

Bible Background

The Bible tells the story of God's love for us. The greatest expression of God's love is found in the person of Jesus and his ministry. The Old Testament of the Bible tells the story of God's people—the Israelites—from their beginning, through many generations of their history. The New Testament tells the story of Jesus, God's Son and a descendant of the Old Testament Israelites, as well as his ministry and the movement that arose from it.

Near the beginning of his ministry, Jesus called twelve people to be his disciples. Before they became Jesus' followers, several of them were disciples of a man named John the Baptist. John the Baptist was Jesus' relative and spent much of his own ministry preparing people to receive the message Jesus would bring. "Someone greater stands among you, whom you don't recognize. He comes after me, but I'm not worthy to untie his sandal straps" (John 1:26-27). John would later identify Jesus as "The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (1:29) and ultimately prompt his own disciples to leave him and follow Jesus.

The story of Jesus calling these disciples paints a picture of lifelong discipleship all in a few short moments. John the Baptist once again identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God and initiates a chain reaction leading his followers into a life of discipleship with Jesus. The disciples mentioned in this passage—Andrew, Simon, Philip, Nathanael, and an unnamed disciple (likely John, son of Zebedee)—deepen their insight into and understanding of who Jesus is as the story progresses. By the end of the account, they have acknowledged who Jesus is by the titles "Rabbi," "Messiah," "the one Moses wrote about in the Law and the Prophets," "God's Son," and "the king of Israel."

This passage highlights the role Jesus plays in the fulfillment of Israel's scriptures and the expectations Israel had for the Messiah. One of Jesus' new disciples, Philip, says, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law and the Prophets: Jesus, Joseph's son, from Nazareth" (1:45). Philip understands that Scripture bears witness to Jesus as the Messiah, but Jesus takes this further and invites the disciples into the story. He mentions seeing Nathanael under a fig tree, an object that often represents Israel's struggle to remain faithful to God. Just as the disciples recognize Jesus' role in the story of God's people, Jesus invites them into the continuation of that story. We are extended that same invitation today.

Jesus calls all of us to be his disciples. Heroes respond to this call and follow him! A life of discipleship following Jesus helps us learn how to show God's love to other people. During Hero Hotline VBS, we will learn many ways to be a hero and share God's love. Responding to Jesus' call to follow him is our first step into a larger world. As you share this story with children, help them understand that the more we learn about Jesus and who he is, the better we can show God's love to other people like the disciples did!



Bible Story

Jesus Builds the Team
John 1:35-51

Hotline Verse

So let's strive for the things that bring peace and the things that build each other up.
(Romans 14:19)

Hotline Tip

Heroes are called to...
Follow Jesus!

Teacher Tip

This Bible Background feature is a supplemental aid provided for you, the Storyteller, to give context for each session's story before you teach on it. You may share this information with your Heroes, if desired, but it is not a recommended portion of the intended lesson.