

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

NAMES

EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

Introducing the Gospel

Renaming Simon (John 1: 29-42)

In John's Gospel, Jesus' ministry begins when John the Baptist witnesses the Holy Spirit anointing Jesus, descending on him like a dove. As in Mark's Gospel, Jesus' first action is to gather around him a body of disciples, but John's account of how this happened is very different. John's account shows how the disciples of the Baptist recognised in Jesus God's Messiah and followed him. In appointing Simon as his own disciple, Jesus changes his name and accordingly changes his character. Simon is now called Peter and Peter means the Rock.

The image to stimulate reflection on John's account of the beginning of Jesus' ministry is *names*.

Core extract from the Gospel (John 1: 40-42; for reflection throughout the week)

One of the two men who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

He first found his brother Simon and said to him,
'We have found the Messiah'
(which is translated Anointed).

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).

Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)

Lord Jesus Christ,
you called your disciples by name
and changed their lives.
Help us respond to your call,
so our lives can be dedicated
to your service;
for your service is our freedom.
Amen.

READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL

John 1: 29-42

The Lamb of God

The next day John saw Jesus coming towards him and declared, ‘Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, “After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.” I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.’ And John testified, ‘I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, “He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.”’ And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.’

The First Disciples of Jesus

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, ‘Look, here is the Lamb of God!’ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. 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.’ They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which is translated Anointed). 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).

ENGAGING WITH THE THEME

Dwelling with the text (John 1: 29-42)

Begin to explore John's account of the beginning of Jesus' ministry by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

Thinking and talking

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- What do you understand by John referring to Jesus as the Lamb of God?
- What do you understand by John testifying that Jesus is the Son of God?
- Why did they call Jesus Rabbi?
- Why does Jesus rename Simon as Cephas?
- What does this narrative say for us today?

Using your Bible

Explore the accounts of Jesus' anointing with the Holy Spirit in the Synoptic Gospels.

- Mark 1: 10-11
- Matthew 3: 16-17
- Luke 3: 21-22

Explore the importance of naming in Genesis.

- Genesis 16: 11
- Genesis 17: 15, 19
- Genesis 25: 25-26
- Genesis 32: 27-28
- Genesis 35: 18

Explore the importance of naming in the Gospels.

- Luke 1: 13
- Matthew 1: 21

Exploring online

Widen your exploration of John's account of the beginning of Jesus' ministry by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

- Jesus as Lamb of God
- Peter the Rock
- Naming in the Bible

Drawing on experience

The image to stimulate reflection on John's account of the beginning of Jesus' ministry is *names*. Draw on your experience of names. For example:

- How do you feel about your name?
- Do you associate specific characteristics with different names?
- Can nicknames be helpful or harmful?

What have you learned about names?

Creating and making

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by John's account of the beginning of Jesus' ministry or by the image of names.

- Make a collage of images of Peter the Rock.
- Make a poster illustrating the meaning of various Christian names.
- Make a collage of pictures illustrating various family names (e.g. Baker, Butcher, Scrivener).
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of the beginning of Jesus' ministry or on the image of names.



EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales.



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