



COME

AND

SEE

BIBLE RESOURCES

**DIOCESE
OF EXETER**



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
IN DEVON

Five sessions for personal reflection or small group study. Providing space to consider the Biblical invitation to 'Come and See'.

INTRODUCTION

An invitation is a powerful thing. It can be the start of a transformative journey, the beginning of a long lasting friendship, or maybe the opening of a door that leads to new adventures. The phrase 'Come and See' can be seen repeatedly in scripture, especially in the Gospels. Each occasion can remind us that the fullness of life, and our own salvation, start with an invitation to follow Jesus.

You are invited to consider five passages of scripture from the Gospels of John and Matthew. Through these Bible passages you can explore what it means to be invited into a deeper relationship with Jesus, by thinking about when and where we meet with God, and when to share our faith. The course prompts us to consider questions like 'When is the right time to tell people about Jesus?' and 'What would happen if a whole community invited Jesus?' We hope that this will stir in you the idea of sharing your faith with someone who doesn't yet know Jesus, and together help build a culture of invitation in your church.



The resources for 'Come and See' have been written by Revd Jeremy Putnam. Jeremy is the Mission Enabler for the Diocese of Exeter, and is also a parish priest in East Devon. Before moving to Devon he served as a parish priest in Truro.

'Find more Come and See resources at: <https://exeter.anglican.org/christian-faith/comeandsee/>





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COURSE FORMAT

This course is designed to be adaptable, so you can use the material in the way that best suits you. Maybe you are setting aside some time each week to think about your faith more deeply. Or, maybe you are a leader in the Church who is thinking about how to best develop the ministry of invitation. The course can be used for personal reflection or with a small group. You can also customise the reflections for church services and other settings. Feel free to make use of the resources in the way that best supports you!






FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

-  **Take time to pray.**
-  **Read a passage of scripture.** What catches your attention?
-  **Listen, watch or read the reflection.**
-  **Consider the questions.**

*Come and see
what God has
done, his awesome
deeds for all!*

Psalm 66:5

FOR A SMALL GROUP

-  **Take time to pray.**
-  **What's the big question?**
-  **Read the Bible passage together.** Read it through with the question in mind.
What can we learn from this passage?
-  **Listen, watch or read the reflection.**
-  **Consider the questions as a group.**

John 4:29

She said to the people, 'Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?' They left the city and were on their way to him.

SESSION ONE



WHEN DID YOU LAST FEEL CLOSE TO GOD?

This big question gets us thinking about when and how God meets us in our lives today. When and where do we experience His presence? Is it in the extraordinary or in the everyday? In the bible passage from John 4, what was the Samaritan Woman doing when she met Jesus?



READ JOHN 4:1-42



SHORT REFLECTION

Have you ever felt really close to God? Maybe it was at a particular time in your life, or when visiting a particular place? People sometimes describe feeling close to God when walking outdoors, on the beach, or on the moors. Some describe a sense of God's presence at times of great joy or sadness. Others describe the feeling of God's presence in the ordinary moments of life too.

According to religious and societal expectations of the day, the Samaritan woman had no good reason to be at Jacob's Well at that time of day, nor did she have any good reason to speak to Jesus whilst she was on her own. And yet something compelled her to be there, at the very same time Jesus was passing through. For the Samaritan woman, this chance encounter with Jesus was a turning point in her life. The very ordinary and yet essential task of collecting water was the setting for God's intervention and the start of her own discipleship journey.

Despite the difference of opinion between Jews and Samaritans at the time, Jesus' words powerfully resonated with her situation. This led her to share all that she had heard with her own community, inviting others to 'Come and See' a man who told her everything she had done.

GOING DEEPER

John, the Gospel writer, intentionally draws from similar ancient Hebrew encounters such as Rebekah and Abraham's servant (Genesis 24:15-49), Jacob and Rachel at the well in Haran (Genesis 29), and Moses and Zipporah at the well in Midian (Exodus 2:14-25). He is clearly aware of the historical echoes resonating in the Samaritan woman's well-side encounter with Jesus.

John also makes an interesting contrast with Nicodemus' encounter with Jesus (John 3). The Samaritan woman arrives in the heat and light of the day, in stark contrast with Nicodemus who comes under the cover of darkness. Both question Jesus intently, but while Nicodemus leaves confused, the woman is compelled to tell others about Jesus. She becomes a messenger of Good News.

You may feel there is a temptation to speculate about the woman's past and why she might be visiting the well during the day, but the gospel writer seems to give more attention to her keen interest and curiosity in Jesus, than he does her past. Despite the perceived cultural and religious divisions, the woman not only accepts Jesus for who he says He is, but also acts upon the revelation by returning to her city to tell others.

The story here is not so much the woman's past, but her future. The Samaritan woman is an example to us of someone who believed in who Jesus said He was, and then told people about Him. As Jesus reveals His true nature (John 4:26), the woman's true identity as a missional co-worker is also revealed (John 4:29-30).



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

When did you last feel close to God?

What stood out for you in the Bible passage?

What might have stopped the woman talking with Jesus?

What might have stopped the woman from telling others about Jesus?

Where are the examples of invitation in this Bible passage?

The woman at the well was called to be a disciple and evangelist. What might God be saying to you about your own calling?



PRAYER

Lord of all,

Show us how you are at work in the ordinary as well as the extraordinary moments of our lives. Reveal to us your true nature, and help us see-through those things that separate us and divide us. Teach us how to walk with people different from ourselves—that we might say to them "come and see".

Amen.

John 1:46

"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip.

SESSION TWO



WHEN IS THE RIGHT TIME TO SHARE YOUR FAITH?

This big question gets us thinking about when we tend to share our faith and with whom. Do we need years of theological education, or a season of volunteering for our church to start sharing the gospel? Philip invited Nathanael seemingly with little to no experience of mission at all! In the Bible passage from John 1, what was the motivation behind Philip's invitation to Nathanael?



READ JOHN 1:43-51



SHORT REFLECTION

'God doesn't call the equipped, He equips the called', an often quoted saying. It was certainly true for the disciples who learnt about Jesus and His mission while they journeyed with him. We can so easily think that we need to be better prepared, better skilled, more knowledgeable, and even better Christians before we set out on the task of sharing our faith and inviting other people to learn about Jesus. But take a look at Philip...

Philip's encounter with Jesus beautifully highlights the energy that pours from new faith. Philip had barely been following Jesus for 5 mins before he was encouraging others to do the same. It is as though the Holy Spirit flowed from his heart and out into the world.

This story reminds us that it doesn't matter whether a person is baptised, confirmed or ordained, or whether they are a regular churchgoer or a first-timer, an invitation to step into a fresh commitment of faith can bring about a season of fruitfulness and purpose that will change lives for Jesus.

GOING DEEPER

When Jesus spoke to Nathanael he made a point of saying how he knew him before he was called. Jesus said, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." Take a look at Isaiah 49:1 "Before I was born the Lord called me" or Ephesians 2:10; Psalm 139 and Jeremiah 1:5, they remind us that God has intended for us a particular calling for our lives, long before we know it for ourselves.

It may also be no coincidence that Nathanael was under a fig tree before Philip called him to follow Jesus. The fig tree was a well-known symbol of Israel at the time. Nathanael's acceptance to go with Philip and follow Jesus could well represent a step of faith, from the shelter of a world he knew and onto a new journey of discipleship with Jesus. Philip's invitation to 'come and see' can inspire Christians today to think beyond our preferred social groups, or our immediate communities and networks, and think about the gift that Christ can be to all. Don't be surprised when you see friends or even strangers respond positively to a simple invitation like 'come and see'. Inviting someone to experience the Good News can become a powerful transforming event in that person's life.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Have you ever received an invitation to follow Jesus?

Where are the examples of invitation in this Bible passage?

In what ways does Nathanael or Philip's experience resonate with yours?

What would have happened if Philip had said no to Jesus' invitation to 'follow me'?

Who would you invite, and how would you go about inviting them to know more about Jesus? You can apply the same question from the perspective of your church too.



PRAAYER

Lord of all,
inspire us by your Spirit to be all you require us to be,
to put aside any inhibitions
that prevent us from saying to others, 'come and see.'
Show us your way, O Lord, and teach us your paths
Amen.

John 11:34

They said to him, 'Lord, **come and see.**' Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!'

SESSION THREE



WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF A WHOLE COMMUNITY INVITED JESUS?

This big question gets us thinking about the kindness and power of a whole community of faith, directing their thoughts toward what Jesus might do if they invited him in.



READ JOHN 11:1-44



SHORT REFLECTION

Loss is universal, and we are all affected by the impact of death. For some, 'loss' can be far more painful and far more invasive than for others. Archbishop Justin Welby has spoken of what it is like to live with loss. He said, "We never get over it, which is an atrocious expression, but we begin to rebuild."

In the passage from John 11, the invitation to 'come and see' is an expression of a community grieving. It begins with the community gathering around Mary and Martha, acknowledging their profound loss, sharing in their pain, honouring the damage that death has caused to this family, and to their own community.

Christians believe that the hope we find in Jesus heals and strengthens us and draws us forward. It helps us live in hopeful anticipation of what Christ has fulfilled on the cross and in the empty tomb.

GOING DEEPER

We might consider that the meaning of this whole narrative for John is that Jesus has the authority over death and the power to give life. In fact the centre point of the whole passage is arguably verse 25, when Jesus says to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life".

Christ was the walking embodiment of hope, he literally exuded life in everything he did and said, and yet when faced with the death of his friend, He wept. There is a deep mystery here that takes us right to the heart of who Jesus is. Fully human, whilst being fully God.

In the passage, the collective imagination of a whole community compelled them to invite Jesus, to 'come and see' the tomb of their dead friend. All in the hope that he might do something extraordinary. And of course, He did!

The words, 'Come and see' could be an invitation for others to step into a safe place, a loving community that, through care and relationship, helps bear the weight of loss.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

What does this passage teach us about Jesus?

Where are the examples of invitation in this Bible passage?

What different communities do you belong to, and how do they relate to your faith?

In what ways does your church or community invite Jesus to reveal his power?

What would an invitation look like if it were from the whole church?



PRAAYER

Lord of all,

Thank you for the faithfulness of Mary and Martha, and for the community around them who showed their compassion and shared grief in the face of death. Help us act like this community that was faithful enough to invite you in, despite feeling loss, bewilderment and even anger. May their belief in what you can do bring comfort to our own hearts.

Amen

Matthew 28:6-7

*He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. **Come and see** the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: "He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him." Now I have told you.'*

SESSION FOUR



WHO WOULD YOU TELL FIRST?

This big question gets us thinking about what it might have been like to be at the entrance of the empty tomb, and to experience the invitation of the angel to 'Come and See'. How would you react, and who would you tell first?



READ MATTHEW 28:1-10



SHORT REFLECTION

Do not be afraid... Come and see. For Christians, Jesus' resurrection is the assurance of our own resurrection. In other words, Jesus' victory over death is proof that the life of every person matters and counts. Telling people that they matter is one of the best things about being a Christian, especially in a world that is so often telling us in subtle and sometimes more explicit ways that some people matter more than others.

Mary Magdalene and Mary showed devotion and dedication toward Jesus by visiting his tomb. Paying their respects, but also showing their strong faith that they would dare look for Jesus (Matthew 28:5). They must have believed, when others didn't, that something extraordinary was about to happen. The angel of the Lord invited them to 'come and see' where they laid him, in what was now an empty tomb.

Can you imagine what they must have felt? The Bible account says they were 'afraid with hearts filled with joy,' as they ran to tell the other disciples.

GOING DEEPER

The phrase "as he said" (Matthew 28:6) is crucial. The fact that Jesus knew He would be resurrected and told His followers ahead of time is confirmation that He was truly the Son of God. It was more evidence that He fully participated in the events that led to this moment.

Have you considered how God might use his messengers (**angelos** is the Greek word for messenger) today? The invitation to 'Come and See' the work of God could be a simple card through the door, an invitation to attend an event or a shared social media post. It might be a word of support in difficult times, or a whisper of encouragement for someone thinking about making a step of faith. The invitation to 'come and see' the empty tomb can come from different people, for different times, and for different situations.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

What stood out for you in the Bible passage?

Why did Mary and Mary react in the way they did?

Is there an invitation for you?

The invitation to 'Come and see' led on to 'Go and tell'. How are these two phrases linked in the life of your church?

In what ways could you or your church be intentionally 'missional', or in what practical ways can you share the Good News?



PRAAYER

Lord of all,
we pray that the good news of your resurrection would spread to all the peoples of our world. Use us as your holy messengers to share this good news like the angel did, and like the women who ran with joy in their hearts. Help us to be open to your prompting.
In your name we pray. Amen.

John 1:38-39

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?' He said to them, 'Come and see.'

SESSION FIVE



WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

This big question gets us thinking about what we are looking for deep down. Andrew and Simon Peter were searching. They were on a quest for the Messiah, but what they came to realise was that Jesus was actually looking for them.

Why not take a few minutes at the start of this session to think about how you would answer this question. You might also answer it from the perspective of your church community too.



READ JOHN 1:29-42



SHORT REFLECTION

John the Baptist had a particular role to play in the great story of salvation. His ministry was a sort of sign post, in which his words and actions would direct people toward the true 'Lamb of God', the Messiah. But Jesus is also looking for followers, so not only does John's witness lead the disciples to Jesus but it also leads Jesus to his disciples.

As a result, Andrew and another disciple leave John and follow Jesus. Interestingly, they don't leave boats and nets, instead, the decision to follow Jesus symbolises their move from an old 'way' to a new 'way'. From asking 'what am I looking for?' to 'where shall we go, Lord?'

The first thing that Andrew does is to find his brother Simon and brings him to Jesus. Andrew's declaration that Jesus is the Messiah marks the beginning of a journey of discovery as they learn their purpose in Christ. What would they learn while on the way? What would characterise their discipleship? What would be the shape of their vocation? What will Jesus ask of them? Andrew and Simon are on a new quest to learn from the 'Rabbi'.

On this journey, each step reveals something new. For example, Simon is given a new name 'Cephas', which is Aramaic for 'Rock' or 'Stone'. It seems that Simon's purpose was already taking shape. What have you discovered about your calling as you've walked with Jesus?

GOING DEEPER

C.K Barrett in his commentary on John's Gospel writes, *'Nothing is more important than to know where Jesus abides and may be found'*.

When Jesus asked the disciples, 'What are you looking for?' the disciples responded by asking where he was staying. 'Come and see.' Jesus said.

For Andrew and the other disciple, there was nothing more important than to know where Jesus was staying. In this moment we not only discover that Jesus is looking for us, but that his invitation to 'Come and see' shows he wants to spend time with us too.

As we read on in John's gospel (chapter 15) we read how Jesus describes himself as the Vine, his Father as the Gardener, and that we are the branches. We are invited again to dwell with him, to remain in him, to abide in him.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

What does this passage teach us about Jesus?

What have you discovered about your calling as you've walked with Jesus?

Where do you go, or what do you do in order to spend time with Jesus?

In what ways do you 'see' your life and the world differently now that you follow Jesus?

In practical ways how can we help people consider what they are looking for?



PRAAYER

Lord, You continuously invite us to come to You, to be with You and to sit with You in Your divine presence. Please help us to hear this gentle invitation of Your love. As we do, please open our eyes to see You, know You and love You more fully. And as we see You, give us grace and strength to follow You wherever You lead. Jesus, we trust in You.

Amen.



WHAT NEXT?

ORGANISE A 'COME AND SEE' EVENT

We hope that each session will help you and your church consider ways to invite non-Christians to learn more about Jesus. 'Come and see' is a great way to start a conversation with your wider community, friends and family members too. Through these 5 Biblical reflections we hope you find the encouragement to think about times when you have been invited to learn more about Jesus, as well consider how you and your church might extend that same invitation to others.

After following the course you may like to host a 'come and see' event in your church. These events could involve all sorts of different things, like a cream tea Remembrance event (Come and Remember), a fun quiz night (Come and Quiz), a community welly walk (Come and Walk), a breadmaking workshop (Come and Cook), curry evening (Come and Eat), a church open day (Come and Explore), a silent disco (Come and Dance), a churchyard treasure trail (Come and Seek) or whatever you would like to do!

Events like these could be aimed at people who do not normally come to church, to give them an opportunity to 'come and see' something of the hope we have in Jesus. Follow-up will need to be a key part of the planning – for example, the event could include an invitation to a course exploring faith or a special service or weekly/monthly church group. Find out more here: <https://exeter.anglican.org/christian-faith/comeandsee/>

GROW COURSES



**Equipping God's
people to serve
with joy.**

If you would like to delve further into studying the Bible or find out our free Grow training courses (which cover subjects like children and youth, digital ministry, leading and preaching and more). Please go to: Find out more at : <https://exeter.anglican.org/ministry/lay-ministry/lay-learning/>

Answering the call to 'Come and See' is the start of a lifelong journey of discovery!

PRAYERS



PRAYERS TO BEGIN EACH SESSION

Opening Sentence

Come and see what God has done:
he is awesome in his deeds among mortals.

Gathering Words

The Lord be with you
and also with you.

Come and see what God has done.
God is awesome in His deeds.

He turned the sea into dry land.
God's people passed through the river on foot.

Make a joyful noise to God all the earth.
Sing the glory of God's name.

Psalm 66:5

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

Lord God, you call us by name, and invite us into the presence of holiness as your people. We answer this call by your grace, and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Grant that we may hear you and respond to you today.
Amen.

You may like to read the passage of scripture for this week. After the reading the following may be said:

This is the Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God.

PRAYERS TO END EACH SESSION

You may like to share a time of open prayer, or make use of this simple litany.

Lord, help us hear your Word for us today. Open our hearts and fill us with your Spirit we pray.

O Lord come
and let us hear what is good.

Lord, as we learn together, help us be mindful of the needs of your world.

O Lord come
and let us seek what is good.

Lord, as we pray together, reveal to us your will for our lives.

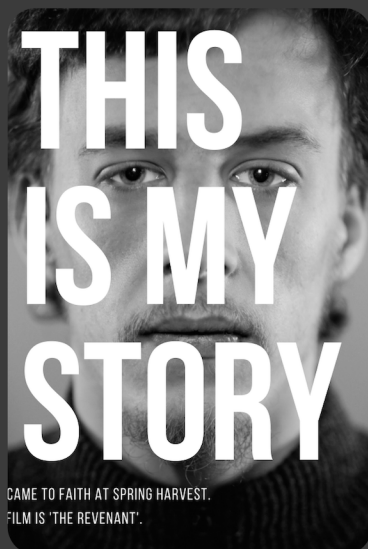
O Lord come
and let us see what is good.

You may like to include the Lord's Prayer before a final blessing.

May God keep watch over us; may Christ restore us, body and soul; and may the Holy Spirit help us to remain faithful, giving thanks to God our whole life long. Amen.

PRAY SERVE GROW

PARTS 2 AND 3 WILL BE AVAILABLE SOON



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