

BEHOLD THE LAMB: SESSION 2

Come and See

John 1:19-51 · A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of John

Part 1: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim: Participants discover that the second half of John 1 is a cascade of witness and invitation: the Baptist points, disciples follow, each finder immediately fetches someone else, and Jesus caps the chapter by claiming to be Jacob's ladder, the meeting place of heaven and earth. They also hear, for the first time, the cry that names our whole study, and they are asked to let it remain a mystery a while longer.

Catholic Touchstone: Vocation and witness. Faith in this chapter travels person to person, by name: Andrew finds Simon, Philip finds Nathanael. The Church grows the same way today, and every baptized person shares the Baptist's job description. Nobody in John 1 is argued into discipleship; they are invited to come and see.

What You Need to Know

The Prologue was the overture; now the curtain rises, and John structures the opening act as a week of days (note the repeated the next day in 1:29, 35, 43, and on the third day in 2:1). Many commentators see here a quiet new-creation week answering Genesis 1, the echo your group discovered last session. You do not need to press the scheme; just know it is there.

The delegation from Jerusalem asks the Baptist three loaded questions: Are you the Christ? Are you Elijah? Are you the prophet? Each had a pedigree. Malachi 4:5 promised Elijah's return before the day of the LORD, and Deuteronomy 18:15-18 promised a prophet like Moses. The Baptist answers with descending brevity: I am not the Christ. I am not. No. Notice the shape of his speech: in a Gospel where Jesus will repeatedly say I AM, the Baptist's testimony is a chain of I am not. His greatness is entirely referential. He defines himself only as a voice from Isaiah 40:3, and that citation carries a quiet bombshell: the voice in Isaiah prepares the way of the LORD, of God Himself. The Baptist is saying that the one coming after him is the coming of God.

Then the cry that titles our study: Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (1:29, repeated 1:35). Here you must exercise deliberate restraint. The Baptist never explains the title, John the Evangelist never explains it here, and neither will you. Participants sealed their guesses last week. Your job this session is to sharpen the strangeness, not resolve it: lambs do not take away sin, sacrificial victims do not walk around Galilee, and no Old Testament text ever calls the Messiah a lamb in so many words. For your own preparation only: the resolution the study is building toward gathers the Passover lamb of Exodus 12, the servant of Isaiah 53 who is led like a lamb to the slaughter, and the daily offering of the *tamid*, and it lands in Session 13, where the group will weigh honestly the long-standing reading of John's Passion chronology that sets the death of Jesus in the hours when the Passover lambs were slain, with hyssop and unbroken bones completing the pattern. Be accurate with yourself here: John dates the sentencing to the day of Preparation of the Passover, about the sixth hour (19:14), and never

states the hour of the death itself, so the synchronization is an inference from his chronology and it is disputed. Session 13 presents it as a reading, not as a datum. Guard the seal.

The call narratives run on two repeated phrases. Jesus' first spoken words in this entire Gospel are a question: What do you seek? (1:38). John has composed carefully; the risen Lord's question to Mary Magdalene in the garden, Whom do you seek? (20:15), closes the arc. Every disciple lives between those two questions. The second phrase is Come and see (1:39), which Philip then repeats verbatim to Nathanael (1:46). Johannine evangelization is not argument but invitation backed by testimony.

Two moments need leader depth. First, the renaming of Simon: You shall be called Cephas (1:42). *Kēphas* is Aramaic for rock, rendered in Greek as Petros. In Scripture, when God renames a man, He is not handing out nicknames; He is announcing a mission and remaking an identity: Abram becomes Abraham, father of nations, and Jacob becomes Israel. John records the rename at the very first meeting and then leaves it hanging like a loaded promise. Christian readers have long heard its discharge in chapter 21, our Session 14, when the risen Lord gives Simon his threefold pastoral commission. John never says so outright; he leaves the name unexplained and lets the commission answer it. Present the link as a reading the Gospel invites, not as a conclusion John states. Plant, do not resolve.

Second, the ladder. Jesus tells Nathanael, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man (1:51). The wording is lifted from Jacob's dream at Bethel in Genesis 28, where Jacob wakes and cries, this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. Jesus places himself where the ladder stood: the image presents him as the new Bethel, the true house of God and gate of heaven, the one place where heaven and earth meet. This locks directly into last week's tabernacle thread: the Word who pitched his tent among us is the meeting place in person. Expect a small thrill in the room when the group finds Genesis 28 themselves.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

- **Isaiah 40:3.** The voice in the wilderness prepares the way of the LORD. The Baptist's self-description, and an implicit claim about who is coming.
- **Malachi 4:5 and Deuteronomy 18:15-18.** The expected Elijah and the prophet like Moses, the background of the delegation's three questions. Leader background; cite from memory rather than turning there.
- **Genesis 17:5 and 32:28.** Abram renamed Abraham, Jacob renamed Israel. Divine renaming announces mission. Optional quick reference during the Cephas question.
- **Genesis 28:10-17.** Jacob's ladder at Bethel, angels ascending and descending, house of God, gate of heaven. The session's climactic live discovery.
- **Isaiah 11:2.** The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him. Background to the Spirit descending and remaining on Jesus (1:32-33).

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), Doctor of the Church, Tractates on the Gospel of John, Tractate 7

Commenting on Nathanael under the fig tree, Augustine hears an echo of Eden: the first thing our fallen parents reached for was fig leaves. When Jesus says, before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you, Augustine reads a picture of every conversion: Christ sees us in the

shadow of our sin before we ever catch sight of him. Nathanael thinks the story begins with his decision to come and see; Jesus gently reveals that he was seen, and loved, first.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. John Chrysostom (c. 347-407), Doctor of the Church, Homilies on the Gospel of John, Homily 19

Chrysostom lingers on one small verse: Andrew first found his brother Simon. Having found the Messiah, Andrew could not hold the treasure alone even overnight; he ran to the person nearest his heart. This, Chrysostom says, is true brotherly love, to share spiritual goods and not only earthly ones. He notes with delight that from Andrew's simple act of fetching his brother came the man who would lead the apostles.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. John Henry Newman (1801-1890), Meditations and Devotions

Newman's famous meditation belongs to this chapter of callings: God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission. Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael are each found differently, named personally, and sent distinctly. Newman insists the same is true of every one of us: somehow I am necessary for His purposes, a link in a chain, a bond of connexion between persons.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 719-720.** John the Baptist as more than a prophet, the friend of the Bridegroom in whom the Spirit completes the cycle of prophets begun by Elijah.
- **CCC 438.** Jesus as the Christ, the anointed one, manifested to Israel at his baptism when the Spirit descended and remained on him.
- **CCC 858.** Jesus calls those whom he desires by name, and the apostles are the emissaries of his own mission: as the Father has sent me, even so I send you.
- **CCC 878.** The personal character of the call: each one is called personally, by name, to follow him.

Thread Watch

THREAD WATCH

The Lamb (title thread, sealed). The title is spoken aloud this session (1:29, 35) and pointedly left unexplained. Sharpen the mystery in Build question 3, confirm that guesses stay sealed, and move on. Resolves Session 13.

I am not / I AM. The Baptist's testimony is built of denials: I am not the Christ, I am not, no. Quietly note the shape. Jesus' thunderous I AM sayings begin in chapter 6 and peak in 8:58; the contrast is deliberate and the group should discover it later, not now.

What do you seek? Jesus' first words (1:38) form a bracket with his post-resurrection question, whom do you seek? (20:15). Plant only; resolves Session 14.

The rename. You shall be called Cephas (1:42) is a promissory note. Our study hears it honored in 21:15-17, Session 14, in the threefold feed my sheep. Plant only.

Tabernacle and temple. The ladder saying (1:51) advances last week's thread: the Word who tabernacled among us now identifies himself as Bethel, the house of God and gate of heaven. Next session the thread jumps again, to the temple of his body (2:21).

Session Goals

1. Participants can describe the Baptist's identity as pure witness, built entirely of denials and a borrowed voice from Isaiah 40, and can say whose way that voice prepares.
2. Participants register the strangeness of the Lamb of God title and consciously keep their guesses sealed.
3. Participants trace the person-to-person chain of the first callings and identify come and see as the Gospel's model of evangelization.
4. Participants hear the strongest case that Son of God in 1:49 is merely a royal title, and watch the chapter's frame answer it.
5. Participants discover Genesis 28 themselves and can explain what Jesus claims by placing himself in Jacob's dream.

Time Note (90 minutes)

Opening prayer and Win, 15 minutes. Build, 55 minutes. Send, Live It This Week, and closing prayer, 20 minutes. If running long, the pre-chosen cuts are, in order: the optional Genesis 17 and 32 lookups in Build question 6 (summarize the renames verbally instead), the Dig Deeper box on the week of days, and the second Win question. Do not cut the Genesis 28 live discovery; it is the session's summit. Do not cut Build question 3; the sealed mystery needs its moment of sharpening.

Part 2: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader prays aloud: Lord Jesus, your first words in this Gospel are a question: what do you seek? Tonight we let you ask it of us. Give us the honesty of Nathanael, the eagerness of Andrew, and the humility of John the Baptist, who wanted only to point at you. Speak, Lord, your servants are listening. Amen.

Win (open the conversation)

1. Have you ever had a nickname that stuck? Who gave it to you, and did it say something true about you?
2. Think of something you love that you only discovered because one specific person invited you. Who was it?

Transition: Tonight nearly everything happens by invitation. Watch how many people in this chapter meet Jesus because somebody they knew came and got them.

Build (inductive discovery)

Have someone read John 1:19-28 aloud. Then ask:

Question 1. The delegation from Jerusalem asks the Baptist three questions about his identity. List his three answers. What do you notice about the shape of his speech, and what is the only positive thing he is willing to say about himself?

ANSWER: share after the discussion

I am not the Christ. I am not. No. His answers shrink with each question, and every one is a denial. The only positive identity he claims is borrowed from Isaiah: I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. A voice exists only to carry a word; the Baptist has made himself pure testimony. Hold on to the shape of his speech, all those I am nots. This Gospel will eventually give us the counter-melody, and when the group hears it in later sessions, this moment will pay off. Do not explain further now.

Question 2 (live discovery). The Baptist quotes Isaiah. Turn to Isaiah 40:3 and read it slowly. In Isaiah, whose way is the voice told to prepare? Now say it out loud: if the Baptist is the voice, whose arrival is he announcing?

ANSWER: share after the discussion

The voice prepares the way of the LORD, and in Isaiah that means God Himself coming to His people. The Baptist has not simply announced a coming teacher or even a coming king. By choosing this verse he has said, as plainly as a first-century Jew could, that the one coming after him is the coming of God. The group met that claim in cosmic language last week, the Word was God. Here it is again in the mouth of a prophet standing in a river.

Question 3. Read 1:29-34. There it is, the sentence our whole study is named for: Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Do not answer it, just interrogate it. What is strange about this title? List everything odd you can find.

ANSWER: share after the discussion

Let the strangeness accumulate and resist every urge to resolve it. Odd things the group may surface: a grown man is being called a lamb; lambs are victims, not leaders; no lamb ever took away sin, and no single sacrifice ever addressed the whole world; the expected titles were Messiah, King, Son of David, and lamb was not on anyone's list. And John never explains it. The Baptist says it twice and offers no footnote. Confirm to the group that their guesses from last week stay sealed, tell them the Gospel will answer in its own time, and enjoy their frustration a little. The mystery is doing its work.

Question 4. Stay in 1:32-34. The Baptist says he watched the Spirit descend and remain on Jesus. Prophets and judges in the Old Testament had the Spirit come upon them for a task. Why might John underline that the Spirit remains?

ANSWER: share after the discussion

Again and again before, the Spirit came upon men for a mission and a moment, and passed on. On Jesus the Spirit rests permanently, which is exactly what Isaiah 11:2 foresaw of the shoot from Jesse: the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him. The permanence marks Jesus not as the latest in the prophetic line but as its destination, the Anointed One as such. And it makes him, as the Baptist adds, the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit: he does not merely carry the Spirit, he bestows him.

Question 5. Read 1:35-39. Two of the Baptist's own disciples peel off and follow Jesus. Jesus turns and speaks his first words in this entire Gospel. What are they? Why might John want a question, this question, to be the first thing out of Jesus' mouth?

ANSWER: share after the discussion

What do you seek? Not a doctrine, not a demand, a question, aimed at desire. Jesus begins with what the human heart is actually hunting for, because until a person knows what they seek, they cannot recognize it when it stands in front of them. Ask the group to sit with the question personally for ten silent seconds before anyone answers the next question. Note also the eyewitness fingerprint at the end of the passage: it was about the tenth hour. Somebody remembered the exact time of day his life changed.

Question 6. Read 1:40-42. Andrew's first act after finding the Messiah is to go find someone. Who, and what does Jesus do when the two meet? Elsewhere in Scripture, when God changes a man's name, what does it mean? If time allows, glance at Genesis 17:5 and 32:28.

ANSWER: share after the discussion

Andrew fetches his brother Simon, and Jesus, on first sight, renames him: you shall be called Cephas, Aramaic for rock. When God renames a man in Scripture it is never a nickname; it is a mission announced and an identity remade. Abram becomes Abraham because he will father nations; Jacob becomes Israel because he has striven with God. So what mission is loaded into rock? John does not say, not yet. The rename sits in the text like a promissory note, and this Gospel does not leave promissory notes unpaid. Tell the group to remember Cephas; the note comes due in our

final session.

Steelman: Son of God, Just a Royal Title?

BUILD THE STEELMAN FIRST: present this at full strength

Read 1:43-49 first (Philip and Nathanael, ending in Nathanael's confession: Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!). Then build the case honestly. Many careful readers, including many Protestant scholars and most skeptical ones, point out that in the Old Testament, Son of God is royal language, not a claim of divinity. In Psalm 2:7 God says of the Davidic king, you are my son, today I have begotten you. In 2 Samuel 7:14 God promises David regarding his heir, I will be his father, and he shall be my son. Nathanael himself pairs the two titles as parallels: Son of God, King of Israel. He is a startled Israelite hailing his Messiah, the argument runs, not confessing the second person of the Trinity. So, the conclusion presses, John 1 gives us high honors for Jesus but not deity. Give this its full weight; the Old Testament texts are real and Nathanael's parallelism is right there in the verse.

Question 7 (press from the text). Grant everything the steelman says about Nathanael's own understanding in that moment. Now ask: who wrote this chapter, and what did he wrap around it? Recall what verse 1 and verse 18 already told the reader. And notice how Jesus responds to Nathanael in 1:50-51: does he accept the compliment, or raise the stakes?

ANSWER: share after the discussion

The steelman is likely right about Nathanael's state of mind: he is hailing his King, and his theology has not caught up with his instincts. But John is not writing a transcript; he is writing an interpretation, and he has framed the entire chapter. Before Nathanael ever speaks, the reader has been told the Word was God (1:1) and that the only Son is in the bosom of the Father and has made God known (1:18). Every title in the chapter is meant to be read inside that frame. And Jesus himself refuses to let the royal title be the ceiling: you shall see greater things than these. He then answers a confession about the Son of God with a claim about the Son of Man on whom the angels of God ascend and descend. Nathanael reached for the highest category he had; Jesus replies, higher still. The Gospel will keep raising the stakes until Thomas runs out of categories entirely in 20:28. Characters in John routinely say more than they know; the evangelist counts on it.

Question 8 (live discovery). Read 1:50-51 again: heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. Jesus is quoting somebody's dream. Turn to Genesis 28:10-17 and read it. What did Jacob see, what was moving on it, and what did Jacob name the place when he woke up? Now put the two passages together: what is Jesus claiming to be?

ANSWER: share after the discussion

Jacob saw a ladder set up on earth with its top reaching heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. Waking, he cried: this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven, and he called the place Bethel, house of God. Jesus takes the ladder out of the dream and stands in its place: the angels ascend and descend on the Son of Man. He is claiming to be the ladder, the one point where heaven and earth actually meet, the true Bethel, the house of God

and gate of heaven in person. Now connect last week: the Word pitched his tent among us. Tent, house of God, gate of heaven, the thread is one thread. Wherever God and humanity meet, John keeps saying, that meeting place has a name and a face.

DIG DEEPER

A week of new creation. Scan the time markers: the next day (1:29), the next day (1:35), the next day (1:43), then on the third day (2:1). Many readers hear John counting out an opening week, a quiet answer to the seven days of Genesis 1 that the group discovered behind the Prologue. Where the first creation account crowned its days with man and woman, whom Genesis 2 sets in a garden, this week will end, next session, at a wedding. The evangelist rarely does anything by accident.

Synthesis question. Race through the whole chapter one last time and list out loud every title given to Jesus, by anyone. How many can the group find, and what does the sheer pile-up tell us about what John is doing in his opening chapter?

ANSWER: share after the discussion

The Word, God, the true light, the only Son, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit, the Son of God (twice, from the Baptist and Nathanael), Rabbi, the Messiah, the Christ, him of whom Moses and the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of Israel, the Son of Man. A dozen or more in fifty one verses. John has emptied Israel's entire treasury of hope onto the table in chapter one, and then spends twenty more chapters showing that every title is true, and that even all of them together are not enough. One title in the pile got no explanation at all tonight. Guesses stay sealed.

Send

1. Everyone in this chapter got fetched by somebody: Peter by Andrew, Nathanael by Philip. Who fetched you? And whose Andrew might you be right now?
2. Philip did not argue with Nathanael's skepticism; he just said come and see. What would come and see look like for a skeptical friend of yours, concretely, this month?

Live It This Week

- **Let him ask you.** Once this week, take ten minutes of real silence and let Jesus ask you his first question: what do you seek? Answer him honestly, even if the honest answer is confused.
- **Be an Andrew.** Andrew's evangelization method was one sentence and one introduction. Pick one person by name this week and make one small introduction: an invitation, a question, a mention of what you are finding here.
- **Listen for it at Mass.** This Sunday, just before Communion, the priest will lift the Host and say words you have now heard at their source: Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Do not solve it. Just notice that the Church has put the Baptist's unexplained cry at the summit of her worship, and hold your sealed guess a little tighter.

Closing Prayer

Leader prays aloud: Lord Jesus, Lamb of God, we do not yet understand your strangest title, but we behold you all the same. Thank you for the people who fetched us, the Andrews and Philips who said come and see. Make us voices like the Baptist, pointing away from ourselves. And this week, when you ask us what we seek, give us the courage to answer truly. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Scripture Memory Verse

MEMORIZE THIS WEEK: John 1:29

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (RSV2CE)

Part 3: Leader Reference Card

Every passage used or referenced in Session 2, in order of appearance. Flag these in your Bible before the session.

- **John 1:19-28** · opening reading, the delegation's three questions, the Baptist's denials, the voice
- **Isaiah 40:3** · live discovery, the voice prepares the way of the LORD
- **Malachi 4:5 and Deuteronomy 18:15-18** · leader background only, Elijah and the prophet like Moses
- **John 1:29-34** · Behold, the Lamb of God; the Spirit descends and remains
- **Isaiah 11:2** · leader reference, the Spirit shall rest upon him
- **John 1:35-39** · what do you seek, come and see, the tenth hour
- **John 20:15** · leader reference only, whom do you seek, the far bracket; do not read in session
- **John 1:40-42** · Andrew fetches Simon, you shall be called Cephas
- **Genesis 17:5 and 32:28** · optional quick lookups, Abram renamed, Jacob renamed
- **John 1:43-49** · Philip and Nathanael, can anything good come out of Nazareth, the confession
- **Psalms 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14** · steelman texts, Son of God as royal title; cite verbally or turn there if time allows
- **John 1:50-51** · greater things, angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man
- **Genesis 28:10-17** · live discovery, Jacob's ladder, Bethel, house of God, gate of heaven
- **CCC 438, 719-720, 858, 878** · Catechism connections