

INTRODUCTION

We're back in the Gospel According to John, and in this message we're going to consider the topic "Jesus: A Man's Man." There's been an ongoing debate about the qualities of a real man. In 1982 there was a best-selling book entitled *Real Men Don't Eat Quiche*. Most of us didn't even know what quiche was at the time. I've had some, and it's not too bad—as long as it has meat in it.

In the United States we have Real Men and then we have a higher level—a kind of man I call a Real Texas Man, because everything is bigger and better in Texas. So I made up a list of Ten Ways to Know if you're a Real Texas Man. Back me up if you agree with these.

You know you're a Real Texas Man if you:

1. Still say, "Yes ma'am and no ma'am" to the ladies.
2. Think tea without ice is a foreign conspiracy.
3. Ever bought a decorated mum for your date that reaches to the floor.
4. Eat puh-con pie not pee-can pie.
5. The only part of the Bill of Rights you can quote is the Second Amendment.
6. Know there ain't no cactus or cowboys in the Piney Woods.
7. Snicker when people in other states complain about the humidity.
8. You have at least one pair of cowboy boots in your closet.
9. Know someone who has a belt buckle bigger than your fist.
10. Refer to any soft drink as a coke—and NEVER call it pop.
11. Know how to pronounce Bexar County, Burnet, Mexia, and Boerne.

I've studied the life of Jesus for more than fifty years, and I'm convinced that Jesus was a man's man. He wasn't some kind of thin wisp of a wimp. He was a hunk. I say that because I've also been a student of biblical art. And there were many artists who portrayed Jesus as a thin, emaciated man with pale skin and light colored hair.

For an example, you can compare two paintings. One is a depiction of the baptism of Christ by Fra Angelico (fig. 1). In that picture Jesus appears to be thin and weak. Compare that to the painting by Caravaggio of Christ at the Column (fig. 2). Jesus is seen as a strong man who is able to endure the punishment of the Roman soldiers.

So which is more realistic? I prefer Caravaggio's depiction. I think Jesus was a man's man. He worked all of His earthly life as a carpenter. He handled rough wood. I think Jesus had dirt under his fingernails and hair on His chest. He had the strength to tear through the temple merchants without anyone stopping Him.

Jesus was a man's man, and he surrounded himself with a group of men to be a part of his team. Nobody knows what the disciples looked like, but for our purposes we'll use the images that Leonardo da Vinci painted for his famous Last Supper (fig. 3). Actually this is a copy

painted by one of Da Vinci's disciples, Giampietrino (Giovanni Pietro Rizzoli) and it hangs in the Royal Academy of Arts in London. It is so vivid that it was actually used for the restoration process of the da Vinci's original on the wall of a church in Milan.

We know the identity of all twelve disciples because of Da Vinci's notes. They are grouped in four groups of three. So starting left to right we have Nathanael, James the Lesser, and Andrew. Next huddled together is the dark face of Judas Iscariot who's holding on to the moneybag, and knocking over the saltshaker, which we all know is a bad omen. Simon Peter is leaning behind him to speak to John, the youngest disciple. Of course, Jesus is in the middle. The Bible says He was extremely troubled that night. I wonder if He was thinking, "Father, do you know what you're doing? Handing over the future of spreading your Word to this bunch?"

Then to the right of Jesus we have Thomas with his finger raised as if he's asking a question. Then there's James the Greater, the older brother of John. He's leaning back as if he's thinking, "Whoa. What's happening here?" Then there's Philip as if he's asking, "Is it I?" The last three are Matthew, Judas Thaddeus, and Simon the Zealot.



*Fig. 1 The Baptism of Christ
Fra Angelico, Fresco, 1450*



*Fig. 2 Christ at the Column
Caravaggio, Oil on Canvas, 1607*



*Fig. 3 The Last Supper
Giampietrino, Oil on Canvas, c. 1520*

In this passage we're going to meet four of these men. It's going to be quick, so it will be a bit like speed dating. Since it's a lengthy passage of scripture, I'll break it down into the sections that deal with each of the four men Jesus called.

John 1:35-41. "The next day, John was standing with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, 'Look, the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard him say this and followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and noticed them following him, he asked them, 'What are you looking for?' They said to him, 'Rabbi' (which means "Teacher"), 'where are you staying?' 'Come and you'll see,' he replied. So they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed him. He first found his own brother Simon and told him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated "the Christ")."

1. ANDREW: The enthusiastic witness.

The setting of this scripture is the Judean wilderness where John the Baptist was preaching and baptizing. Andrew and another disciple were already disciples of John the Baptist. John pointed to Jesus and said, "There's the Lamb of God." So they followed Jesus.

We don't know where they went, we just know that these two followed Jesus and spent the rest of the day with Him. I would have loved to have been a fly on the wall and heard what Jesus said to them, but it's not recorded. All we know is that after Andrew had listened to Jesus he ran to tell His brother, Simon, about Jesus.

Andrew's Confession: "We have found the Messiah!"

Every Jew in Israel was looking for the Messiah at that time, and something Jesus said convinced Andrew that He was the One. The reason I call Andrew the enthusiastic witness is because he was enthusiastically seeking the truth. His name means "manly." I picture him as being outgoing and energetic. Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland. One of the most beautiful spots on earth is St. Andrews, Scotland. And there is a fault line running next to California named the San Andreas Fault—named after Andrew. So I guess when the next big one hits it will be Andrew's fault!

Andrew was also an enthusiastic witness because whenever we encounter him in the four gospel accounts, he is usually bringing someone to Jesus. He was so excited when he found the Messiah that he ran and told his brother Simon and brought Him to Jesus.

Andrew was the one who brought the little boy with five loaves and two fishes to Jesus. We never read that Andrew ever preached a sermon. He just brought people to Jesus. What a model for us. We should all be involved in Operation Andrew and bring as many people as we can to meet Jesus.

Personal Application: Jesus is the end of your search for meaning.

Jesus asked Andrew, "What are you looking for?" Andrew didn't answer Him, but after spending a few hours with Jesus, Andrew went running to Jesus and said, "I've found Him! I've found the Messiah." He found what he was looking for.

Have you? Jesus is asking you the same thing He asked Andrew. "What are you looking for?" I think it's interesting that the very first statement recorded out of the mouth of Jesus in John is a searching question: "What are you looking for?"

It's as if everyone has a hole in his or her soul. They keep trying to stuff things in that hole to satisfy their ultimate craving. They try to stuff money, possession, fame, and pleasure in that hole. But nothing fits. It's like putting a square peg in a round hole. There is only one person who can satisfy your soul, and His name is Jesus.

The French theologian, Blaise Pascal, was the first to write about this emptiness in everyone's soul. He said it is a God-shaped hole, and only God can fill it.

It reminds me of a story I heard of a cellist who was sitting there playing one long note over and over again. An observer stopped and asked, "What don't you move your fingers and play other notes?" The cellist looked up and smiled. He said, "All the others are search for the right note. I've found it!"

And like Andrew, I can say with certainty that I have found the only thing that will satisfy my soul—a personal relationship with Jesus Christ!

John 1:42. "And he brought Simon to Jesus. When Jesus saw him, he said, 'You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas.' (which is translated "Peter")."

2. Simon Peter: The listener who became a leader.

His real name was Simon son of John. He would have been called Simon Johnson. But when Jesus met him, He gave him a nickname: Rocky. Cephas is the Aramaic word for rock, and *petrá* is the Greek word for rock.

The name Simon means "listener." It was Simon's nature to listen to what everyone else was telling him. When you compare all the statements Peter makes in the four gospel accounts, he appears to be impetuous and wishy-washy. He was always saying the wrong thing. I've often said the only time Peter opened his mouth was to change feet. He made boasts he couldn't keep because he listened to others too much.

Fast-forward three years from when Jesus met Peter and it's the night before the crucifixion. Jesus announced that He would be betrayed and that all the disciples would desert him. Peter stood up and boasted, "Lord, these others may leave you, but I won't! I'll die for you!" Jesus said, "Peter before the rooster crows you will deny me three times."

We all know what happened that night. Simon listened to the accusations of the servants in the courtyard of the High Priest. "You were with him." Simon said, "No I wasn't." A second servant said, "Yes, I can tell by the way you talk, you're a country boy from Galilee." Again, Simon lied, "No, I tell you I don't know the man." Then a teenage servant girl said, "I'm certain! You are one of his disciples." And Peter cursed like the sailor he was and said, "May I be blankety blankety cursed if that's true! I don't know him."

Then, wait for it...Cock a doodle dooo! And Peter was cock a doodle done. He was a listener instead of a leader. In this first encounter, Peter wasn't sure who Jesus was. He wasn't convinced like Andrew that he was the Messiah.

Peter's Confession: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16)

So what convinced Peter? When you continue reading the Gospel accounts, you learn that it took several months of miracles and messages for Peter to become convinced. He was different from Andrew who believed after a short time. And there are people like Peter today. You have heard the message, but you aren't yet ready to confess that Jesus is the Son of God. Just keep watching and listening to what Jesus is doing and I believe you'll come to the same point of belief.

Personal Application: Jesus sees your amazing potential.

When Jesus first met Simon He saw that he could become a rock. It took a long time for the listener to become a leader, but it eventually happened. The cowardly fisherman who denied Jesus three times became the courageous preacher on the day of Pentecost who stood up and boldly proclaimed the Good News. He was the rock who stood up to the same Sanhedrin that condemned Jesus and said, "You killed the Son of God." After they beat him, they commanded him not to speak about Jesus anymore. But the Rock said, "We are going to obey God rather than man."

Like a rock, he preached the gospel to tens of thousands until tradition says he was arrested in Rome. Eusebius wrote that they were going to crucify him, but he didn't feel worthy to die in the same way his Lord had died, so he requested to be crucified upside down.

Jesus saw a listener (Simon) who would become a leader (Rocky). And Jesus looks at you today and sees your true spiritual potential. He sees men, women, boys and girls who can become champions for Christ. You may think you don't have many abilities or skills to serve God, but He will shape you and mold you to do whatever He calls you to do.

John 1:43-46. "The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. He found Philip and told him, 'Follow me.' Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and told him, 'We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law (and so did the prophets): Jesus the son of Joseph, from Nazareth.' 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Nathanael asked him. 'Come and see,' Philip answered."

3. PHILIP: The thinker Jesus sought.

We immediately learn something about Philip from his name. It's a Greek name that literally means "lover of horses." Philip II was the father of Alexander the Great. Philip might have been from Greece or Macedonia.

Then we learn a second interesting thing about Philip. Andrew sought out Jesus, and brought his brother Simon to Jesus. But Jesus traveled all the way from Judea back to Galilee to search for a particular man, whose name was Philip. He lived in the same town as Peter and Andrew.

Besides this passage there's another occasion where we learn something about Philip. In John 6, a huge crowd has gathered and they are hungry. Jesus asked Philip, "Where could we buy food to feed all these people?" Without missing a beat, Philip gives the answer, "It would take over two hundred denarii to feed this crowd."

That shows me that Philip was a thinker. He could look at a hungry crowd and calculate the cost of feeding them. But it took the thinker a long time to really figure out who Jesus was.

Philip's Confession: "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law (and so did the prophets): Jesus the son of Joseph, from Nazareth."

From what Philip told Nathanael, we learn that his faith is incomplete. He doesn't yet fully understand who Jesus really is. He sees Jesus as the fulfillment of Moses's prediction that a great prophet would come. But Philip calls Jesus the son of Joseph, and we know He was the Son of God.

Because Philip was a thinker, it took him a long time to come to the full understanding of the identity of Jesus as God. In John 14, Jesus was talking about His Father. Philip says, "Lord, just SHOW us the Father and that will be enough!" Jesus said, "Philip, I've been with you all this time, and you haven't figured it out in your brilliant mind? When you see me, you see the Father." It took Philip a while, but he finally got it.

Personal Application: Jesus is looking for all kinds of people to follow Him.

Philip was that introspective kind of thinker who is often overlooked. We might call him a Geek today. But Jesus went searching for him. The recruiting theme for the U.S. Marine Corps is "We're looking for a few good men." Jesus is looking for anyone who is willing to admit that they are a sinner in need of a Savior. You don't have to be good to come to Him. Like the song says, "Just as I am I come."

Jesus told us that God is like a shepherd who had one hundred sheep and one lamb that wandered off into the wilderness. Jesus said the Shepherd left the ninety-nine in the sheepfold and went searching for the one lost lamb. When he found him, he carried him safely in his arms back to flock. And Jesus said that is what God is like.

There could be four thousand people here today who already know the Lord, but if you don't yet know the Lord, He is searching just for you. I pray that you will feel the arms of the Holy Spirit embracing you, bringing you home to your Father.

John 1:47-51. "Then Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said about him, 'Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.' 'How do you know me?' Nathanael asked. 'Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you,' Jesus answered. 'Rabbi,' Nathanael replied, 'You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel!' Jesus responded to him, 'Do you believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this.' Then he said, 'Truly I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.'"

4. NATHANAEL: The honest seeker open to being amazed.

His name means "Gift of God." The first question Nathanael asked when he heard about Jesus of Nazareth was, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Nathanael was from Cana where Jesus will turn the water into wine in the next chapter. Today Nazareth is a huge city and Cana is a tiny village. But two thousand years ago, it was just the opposite. Cana was a major city and Nazareth was a sleepy little village. So Nathanael was astonished the Messiah could possibly come from Nazareth.

So Nathanael was honest. He was a straight shooter. And when Jesus met him, He made an amazing observation. He said, "Here is an Israelite in whom is no guile or deceit." That was a play on words. Jacob was a grabber, a deceiver whose name was changed to Israel. Jesus saw such honesty in Nathanael that He said, "Wow! An Israelite with no Jacob in him!"

Nathanael was astonished that this stranger would know so much about Him. He asked, "How do you know me?" Jesus said, "I saw you sitting under a fig tree." Now whether that was a vision or Jesus actually saw Him, there was a miracle at work. Jesus didn't just see Nathanael, He REALLY saw him. He saw into his character. He knew his heart just as Jesus knows our hearts.

Nathanael's Confession: "You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel!"

This is the most powerful confession yet. He's just not the Messiah, or the prophet, or the son of Joseph. Nathanael declares that Jesus is the Son of God and the King of Israel. He was amazed that Jesus knew him so well.

Personal Application: Jesus knows you and He still loves you.

Jesus saw Nathanael and knew his name and his heart. But notice what Jesus said to Nathanael. "Nathan, you haven't seen anything yet. Just wait. Truly I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." Look at that phrase "Truly I tell you." If you cut your teeth on the King James Version, you are familiar with the phrase, "verily verily I say unto you." It's actually the words "amen, amen, I say to

you." When Jesus is about to make a profound statement, He prefaces it with "Amen, Amen." It means, "Pay extra close attention, I'm about to say something that is supernaturally true." There are twenty-five "Amen Amen" statements in John this is the first one.

CONCLUSION

So, what did Jesus mean when He told Nathanael he would see heaven opened and angels ascending and descending on Him? Jesus was referring to Genesis 28 when Jacob had a dream of a stairway reaching to heaven. And there were angels going up and down the stairs from heaven to earth. So, in case you didn't know it Led Zeppelin didn't make up that idea for their 1977 rock legend. It comes from the Bible.

Jesus made an amazing claim. He told Nathanael that unlike Jacob's dream, those angels wouldn't be traversing a stairway to heaven, they would be ascending and descending on Him. Jesus opens heaven and He IS the stairway to heaven. He is the only access to heaven. He said, "No one comes to the Father except by me." Some people are trying to take the express elevator of religion or glide up the escalator of good works, but there is only one way to heaven, and that is by heaven's staircase, Jesus.

Jesus was a man's man. He called real men and women to follow Him and serve Him. He is still seeking out people to call them. When I was seventeen, I was a lifeguard at a summer camp with bleached blonde hair. I was a backslidden Christian much more interested in girls than God and more interested in football than faith. I was more into popularity than prayer. But on June 24, 1970 Jesus found me and said, "I've been looking for you. I want you to follow me and preach the Word." That's what I've been doing for the past forty eight years.

Sometimes we say something like, "I found the Lord. But the truth is that He found me." Jesus is calling you to follow Him today. What will you do?

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



*David O. Dykes, Pastor
Green Acres Baptist Church
Tyler, Texas*
