

12 Disciples Series: #5: Andrew: The Inviting Disciple  
Matthew 28:19-20 (and John 1:35-42a read during sermon)  
By John Gill

Here at The Open Door, we are engaged in an exciting adventure – no less than the rebooting of our congregation, seeking to recapture this congregation’s passion and refocusing our mission. It is breathtaking what we, following the guidance of the Holy Spirit have already accomplished:

We have developed and adopted a new Mission to guide all we do here – “Leading people to Jesus through Christ-like love and service.” We have set as our Vision, “Growing a Christ-like community.” This is now the litmus test by which we measure everything we attempt here in Cocoa.

Our congregation has officially adopted four initiatives we believe are essential for making our Mission and Vision a reality, and we are going full-speed ahead to fulfill those initiatives. They are:

1. Contemporary Worship
2. Evangelism and Community Engagement
3. Children and Youth Ministries
4. Discipleship

In all these areas, we are making great strides.

A major driving motivation in all of these Initiatives is reaching the unchurched in our community, introducing them to Jesus, and bringing them into our church family. And you are key to making that happen!

We can develop the best worship service options and provide the finest programming for people of all ages – but none of those efforts will succeed unless every one of us takes it upon ourselves to do all we can to help. This involves having a positive attitude and enthusiasm for what we are trying to accomplish here. This means volunteering and being encouraging in various ways. This also involves being generous in giving to support the cost of these efforts. And I want to thank you for the many ways you are supporting our Mission and Vision.

Of course, the most important way you can help is claiming the Mission: “Leading people to Jesus,” as your own mission. This is the only reason we exist as a church, and it is what all our Initiative are designed to accomplish. I’m speaking of Evangelism, of course.

Evangelism is a word we often shy away from, when it should be the cornerstone of our church’s life.

You know, the word “Evangelism” has become unpopular among many people these days – it has something of a bad reputation. What do you think of when you hear the word “evangelism?” Chances are your mind flashes back over the past few decades to those “TV

evangelists” who got themselves into trouble – men so drunk with power and fame that greed and lust compromised their ministries.

Or perhaps the word “evangelism” conjures up bad memories of pushy door-to-door “evangelists” who try to peddle their neatly packaged brand of the Gospel, “selling” Christ in the same way people used to sell vacuum cleaners, brushes, and magazine subscriptions.

Or maybe the “evangelist” that comes to mind is a Bible-thumping preacher standing under a circus tent, preaching the “Good News” of hell, fire, and damnation.

Or in this political season, you may think of the way the news media tries to lump all “evangelical Christians” together as a special interest caucus of one political party, as if that is what being an “evangelist” is all about.;

It’s true that the words “evangelist” and “evangelical” have gotten a bad reputation, and if you base it only on these examples, that reputation is well-deserved. It’s no wonder people are turned off by the word. Many United Methodists have become so negative about “evangelism” that we tend to ignore it, or at the most, we leave it to the preachers to carry out.

But that’s tragic! It’s tragic because, in reality, “evangelism” is the life-blood of the Christian Church. Evangelism is vitally important! The last message Christ spoke to us before he ascended to heaven was a command. He said, “Go ye into all the world... and make disciples!”

You see, evangelism is NOT an option. It’s an obligation. It’s the central task of the church and it’s the main reason for its existence. It’s far too important to be left to the preachers alone... it’s the responsibility – and privilege – of every disciple of Christ (lay and clergy alike).

“OK,” you might say, “so evangelism is important. But, what are we supposed to do – become like those others you just mentioned who have given ‘evangelism’ a bad name?”

No. There is a much better way – it’s found in the Gospel of John (1:35-42), and we see it modeled by the Disciple of Jesus we are focusing on this morning, as we continue our series of sermons on the 12 Disciples. Today we look at Andrew. In this passage, we can find a model for evangelism – a model that is both biblical and effective. Listen carefully to this reading from the Gospel: The account of the calling of the first Disciple of Jesus, according to John’s Gospel:

Read John 1:35-42a NRSV

The next day John [the Baptist] 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...

Here we see evangelism at its very best – the kind of evangelism that anyone can do – the kind of evangelism that changes lives. The story is about our disciple for this morning, Andrew. In him we can see, what I want to call “the Cycle of Faith,” – the way we gain our faith, grow our faith, and then share our faith. So now, let’s take a closer look at this disciple, Andrew and this “Cycle of Faith.”

First, we are led to Christ by another person.

This was Andrew’s experience. Andrew had been a disciple of John the Baptist until John pointed him to Christ and proclaimed, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” and Andrew followed. Andrew was led to Christ by John.

Who was it that led you to Christ? Who was your John the Baptist? Your parents? A Sunday school teacher? A friend? Your spouse? Someone, somewhere back in your past pointed you to Christ and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” and you followed.

For me, there wasn’t just one person – actually there were many who pointed me in the right direction. I suppose I’d have to say that my parents played the biggest part in my journey to Christ. They’re in heaven now, but for leading me to Jesus, I will always be indebted to them.

It was John the Baptist who led Andrew to Jesus. Who was responsible for pointing your way to Christ? Whoever it was, you owe them a debt of gratitude, for they played a key role in your salvation.

So, the first stage in the Cycle of Faith is that someone pointed you to Christ.

The second stage is the growth stage when we claim Christ as our own. Our text says that, after Andrew came to Christ, he followed him and dwelled with him. “What do you seek?” Jesus asked Andrew. It was a good question. “Andrew, are you here because John told you to believe? Are you here merely out of curiosity, or are you searching for more? Andrew, what do you seek?”

Andrew was seeking after the Messiah – and he found him.

You see, once we have been pointed in the right direction by someone else, the rest is up to us. “What do you seek?” Jesus asks each one of us. Are you seeking after the Messiah? If so, you have found him!

During this second stage in our Cycle of Faith, we develop our personal relationship with Christ, our level of commitment grows and deepens, and our faith matures. As our text describes it,

Andrew “found where Jesus was staying,” and he “spent time with him.” He established a personal relationship with Christ.

Many people stop at stage two in the Cycle of Faith. They get stuck there. Maybe some of us here this morning are stuck there.

But there’s one more stage we must reach if our faith is to be fully realized: We must share our faith with others.

Andrew couldn’t keep it to himself: he felt driven to rush out and bring someone else the Christ. And, who did Andrew evangelize? Some stranger on the street? No. Andrew went to find his brother, Simon Peter.

You know, most the studies of Evangelism show us that this is the key to all growing and vital churches today – their members witnessing to and inviting to church – their family, friends, co-workers, classmates, and neighbors – the people in their unique sphere of influence.

In a poll of the “unchurched” in America, 9 out of 10 said they would attend a worship service if someone invited them. People were also asked, “Would you join a church?” More than 50% said they would! Then, when asked why they had not joined a church, many of them said, “No one has asked me.”

Andrew didn’t hesitate to invite Peter to Jesus.

You know, Andrew wasn’t very prominent in the New Testament. He was easily overshadowed by other, more dynamic disciples – especially by his brother, Peter. But, in reality, Andrew was very dynamic in his quiet sort of way. HE wasn’t the Rock on which Christ would build his church – but he brought the Rock to Jesus. He may not have fed the 5000, but as you will recall, it was Andrew who brought the little boy with the loaves and fishes to Jesus.

Andrew was always bringing others the Christ. In the words of the Mission Statement of the United Methodist Church, he was “Making disciple of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” Or in the words of our Mission Statement at The Open Door, his passion was “Leading people to Jesus through Christ-like love and service.” Andrew could be the patron saint of The Open Door!

Imagine what would happen if we unleashed a hundred “Andrews” on Cocoa and Rockledge! And that means YOU. I’m asking every one of us to become an Andrew, to invite and bring people to our church, to the Drive In service, the Traditional service, and especially to our new Modern worship service we will be launching in a few months! We want you to become an Andrew-style evangelist for Christ.

But what does that mean? What are the hallmarks of “Andrew-style evangelism?” What am I challenging you to do?

This is what I'd like for us to focus on in closing, this morning. I'd like to give you a crash course in "Andrew-style evangelism," modeled after this passage this morning:

As I see it, there are three guidelines we should follow as we undertake Andrew style evangelism:

Frist is witnessing to our faith.

We see that Andrew was not hesitant to witness to his faith. "We have found the Messiah," Andrew told his brother. Notice that he was resolute about his new faith. He didn't say, "We think we may have found the Messiah." Nor, "We have found one who claims to be the Messiah." No. He said, "We have found the Messiah" – a very personal statement of faith. Andrew was not afraid to tell others of his faith, and what Christ meant to him.

You know, evangelism involves both words and deeds. Sometimes we hear people say, "Actions speak louder than word," or "I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day." And that may be true. But we must also be willing to share our faith with others - to tell them our story of what Christ has done for us.

In Peters first letter, chapter 3, verse fifteen, Peter writes, "Always by prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."

To be an Andrew, we must have a story to tell – and we must be willing to tell it.

You may not think so, but your personal story is very powerful. It can inspire and challenge another person to accept Christ for the first time. So never underestimate the power of personal witness in evangelism. It can change lives.

What is your faith story? Could you tell it to another person? Andrew shared his story, and it changed Peter's life forever. I hope you have a story to tell, and will share it with others.

The second guideline for Andrew-style evangelism is the issuing of an invitation. Andrew didn't stop with his witness. He invited his brother to respond.

You know, we've been guilty in our churches, and even here at The Open Door, of not giving people an invitation to respond. Sometimes we stop short of inviting those around us to come to church and meet Christ. Even though we have experienced the joy and peace of knowing Jesus and following him as his disciples, we have neglected to offer that same joy and peace to others.

Our lives have been changed by the saving grace of God – yet, for some reason, we have been keeping that grace a secret from our friends. That needs to change. This week, look for a way

to share the Gospel with someone by your witness, but don't forget to invite them to respond – by offering them Christ – and inviting them to join you for worship.

So, to be an Andrew evangelist, we must: first, witness to our faith, and second, invite a response. Last but not least, we must take action!

Andrew was not just a man of words, he was a man of action. He actually brought Peter to Jesus. He felt so strongly about Christ that he took it upon himself to make sure that his brother would have the chance to know Christ: “We have found the Messiah... And he brought him to Jesus.”

Who is here in worship this morning because YOU brought them to church at some time? Or maybe I should turn that around: Who COULD be sitting in that empty seat, if only you had brought them?

Sometimes witnessing to our faith and inviting a response isn't enough. Oftentimes, the unchurched need to know that someone cares enough for them to physically bring them into the presence of Christ. Andrew took action. Do you care enough to take action? Wouldn't you like to know that you were responsible for bringing someone else to Christ?

And Andrew never stopped bringing people to Jesus. According to church tradition, after ministering in Jerusalem in the years immediately following the resurrection, Andrew went to Ephesus, and then to southern Russia. In fact, his ministry was so successful in Russia that St. Andrew is the patron-saint of the Russian people. It is believed that, after leaving Russia, he went to Greece, where he was martyred for his faith – crucified on a cross formed in the shape of an “X” – which has become the symbol of this Apostle.

Through the witness of his life and his death, Andrew continues to lead people to Jesus!

Yes, Andrew's style of evangelism works: It's the kind of evangelism that each of us can do. It's the kind of evangelism that each of us must do if we are truly to call ourselves a “disciple of Christ.”

Prayer:

Lord, show us who it is in our lives that we can bring to you. Then, give us the courage to share our faith story with them, to invite them to know you, and to bring them with us to church. May we know the joy of being the “Andrew” in someone else's life. Amen.