

Title: WIDENING THE CIRCLE OF FAITH, JOHN 1:29-42  
(Chatham, NJ; 01/19/14, AM) [Pc – Topical]

Theme: The church grows most effectively when we model Andrew's recruitment of Peter and Philip's recruitment of Bartholomew: one on one, person to person.

Purpose: To remind us how the faith spreads, and to encourage us to pray for friends, neighbors, and opportunities to share the Gospel that we haven't even had yet.

Introduction:

1. Sociologist Rodney Stark suggests that "social movements grow much faster when they grow through existing social networks," and conversion to a new religious group occurs when "people have or develop stronger attachments to members of the group than they have to nonmembers." (Stark, *Rise*).
2. In evangelistic terms, conversion happens one-on-one and person to person.
3. How else could the early church have grown without the use of mass media?
4. Efforts to spread the Gospel any other way can result in greater awareness of the message, but those things do not produce conversions.
5. Implication: every Christian must seek to fulfill his role as a "Light of the world."
6. Isaiah 49:6 attached that role to the nation of Israel, and Paul uses the same passage to justify evangelizing the Gentiles, Acts 13:47.

I. The Action Sequence of Witnessing, Psalm 40 demonstrates what helps drive evangelizing

- A. An honest, humble heart, 8 & 17
  1. Allusion to Christ, Heb. 10:5-7
  2. Representative of what we should be – receptive, obedient
  3. Humble commitment to God's ways
- B. Psalmist feels the weight of sin, 12
  1. A burden upon his heart
  2. Recognize the truth that "all have sinned"
- C. Leads to a song of deliverance, 9-10
  1. The psalmist does not withhold his exuberance and witness
  2. Though he still needs God's help (13), he is confident (17)

II. Andrew Widens the Circle of Faith, John 1:29-42

- A. God has prepared Andrew as a member of the nation of Israel
  1. He was looking for the Messiah
  2. He displays an searching heart
  3. He believed the prophecies and he believed John
  4. He follows Jesus because of John's witness
- B. One day convinced him
  1. He spent the rest of the day talking with Jesus, 39
  2. After his own conversion, he goes and tells someone else, his brother
  3. Isn't this the exuberance of witness and faith?
- C. Andrew thus widens the circle of faith
  1. His witness to Peter models the conversational nature of evangelism
  2. People talk about their beliefs to those close to them
  3. Jesus engages in conversation with Nicodemus and the woman at the well
  4. Such dialogues bring about faith
  5. Philip (John 1:43-51) does the same for Bartholomew

6. We think he is the other half of the two who spent the day with Jesus
7. Both Philip and Andrew are paired again in John 12:20-26 where they seek to introduce some Greeks to Jesus (already the person to person approach is bearing fruit among the Gentiles)
8. Look through Acts and consider that although Paul did his original preaching in the synagogues, during the week others often spread the word and brought more people to hear

### III. The Message Is Christ: "We have found the Messiah"

- We have demonstrated in the last week just how important this is
- We used to be able to assume people understood this, now I don't think we can
- His nature and his atoning work are foreign to people but still needed for the Gospel
- Discussions of such things are surely evangelistic

#### Conclusions:

1. Develop a love and thanksgiving for your salvation; this led to the Psalmist's exuberance.
2. Remember the role of the Holy Spirit, and pray.
3. Pray for your friends and neighbors.
4. Pray for opportunities and open doors for discussion.
5. Pray for society.
6. Witness even in the face of opposition: never surrender (1 Peter 3:15).
7. You are the light of the world; let it shine.