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' you believe. You will see greater things than these. You will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the son of Man."

Nathaniel and Philip followed Jesus when he called them. They became his disciples, and they saw Jesus do many miraculous things. Jesus calls us to follow him, too – and one day we will see all the amazing wonders of heaven.

- **How did Nathaniel come to know who Jesus is?**
- **How do you know that Philip loved Nathaniel?**
- **Who did Nathaniel say that Jesus is?**
- **What did Philip and Nathaniel do when Jesus called them?**
- **What does Jesus call us to do?**

Close with prayer.

Tuesday
Acts 9:1–20

Saul was an educated man who did everything as hard as he could. But Saul did not believe that Jesus was the Savior or that he had risen from the dead. Because of this, Saul hated Jesus and persecuted anyone who believed in him. He even put believers in jail to try to make them stop believing in Jesus – or at least stop preaching about him!

Saul decided that Damascus was the next place where he would go to find Christians and put them in jail. While Saul was traveling along the road, suddenly a bright light from heaven shone all around him. Saul was afraid and fell to the ground. Then he heard a voice asking, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

Saul replied, "Who are you, Sir?"

The voice said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."

Even though Saul was an enemy of Jesus, Jesus loved Saul and wanted Saul to believe in him. Jesus had an important work for Saul to do. Jesus told Saul to get up "and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." But when Saul opened his eyes, he couldn't see. His friends helped him to the city, where he prayed and waited for God to tell him what to do.

After waiting in the city for three days, Jesus sent a man named Ananias to Saul. Ananias was worried, because everyone knew that Saul was putting believers in jail everywhere he went. Still Ananias obeyed God and went and found Saul. Ananias told Saul that Jesus had sent him so that Saul could see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

As soon as Ananias said this, suddenly Saul could see! He got up and Ananias baptized him, because now Saul wanted to be a follower of Jesus.

God changed Saul from being God's enemy into his own child. Some time later, Saul changed his name to Paul. Paul served the Lord with all his heart wherever God sent him to go. God used Paul to become a great missionary and a preacher, to tell thousands of people about Jesus. God's Word tells how he loved us even while we were still enemies of God. How wonderful it is to have our sins forgiven and to be part of his family!

- **What was Saul doing before he believed in Jesus?**
- **What happened to Saul while he was traveling on the road to Damascus?**
- **How does Jesus grab the attention of sinners and save them today? How has he done this in your own heart and life?**

Close with prayer

Wednesday
Hebrews 9

In the Old Testament, God instructed his people how to worship. God gave instructions that were intended to help the people realize what a problem sin is and how much sin has separated us from God.

Before the people could enter their church called the tabernacle, they had to first offer a sacrifice or sin offering. That meant an animal would be slaughtered as a reminder that the wages of sin is death. The people would give their offered animal to the priest, who would kill it and burn it in front of everyone. Once they had offered their sacrifice, then they could enter inside the sanctuary of the tabernacle. The inside of the tabernacle was called “the holy place,” and you could not enter it without first having your sins paid for with a sacrifice.

Once inside “the holy place,” the high priest would offer prayers to God on behalf of the people. Talking to God (or anyone else) on behalf of another person or other people is called being an intercessor. The High Priest would intercede for all the people by offering prayers to God on their behalf.

There was another room in the front of “the holy place” called “the most holy place” or “holy of holies.” This room represented God's presence, and no one was allowed to enter that room except for the High Priest – and even the High Priest would only enter that room once each year.

The most holy place was separated from the holy place by a curtain. The tabernacle was later replaced by a bigger and permanent temple built in Jerusalem. The temple was set up the same way as the tabernacle and followed the same practices. So the temple also had a holy place where the people would gather after offering their sacrifice for sin and it had a most holy place separated by a curtain. When Jesus died on Good Friday, that curtain was torn in half, symbolizing that the sin which separates us from God has been fully paid for and removed. Sin no longer separates us from God's presence, because Jesus has paid for our sin.

Jesus is our high priest. The sacrifice he offered of himself is the only sacrifice for sin we will ever need. When we pray to God, Jesus is our intercessor. Jesus is God, so God himself is our intercessor. Because of Jesus, we all have access to the most holy place to live in the presence of God forever.

Sin separates us from God, and we should take that as seriously as God's Old Testament believers did. Jesus has removed that separation, and we should rejoice as we take that very seriously too.

Dear Jesus, we come to you knowing that you represent the whole world before God. And we know that you are true God. We thank you for sacrificing yourself for the sins of all, including us. Help us appreciate the great problem and separation our sin has caused, so that we may fully appreciate and respect what you have done to remove that separation. By faith, our greatest desire is to simply live in the presence of God. You have made that eternally possible. Thank you. Amen.

Thursday
John 10:1–30

In Jesus' time in the country where he lived, many families kept sheep, and the person in charge of the sheep was called a shepherd. Because people understood about sheep and shepherds, Jesus used these familiar things to explain that he was the "Good Shepherd."

A good shepherd provides, protects, and cares for his sheep. Jesus explained how sheep recognize their true shepherd and will not follow a stranger. When a shepherd goes to the sheep pen to get his flock, he stands at the gate and calls to them. He calls each sheep by name. The sheep recognize the shepherd's voice, and they run to follow him. The sheep will not run out to meet a stranger or a thief.

Then Jesus said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it to the full. I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father."

Later, as Jesus was walking in the temple, some of the unbelieving Jews started to question him about who he really was. Jesus reminded them that he had already told them, but they did not believe him. "You do not believe," he said, "because you are not among my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

Jesus tells us that the most important thing in life is to believe in who Jesus is – the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for us. Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins, and he rose again to defeat sin and death and the devil. Through faith in him, we know that we are his own and that he will always be with us, both now and forever with him in heaven.

- **What does the Good Shepherd do for the sheep?**
- **Who is the Good Shepherd, and who are the sheep?**
- **How does Jesus shepherd you in your daily life?**

Close with prayer

Friday
Luke 5:17–26

Jesus is the greatest of all healers. He is a healer of both soul and body. Jesus once showed that he could heal both souls and bodies. It happened while he was teaching in a house.

The house was crowded with lots of people, including some who were Jesus' enemies. Some men came carrying a bed. On the bed was their friend; he could not walk. The men could find no way to get their friend into the house to see Jesus, so they went onto the roof of the house and lowered the man down before Jesus through a large hole they had made in the roof.

Jesus said to the sick man, "Your sins are forgiven." When Jesus' enemies heard these words, they thought that Jesus might be pretending he was God, since only God can forgive sins. Being God, Jesus knew their thoughts. He said, "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? So that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." Jesus turned to the sick man and said, "I say to you, get up. Pick up your bed and go home."

And he did! The sick man now could walk! He did as Jesus told him. As he went his way, the man glorified God. Just as surely as Jesus forgave and healed the sick man in this story, Jesus remains the great healer today. He still forgives all sins and heals all diseases. What a great God and Savior Jesus is!

- **Talk about a time when God healed you from a disease or injury. Then talk about the time God healed you from sin-sickness. Talk about heaven, where there will be no more sickness – ever.**

Dear God, you are the best doctor ever. You heal us both in body and in soul. You took care of our disease of sin by sending your Son, Jesus. He took the punishment for us, and now by his wounds we are healed. Thank you for making us perfect in your sight. Amen.