

You're Invited, Part 1: Come and See

Joel Thomas · John 1:1-9; John 1:29-42; John 1:43-51; John 15:1-17; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

AT A GLANCE

The movement Jesus began did not spread through argument or persuasion but through personal invitation rooted in personal experience. The lynchpin, then and now, is abiding — remaining so consistently connected to Jesus that the life visibly produced in us becomes what we actually bear witness to, making our invitations credible and our declarations consequential.

- Bearing witness is active, not passive — declaring what you believe and inviting others to come experience it themselves.
- Your job is not to explain Jesus but to help people experience him; experience always outpaces argument.
- Abiding in Jesus is the lynchpin: without it, declaring and inviting produce no lasting fruit.

“Your job isn't to explain something. It's to help them experience someone.”

EXPOSITION

Scripture engaged

[John 1:1-9](#) — Before the world began, the Word was there. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was there with God in the beginning. Everything was made through him, and nothing was made without him. In him there was life, and that life was a light for the people of the world. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not defeated it. There was a man named John, who was sent by God. He came to tell people about the light. Through him all people could hear about the light and believe. John was not the light. But he came to tell people about the light. The true light was coming into the world. This is the true light that gives light to all people. (ERV)

[John 1:29-42](#) — The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God. He takes away the sins of the world! This is the one I was talking about when I said, ‘There is a man coming after me who is greater than I am, because he was living even before I was born.’ I did not know who he was. But I came baptizing people with water so that Israel could know that he is the Messiah.” Then John said this for everyone to hear: “I also did not know who the Messiah was. But the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘You will see the Spirit come down and rest on a man. He is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ I have seen this happen. I saw the Spirit

come down from heaven like a dove and rest on this man. So this is what I tell people: ‘He is the Son of God.’” The next day John was there again and had two of his followers with him. He saw Jesus walking by and said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” The two followers heard him say this, so they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw the two men following him. He asked, “What do you want?” They said, “Rabbi, where are you staying?” (“Rabbi” means “Teacher.”) He answered, “Come with me and you will see.” So the two men went with him. They saw the place where he was staying, and they stayed there with him that day. It was about four o’clock. These men followed Jesus after they had heard about him from John. One of them was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. The first thing Andrew did was to go and find his brother Simon. Andrew said to him, “We have found the Messiah.” (“Messiah” means “Christ.”) Then Andrew brought Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon, the son of John. You will be called Cephas.” (“Cephas” means “Peter.”) (ERV)

John 1:43-51 — The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He met Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” Philip was from the town of Bethsaida, the same as Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the man that Moses wrote about in the law. The prophets wrote about him too. He is Jesus, the son of Joseph. He is from Nazareth.” But Nathanael said to Philip, “Nazareth! Can anything good come from Nazareth?” Philip answered, “Come and see.” Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said, “This man coming is a true Israelite, one you can trust.” Nathanael asked, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered, “I saw you when you were under the fig tree, before Philip told you about me.” Then Nathanael said, “Teacher, you are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel.” Jesus said to him, “Do you believe this just because I said I saw you under the fig tree? You will see much greater things than that!” Then he said, “Believe me when I say that you will all see heaven open. You will see ‘angels of God going up and coming down’ on the Son of Man.” (ERV)

John 15:1-17 — Jesus said, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that does not produce fruit. He also trims every branch that produces fruit to prepare it to produce even more. You have already been prepared to produce more fruit by the teaching I have given you. Stay joined to me and I will stay joined to you. No branch can produce fruit alone. It must stay connected to the vine. It is the same with you. You cannot produce fruit alone. You must stay joined to me. I am the vine, and you are the branches. If you stay joined to me, and I to you, you will produce plenty of fruit. But separated from me you won’t be able to do anything. If you don’t stay joined to me, you will be like a branch that has been thrown out and has dried up. All the dead branches like that are gathered up, thrown into the fire and burned. Stay joined together with me, and follow my teachings. If you do this, you can ask for anything you want, and it will be given to you. Show that you are my followers by producing much fruit. This will bring honor to my Father. I have loved you as the Father has loved me. Now continue in my love. I have obeyed my Father’s commands, and he continues to love me. In the same way, if you obey my commands, I will continue to love you. I have told you these things so that you can have the true happiness that I have. I want you to be completely happy. This is what I command you: Love each other as I have loved you. The greatest love people can show is to die for their friends. You are my friends if you do what I tell you to do. I no longer call you servants, because servants don’t know what their master is doing. But now I call you friends, because I have told you everything that my

Father told me. You did not choose me. I chose you. And I gave you this work: to go and produce fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you anything you ask for in my name. This is my command: Love each other.” (ERV)

[1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#) — Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous, it does not brag, and it is not proud. Love is not rude, it is not selfish, and it cannot be made angry easily. Love does not remember wrongs done against it. Love is never happy when others do wrong, but it is always happy with the truth. Love never gives up on people. It never stops trusting, never loses hope, and never quits. (ERV)

The argument

Bearing Witness Is an Active, Not Passive, Calling — The distinction between being a witness and bearing witness is where mission begins

Joel Thomas opens by pressing on a distinction John the apostle draws in introducing John the Baptist: being a witness is passive — something happens and you see it — but bearing witness is active, a chosen declaration of what you have seen. John the Baptist did both: he was present for Jesus's arrival and he boldly named him publicly. Joel notes that this public naming — 'Look, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' — was genuinely provocative, because if true it rendered forty generations of sacrificial practice obsolete overnight. The declaration divided people. But that is what bearing witness costs. The movement began not with a curriculum or a program but with someone willing to say out loud, in public, what he believed about Jesus.

Insight — Witnessing becomes bearing witness only when you choose to declare, at some social cost, what you have personally seen and experienced.

The Invitation Precedes the Argument — and Always Has — Come and see is the original evangelistic method

When two of John's disciples follow Jesus, he does not open with a theological challenge or a demand for repentance. He asks, 'What are you looking for?' — a question Joel Thomas reads as curiosity, not condemnation. Jesus knows they are searching; he does not tell them what is wrong with them. When they answer with an awkward non-answer ('Where are you staying?'), Jesus simply says, 'Come and see.' Joel traces this same three-beat pattern — declare, invite, follow — through Andrew finding Peter, Philip finding Nathanael, and Nathanael's skepticism met not with argument but with Philip's 'Come and see.' None of them tried to convince or convict. The goal was never to explain something but to help someone experience someone. Joel is direct: 'That's not your job. It's simply to invite people to come and see.'

Insight — When the best things are beyond explanation, the most faithful thing you can do is create the conditions for someone else to encounter them firsthand.

Abiding Is the Lynchpin — Without It the Wheels Come Off — John 15 names what holds the whole movement together

Joel Thomas moves to John 15 and identifies the Greek word *menō* — translated variously as 'remain,' 'abide,' or 'dwell' — as the structural thread connecting chapter one's 'they spent the day with him' to Jesus's vine-and-branches teaching. Joel is careful about what abiding is not: it is not attending services weekly, giving occasionally, or serving periodically. Those things may be part of it, but the lynchpin is staying connected to Jesus himself. 'Apart from me you can do nothing' — no fruit, no impact, no effective witness — regardless of how much declaring and inviting you do. Using Seth Godin's image of the lynchpin on a carriage wheel, Joel frames abiding as the smallest, simplest behavior with the largest consequence: if it goes missing, everything else falls apart.

Insight — Outward mission without inward abiding is activity without roots — it looks like movement but produces nothing that lasts.

Remaining in Love Is the Shape Abiding Takes — The commands of Jesus are not conditions of love but the path through which love is experienced

Joel Thomas handles John 15's 'if you keep my commands you will remain in my love' with pastoral care, explicitly guarding against a works-oriented reading: 'This is not you continue to be loved as you keep the commands. That's not what he's saying.' His reading is that the commands describe the path along which the Father's love is experienced — every instruction Jesus gives is motivated by love and oriented toward what is best for us. To follow his way is to stay inside the flow of that love. The Father's love sent the Son; the Son's love teaches us the way; remaining in that way is how we keep receiving what was freely given. Abiding, then, is less a discipline than a posture of trust: 'This isn't about earning. It's about resting in the love of the father.'

Insight — Obedience to Jesus's commands is not the price of love but the road on which love continues to be received.

You Bear Witness to What You Have Actually Experienced — Telling without showing has never moved the movement forward

Joel Thomas closes the argument with a challenge directed inward before it is directed outward. The Spirit's role, he notes, is to bear witness to Jesus from within us, and then 'you will also bear witness' — the sequence matters. First you experience Jesus's love, grace, mercy, and correction; then you have something real to show. He frames the homework accordingly: personalize 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 by inserting your own name — 'Joel is patient, Joel is kind' — and use the gap between the description and your actual life not as a condemnation but as a prayer: 'God, transform me by the power of your love.' When that transformation is visibly underway, an invitation to 'come and see' is backed by evidence. 'Telling without showing

hasn't done our world any good.'

Insight — The credibility of your invitation is proportional to the visible transformation your abiding has produced.

Cross-references

- [John 1:1-4](#) — Joel used this prologue to establish who Jesus is before narrating the movement's beginning — the Word who was with God, was God, and whose life was the light of all mankind.
- [John 15:5](#) — The vine-and-branches verse Joel identified as naming the lynchpin: apart from Jesus you can do nothing, no matter how much outward activity you produce.
- [1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#) — Assigned as the homework benchmark — Joel had listeners personalize the love description by inserting their own name to surface where transformation is still needed.

DEVOTIONAL

There is a question Jesus asked that still floats in the air for anyone willing to hear it: What are you looking for? He did not ask it to shame the two who were trailing him at a cautious distance. He asked it because he already knew they were searching — and because he had no interest in condemning what they had not yet found. That is the quality of attention he brings. Not forensic. Not impatient. Curious, in the way only someone who loves you can be curious about what keeps you up at night. They did not have a clean answer. Most of us don't. 'Where are you staying?' is not the reply of someone who has their spiritual house in order. It is the reply of someone caught off guard by grace — someone who set out to observe and found themselves suddenly invited. Come and see. Not come and believe the right things first. Not come once you've resolved your questions. Come. See. Then tell me what you think. What followed was a day — one day — of remaining. Menō. Abiding. And it was enough to change everything for Andrew, who went straight to find his brother. He didn't have a doctrine to argue. He had an experience to share: we found him. Come. The movement that has reached every corner of the earth began with that smallness — two men, a question, an afternoon, a word to a brother. And the thread connecting that first afternoon to everything since is still the same word: remain. Stay connected. Let the love of the Father, demonstrated in the sacrifice of the Son, be the daily air you breathe. When it is, you will not have to manufacture something to say. You will simply have someone to introduce.

Reflection

- When did you last experience Jesus in a way that left you with something you genuinely wanted to share — and what was it about that experience that moved you?

- Where in your life right now is 'telling without showing' the more honest description of how you represent your faith — and what would it look like for your daily abiding to close that gap?
- Who in your life is at the 'where are you staying?' stage — curious but not yet asking the right questions — and what would a low-pressure, genuine invitation from you look like for them this week?

Closing prayer

God, let what we walk away with today not be a list of things to do or a measure to live up to. Let it simply be this: we need to be with you. We need daily, regular reminders of your love for us — the love that sent your Son, that forgave and forgives, that lifts us when we fall and bends toward us when we are broken. Where we fall short, we are not asking you to lower the standard. We are asking you to do in us what we cannot do for ourselves. Empower us by the power of your Spirit. Teach us and guide us in the way we need to go. Make us people who resemble you more — so that when we go to bear witness, there is something real for people to witness. We pray it in your name. Amen.

FORMATION

One thing to remember

The movement spreads through people who have experienced Jesus, not just people who know things about him.

This week

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 slowly, substituting your own name for the word 'love.' Wherever the description and your actual life diverge, stop and pray specifically: ask God to let his love transform that particular place in you — not as a task to complete, but as an honest conversation with the one whose love has already reached you.

Return to [1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#)