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Come back with me, if you can, and imagine nothing. In the beginning, nothing existed. No earth, no sky, no air, no sun. Nothing. Nothing to see, hear, or touch. Nothing at all. Then God spoke. God spoke into that nothing, and an entire universe suddenly existed! God spoke, and it was! When God Speaks, Things Happen!

This is how John the apostle starts his gospel. He begins by telling us about this Word of God which gets things done! God's Word is powerful and John wants us to hear that throughout his Gospel. John has a huge emphasis on the words of Jesus. John records way more of what Jesus said than Matthew, Mark, and Luke do.

John begins this theme in the first chapter of his Gospel. He's already connected Jesus with that all-powerful Word that spoke the universe into existence. Then he tells us that this same Word became flesh, became human. Jesus is that all-powerful Word.

With that thought in our heads, look at Jesus' call of Philip and Nathanael again and pay close attention to what happens when Jesus speaks.

(v43) The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."

Jesus finds Philip and simply tells him to follow. John isn't trying to record an exhaustive history here. We don't know if or how many times previous to this occasion that Philip had seen Jesus. But again, notice the power of Jesus' words. He goes to Philip, says, "Follow me," and that Word creates in Philip the desire and ability to follow Jesus all over Israel for his 3 year ministry. Then after Jesus' ascension, Philip traveled to distant countries telling people about Jesus until, church tradition tells us, he was put to death for confessing Jesus, possibly by crucifixion. But it all started with two Words from Jesus. It all grew from his constant exposure to those powerful Words as he traveled with Jesus and heard him again and again.

Back to our lesson, (v45) Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote — Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

Again, the "Law and the Prophets," is a common way that the New Testament refers to the Old Testament books.

Anyway, Philip says, "We found him! We found the Messiah; the One God's Word promised would come to us! It's Jesus of Nazareth!"

Nathanael's response? (v46) "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nazareth was apparently kind of a backward place. A lot of people had a pretty poor opinion of it. Like today, for example, most people don't expect great things to come

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out of, say, Detroit. Suffice it to say, Nathanael isn't impressed with this Jesus guy. This is supposed to be the Messiah? And he comes from Nazareth? Yeah, right, Philip. You've lost it.

But notice what Philip says. And this is great evangelism advice for us today. He doesn't defend Nazareth. He doesn't launch into a lecture on Old Testament prophecies and how Jesus has fulfilled them. He doesn't answer any of Nathanael's questions or objections. He simply says, "Come and see."

That's the same for us today. We don't need to have all the answers in order to tell people about Jesus, because the power isn't in us. The power is in God's Word. Our job is simply to point Jesus out to people; to simply invite them to come and see. It was God's Word that made us believers, not the clever answers of a friend. It's God's Word that will make more people believers too!

Next our lesson gives a really interesting conversation between Jesus and Nathanael. John doesn't tell us everything that's going on here but let's take a look.

(v47) When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."

Interesting phrase from Jesus, here. What was Nathanael's background? Did he really pride himself on honestly and worked to make sure that he never lied and was in no way a hypocrite? Or, very possibly, was Jesus being a little bit sarcastic here? When Nathanael heard those words, did he feel a pang of guilt because he knew just how deceitful his life really was?

(v48) Nathanael's question: "How do you know me?" may have been more of a, "Yeah, true Israelite, uh... have we met before?" Then Jesus' Words hit Nathanael hard. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."

Again, John doesn't tell us what all is going on here. Was Nathanael under that fig tree thinking some deep thoughts about God? Or, possibly, was Nathanael doing something under that fig tree that he didn't want anyone else to know about? Whatever it was, God's power went to work in Nathanael's heart. (v49) Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel."

Again, see John's point here. Nathanael wasn't all that interested in Jesus right up until Jesus spoke. There's that powerful Word of God again. It is God's Word that turned this skeptic into one of Jesus' 12 disciples! It is God's Word that turns sinners into his people; that turns unbelievers into believers! That is the power of God's Word!

This kind of thing still happens too! Consider the lives of people like Frank Morison, a lawyer who believed Jesus' resurrection to be nothing more than a fairy

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tale, or people like Gilbert West and Lord Lyttleton, both Oxford scholars. All three of these people set out to definitively disprove Christianity. Their research led them to read God's Word, the Bible, and all three of these men ended up becoming Christians after their research! When God Speaks, Things Happen!

Back in our lesson, Jesus says it right out to Nathanael, "You believe because I *told* you I saw you under the fig tree." Eh? Then Jesus continues, "You will see greater things than that... Very truly I tell you, you will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on' the Son of Man."

Notice again, the belief doesn't come from seeing, faith comes from hearing Jesus talk. But faith does see things that unbelief cannot. Jesus gives Nathanael a reference to Jacob's ladder, where Jacob from the book of Genesis, saw a stairway going from heaven to earth and the angels, or in the original Hebrew, the *messengers* of God going up and down on it.

Notice the focal point of this ladder in Jesus' words here: the Son of Man. That's Jesus' favorite way to refer to himself. Heaven has been opened and the messengers of God are going up and down on Jesus. Jesus is the link between heaven and earth.

Jesus is the focal point of the God's messengers. They tell us what Jesus accomplished on that cross when he hung between earth and heaven. When Jesus was on the cross paying for the sins of the world so that we might be saved, at that moment Jesus spoke and said, "It is finished." Sin has been paid for! Salvation has been won for the entire world! Right then, heaven was opened for all believers in Christ. When God Speaks, Things Happen!

That's what we're doing here, isn't it? That's why most WELS churches use the liturgy so often because it focuses us on what? On God's Word. That all-powerful Word of God which spoke the world into existence, which spoke our faith into existence, which even now continues to strengthen and sustain our faith in God as we hear him speak through his Words in the Bible! It is God's Word that creates in us the desire and the strength to live godly lives. We keep God's Word the focal point of our Worship because when God Speaks, Things Happen!

You can see what it is so important to be in the Word regularly; to have God's Word as a regular part of your mental diet; to have God's Word constantly on your mind. This is why many of us did so much memorizing of God's Word in Sunday School and Catechism. Because through faith, we can see the power of God's Word and we want that Word in our lives as much as possible, whenever possible!

There's an old movie called "My Big Fat Greek Wedding." And there's a character in the story who is convinced that Windex is a cure-all. Whatever the physical ailment, he says again and again in the movie, "Put some Windex on it."

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As Christians, we have the cure-all for every problem of sin, the cure-all for every spiritual and eternal need, and even the promise of God to provide for all our physical needs. That cure-all is God's Word.

Whatever your struggles, put some Word on it! God doesn't promise that all of our problems will go away if we just read our Bibles more. In fact, he promises us more problems in this life when we follow him. But in God's Word we find forgiveness of our sins, we find strength for our faith and lives, we find God's promise of heaven. In God's Word, we receive God's power to create in us the desire and ability to do what he calls us to do. What better place to go every day than to God, who spoke and the world came to be, who spoke and blind men could see, who spoke and we are saved eternally? When God Speaks, Things Happen. Amen!