We continue our series on the Gospel of John. We have been spending some time in the first chapter.

It is critically important that if you are going to follow someone, that person should be trustworthy and extremely helpful. Not just “kinda helpful” or “sorta helpful.” Life is so short that the person you intend to follow or be mentored by better be EXTREMELY HELPFUL, accurate and trustworthy.

Be careful of whom you follow.

Check out my hair. Is this not a great haircut? Please say, “Yes, great haircut!”

Thank you.

I need to hear that because last week I followed someone’s advice whom I felt was trustworthy. This person said, “Hey, Dan, you should try my hairdresser. She’s phenomenal! And she charges just $25.”

Now I usually pay between $12 and $22 for a haircut. $25 was a bit higher, but sure, to keep up my image of People Magazine’s Sexiest Man Alive, I need to look extraordinarily good. So I followed her advice and made an appointment.

Let me say for the record that part of my friend’s advice was extremely accurate. In my opinion, this is one of the BEST haircuts I had ever had. You might not be able to tell. But, aah, the way my hair blows in the wind and now it nestsles on my head, it is the crème de la crème.

The hairdresser took nearly an hour to cut my hair. She studied the shape of my head and how my hair was previously cut. She suggested changes and then carefully crafted a coiffure of Christ. (I’ve been coiffed for Christ!)

Well, at the end of my session just before I got out of the chair, I said to her, “Wow, this is a great haircut. I have a 14-year old son. Do you charge the same price for kids?”

She said, “For a 14-year old, oh, I give a big discount for that. It’s only $30.”

I thought to myself, “Thirty dollars???? Wait a minute! That’s a big discount? But my friend said I would only be charged …..”

So I said, “Do you take credit cards? “And she said, “No just cash or check.”

“So, how much do I owe you?”

She said, “That’ll be $50.”

Fifty dollars!!! I nearly had a Pastor Pake heart attack. Do men get charged that much for a haircut?

Fortunately, I had a $100 bill from a wedding I did recently. So she got $50, plus a tip!

So, please tell me again, “Great haircut, Pastor Dan! Wow, that looks like a $50 haircut!”

The lesson is: be careful of who you follow.

Today’s Bible story shows the amazing faith of the first followers of Christ. They saw Jesus as someone worth following.

John 1:35 The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples,

John 1:36 and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!”

John 1:37 The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

John 1:38 When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher), “where are you staying?”

I love it that when the two disciples started following Jesus. Historians think they were probably Andrew and John, the writer of one the Gospel toward whom Jesus turned and asked, “What are you looking for?”

That is such an important question to ask of our ourselves. What are we looking for in life?

Albert Einstein said, “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.”
When we follow someone, like a coach, a personal trainer or mentor, it is because we want different and better results in our lives. If we are looking for the Messiah, what are we looking for?

That’s a brilliant question by Jesus. Why do we want to follow Him? Because He might make us rich? Happy? Successful?

Much of what Jesus did and said was to clarify what He was about. He also wanted people to focus on what was important in life. So if you are going to follow Him you should know that He is not just a miracle man of healing. He is not your ticket to win the lottery as He doesn’t care if we are rich. He is not the one to protect us from all pain.

On the contrary, when Jesus healed people, He often told the healed person not to tell anyone because He didn’t want to be known just for that. When He told a rich young ruler to give up His money Jesus wanted him to understand that life was not about making money and then hoarding it. When it came to trouble and pain, Jesus said, “In the world you shall have tribulation.” His role in life was not to catch us before we fall and skin our knees.

Maybe Jesus is asking us that question: What are we looking for in following Jesus?

And what do we need to change, clarify or recalibrate in our thinking about what He desires in our life? What we should desire in our life?

John 1:38 When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher), “where are you staying?”

John 1:39 He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon.

After Jesus asked them His piercing question they said, “Rabbi, where are you staying?” And then Jesus said, “Come and see.”

If this were a pidgin English in Hawaii, it went from – “Eh, where you stay?” to: “Try come.”

Friends, this is really important. When we decide to begin a journey of being a follower of Jesus, He is telling us to come and see. Jesus did not sit them down and say, “Now listen to this three-hour lecture on theology,” but rather He invited them to COME and SEE what it means to live a life like Christ; to come and see Him heal and help people.

When we invite people to attend a Healing Service it is an invitation for them to come and see God heal people. It’s not to hear about healing but to see people get healed when God shows up. Come and see.

When we invite people to worship, we are saying, “Come and see.” Come and experience God showing up in the music, the prayers and the message.

My wife Pam came up with this idea. Two months ago our 24 elders met for a retreat. And one of the exercises we did was to write down on a 3 by 5 card three words that best describe our church.

They wrote down words like music, friendly, grateful, risk, forgiving, grace-oriented.

Then we realized that we now know what to say when people ask us about why they should go to our church. If you wonder what you would say about our church to someone while in a one-minute elevator ride, now you have it.

We should all try this exercise. Choose three words that describe First Prez, and then center your thoughts on those three words. In essence, you are saying, “Come and see if that is not true when you visit.”

Then write another three words on the note card that says why you follow Jesus. You can make that the centerpiece of what to say to someone who doesn’t know Jesus and why he or she should follow Him. It can be the core of your testimony. Try it this week with your small group.

John 1:39 He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon.

Not sure why the Apostle John wrote 4 o’clock other than it was such a memorable meeting, which changed his life, that he wanted to record it. Or perhaps he wanted to show how long they stayed talking story in his first meeting with Jesus.

John 1:40 One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.

John 1:41 He first found his brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated Anointed).

John 1:42 He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter).
John 1:43 The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.”

Notice how in just the first chapter of John, Jesus has already been given many titles. He is the Logos, the Word, the True Light, the Lamb of God, Rabbi and Messiah. And then in the next verses we will hear Him being called Son of Joseph, Son of God, King of Israel and Son of Man, which is Jesus’ favorite term for himself. Why?

I think it’s because “Son of Man” underlines the same reason why He asks people to come, see and follow Him. He can be in the same level as us. He wants to show his humanity and accessibility.

When we follow Jesus, He speaks into our lives.

Remember in the last passage how Jesus said to Simon that he would now be called Cephas (the Aramaic word for rock)? The first thing that Jesus did was to speak into Simon’s life and say that he would now be called Cephas (Aramaic for rock), which is Petros in Greek, and where we get Peter in English.

The Apostle Simon would now be called Peter. He would be now known as Rocky. Sturdy, solid, with a comeback spirit like the boxer. Not just an impulsive and talkative Galilean fisherman but the rock, the foundation on which Jesus would build His entire Church.

Names in Jewish culture were considered an expression of the person’s whole personality. To be given a new name indicates a change in position.

In following Jesus, He prophetically gives us new names. The longer we follow Him, it becomes more evident that Jesus really knows us and has promises and affirmations for us.

Our church’s vision statement is to help people find their destiny in Jesus Christ. When we follow Jesus, He speaks into us a destiny far greater than we would ever have dreamed, if we but dedicate all of our life to Him.

Simon was called Peter the Rock. Jesus spoke to him a new name and, therefore, a new destiny. I think He does that with all of us.

I think Jesus took my name Daniel, which means “judge of God,” and gave me the new name, Forrest Gump, after the man in the movie of the same title. Remember Forrest Gump starring Tom Hanks?

It’s about a fictitious, mentally challenged guy who, through the grace and destiny of God, experienced and accomplished wonderful things. (Run, Forrest, run!)

Forrest played for the Alabama Crimson Tide football team under Bear Bryant and graduated from college even though he only had an IQ of 75.

He won the Congressional Medal of Honor for bravery in Vietnam. He played for the All-American Ping Pong Team. He started a successful shrimp business and bought Apple stock that made him a multi-millionaire.

He continually got to go to the White House to be honored. He would always say, “Yeah, I had to go to the White House again, and met the President of the United States again!”

He had a beautiful wife and child. It’s all pure grace, not because he deserved it or had the skills for it.

I have found my life to be like Forrest Gump. And it’s purely because of Christ. My brother went to Yale, Harvard and Stanford, had perfect SAT scores, while I went to an unknown school called Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon.

No one in my family had ever gotten a divorce except me. As you know, my first wife left me just as I started seminary. On the day after I got my divorce papers I got an “F” on my finals in my New Testament Survey class. I swore I would never become a pastor. I was told that I shouldn’t be a pastor.

Yet, I felt like God said, “You now have a new name. Not Peter the Rock, but Forrest Gump; a man who God blesses in spite of himself.”

I got to go on KGMB-TV News when I was 21 and got to anchor the news with Bob Sevey during a time the station had the highest news ratings in the history of television.

Got to be a pastor at First Presbyterian Church, which turned out to be one of the top ten growing churches in our denomination. (Run, Forrest, run!)

Got to speak for Promise Keepers at capacity-filled stadiums and arenas around the country.

Got to preach at the world’s largest church in South Korea with 750,000 members. (Run, Forrest, run!)

Got to start Hawaiian Islands Ministries with my wife Pam and it is still alive 25 years later, having ministered to some 40-thousand people.
Got to see a church with $200,000 in capital campaign funds buy and move into a $120-million, 242-acre golf club.

Went on just a tour of a building in Colorado, the headquarters of Compassion International, and began to excitingly tell others about the need to help children in poverty and then sat back and watched thousands of children get sponsored.

Became a Trustee of the Seminary where I got an “F.”

And I got to pray for and watch people get healed before my eyes. (Pray, Forrest, Pray!)

Forrest Gump’s mom said, “Miracles happen every day; it’s just that people don’t see them.”

I always, always feel like a country bumpkin who gets to meet famous people, and somehow I get to do neat stuff. And yes, I did get to go to the White House, but it was the normal White House tour for tourists!

Now what happened to me is my destiny. Everyone’s is different. And everyone’s critically important and can do wonders for God’s purposes.

Maybe for you the name God gives you will not be Forrest Gump or Peter the Rock, but a holy name like Helper, Transformer, and Encourager.

You might be one of those who choose to help children through the ministry of Common Grace, by being with one public school elementary child for one hour, once a week for one year. You are doing something truly far greater and deeper than speaking to a stadium of people for 30 minutes.

For those who teach Sunday School nearly EVERY WEEK for a year, or drive our church shuttle every Sunday so people can come to church, or usher 52 Sundays a year, what you’re doing is NO SMALL thing.

And it just might be that there is more than one Forrest Gump in this room who will be surprised with the roles and responsibilities that God will give him or her.

I firmly believe that when we follow Jesus, He speaks into us a journey and a destiny far greater than it would have been if we didn’t follow Him.

To be true, the things I have seen and experienced are all by grace. I believe, when we truly follow Him our lives get more exciting and not more boring, Not less painful, but more peaceful. Not without stress, but more energizing. Not chaotic, but more unexpected. Not without fear at times, but always with more fulfillment.

Jesus speaks into our lives and says, “You think you have a good life? You will see greater things with Me, things that really count.”

We see this as we continue in the passage:

John 1:44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

John 1:45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.”

John 1:46 Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.”

John 1:47 When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, “Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!”

John 1:48 Nathanael asked him, “Where did you get to know me?” Jesus answered, “I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.”

John 1:49 Nathanael replied, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

John 1:50 Jesus answered, “Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.”

John 1:51 And he said to him, “Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

Jesus was saying, “Nathanael, I affirm you as a man without guile, a man in whom there is no deceit.”

People without guile normally do not get affirmed for having no guile, but Jesus is so perceptive that He can get down into our very core and affirm us for the things that people do not see.

And the fact that he could see Nathanael under a fig tree even before he was called means that Jesus can always see us and knows what we are going through even when we don’t see Him.

If you think it is cool that He can do that, well, Jesus says you will see even greater things than that if you come and see and follow Him.

And here’s a big clue: you can only do and see greater things if you truly drop everything, and I mean everything, to follow Jesus.
Drop even the things that you are the expert in, and follow Him to become a fully committed, devoted follower of Christ with every fiber of your being. It doesn’t mean we’re perfect, but we’re striving to have Jesus the very core of our soul.

We read about one of the first meetings of Jesus and the disciples in the Gospel of Matthew.

Matt. 4:18 As he [Jesus] walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen.

Matt. 4:19 And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.”

Matt. 4:20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

Matt. 4:21 As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them.

Matt. 4:22 Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

Know when we read in the Gospels that the Disciples followed Jesus, it wasn’t that they immediately followed that without thinking. It was over a period of time. Sometimes when it says the word “immediately,” it’s not like how we Americans would use the word. It means more like “and so then eventually they left their boat.”

But indeed, the process of following Jesus is difficult because sometimes it means leaving our family traditions or even going against one’s parents. It means leaving the way we normally have looked at our professions.

Notice in this passage that James and John left their father Zebedee and left the family business. Just as they were mending the nets, they dropped them to follow Jesus. By dropping their nets, they were dropping the security upholding their lives.

When Jesus says come and see and follow me it is easy to say “yes,” but to truly following Him means a change of behavior also.

If one says, “I now follow Jesus but I still have the same spending habits, make money the same way and forgive people the same way,” then maybe Jesus is just a hobby and we are not really following Him. We’re not disciples but dilettantes just dabbling in the faith.

Part of the challenge of following Jesus is to trust Him with everything, even our jobs.

Let’s take a higher macro view of this story of the first disciples to follow Jesus. We started in the gospel of John with a very brief account. Then we went to the Gospel of Matthew, which had a tiny bit more. Now let’s go to the Gospel of Luke where we can a more detailed account.

Luke 5:1 Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God,

Luke 5:2 he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets.

Luke 5:3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.

Luke 5:4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.”

Luke 5:5 Simon answered, “Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.”

Luke 5:6 When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break.

Luke 5:7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink.

Luke 5:8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!”

Luke 5:9 For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken;

Luke 5:10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.”

Luke 5:11 When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

When Peter did it Jesus’ way and truly followed His direction, he was blessed in ways greater than he could imagine. But it meant he had to drop the nets of how he did things and use those nets in God’s way.

Peter, James, and John had probably been fishermen for many years. They knew their business. They should be the authority in fishing. Yet, this young Rabbi, not a fisherman but a Rabbi, named Jesus told them how to fish.
They must've been thinking, "What would He know? We've fished all night. We know when to quit. We're pros." Do they sound like us sometimes?

They didn't believe Him, but then they finally dropped their nets over the side to do it the way Jesus said, and lo and behold, they were blessed abundantly! In following Jesus, they saw greater things.

Peter finally dropped his nets. You can't catch anything unless you drop your nets. And we can't fill our nets and receive unless we open them for God's blessings.

Ladies, and gentlemen, some day, maybe today, we will have to drop our nets and open them to Jesus as a way of expressing our trust in Him. The nets can be anything – our pride, our way of doing things, our way of doing business. Drop them and open up to Jesus' way. Jesus, has a really big plan for you and what you can do for this world.

A person once said that if you really want to change your life for God you have to have an attitude that if anything is worth doing it is worth doing now. Right now! If we wait for a good day or the right time to do it, that time will never come. If we are waiting for a break in the schedule when we are more rested and relaxed, that day may never come.

Do it now. Drop the nets, trust Jesus and then open them to haul in the blessings of doing things His way.

What nets do we need to drop in our lives right now to follow Jesus? Is it a time management issue? A co-dependency? A control issue? Money matters? Worries?

It may be something we think, like Peter, that we are the experts in, and that we know more about it than Jesus. But maybe today is the day that we will finally listen to Jesus saying, "Drop the nets, and come and follow Me."

Jesus says, "Come and see. I have a better life for you that's far greater than you can imagine."

Listen to His voice today. "Come and see, and follow me." Let's pray.

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Sunday worship sermons can also be heard on "Strength for the Journey," First Prez's weekly radio show. Sunday mornings at 10 on KGU 760 am.
You can also listen and download it at fpchawaii.posterous.com