

## **A Trustworthy and Reliable Witness**

John 1:35-42

Pastor Youwan Kang

November 4, 2018

Today we live in a post-truth era, where the majority of people question the validity of traditional media outlets. In this environment, there is an increasing number of religious “nones” who don’t identify with any organized religion. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity for us to witness. In this culture of fake news, people need an authentic, trustworthy, and reliable witness to bring people to the truth.

Today’s passage describes the calling of the first disciples. Although Peter, James, and John are the most prominent disciples who receive the most screen time in the gospels, Andrew was the first called. He was initially a follower of John the Baptist, who pointed him to Jesus, whom Andrew immediately started following. He was star struck by Jesus, and when Jesus asked him what he wanted, he awkwardly responded by asking where Jesus was staying. In his humanity, he is just like us. Andrew also was the brother of Peter, and the first thing he did was to tell Peter that he found the Messiah. And through this invitation Peter’s destiny was changed forever.

Andrew’s connections and relationships allowed him to meet Jesus, and to lead others to Him. We are just like Andrew in that we all have connections and relationships. We may be connected to people who are interested in a higher power but do not know where to look. We can be faithful, trustworthy, and reliable witnesses. Apple bought Texture, a digital magazine subscription application, in order to bring a source of trustworthy news to revamp their own news application. They knew how much people needed reliable sources of news, and how they needed established publications that people trusted. Trust is likewise a priceless commodity for us when we witness to friends. The most effective witnesses are not professional evangelizers or pastors, but rather those who have relationships with those being witnessed to. Your relationships make you trustworthy. In the past we relied on group structures such as family, clubs, churches, cities, states, and countries for information and identity. In the digital age we are connected to the world through a vast network, of which we are the central node. We no longer ask our neighbors who is the best plumber; instead we can get reviews from all sorts of people online. We have this web of relationships that we can use to witness.

The application for us is to leverage the trust that is built in each of these relationships to bring people into the kingdom of God, just as Andrew did. The first practical way we can do this is to build bridges instead of trying to score victories. Apologetics is not a means for us to defeat nonbelievers and prove we are right, rather it should be a tool to provide clarification about misconceptions, and remove barriers that are preventing them from being open about considering our faith. We should be building trust and having civil dialogue with others, not trying to win against them, which would only drive them away. For example, one of my relatives was really into the movement to Make America Great Again, and my other relatives would just ignore him. But I made the effort to discuss all these issues with him, and although I wasn't able to convince him, we built enough trust that he would ask me what I thought on certain issues. Don't strive to win immediately, but rather first deepen the relationship and build trust.

Second, we should spend time and energy to actively engage in ministry. God gave you relationships, and we must take the opportunity to invite people in. When I was going through a hard time in high school and disavowed Korean churches, my good friend kept inviting me to go to his Chinese church. Eventually I went, and it changed my life. Your invitations may not be accepted right away, but you never know when God will move someone's heart to take your invitation, and the impact that will have. We can even invite them to church to connect with others at church with whom they might share common interest, just to expose them to the church environment. Thus we can build a second connection between the unbeliever and the church.

Finally, we need to assume a positive posture. We are placed in relationships for a purpose. Let us take up the call and be bold and trustworthy witnesses. Ask God for opportunities to reach others for Him. Andrew is like Hideki Okajima, the Red Sox pitcher whose successful career was overshadowed by that of Daisuke Matsuzaka. He was a hero in the dark, unrecognized but not without impact. Andrew's impact was how he used his relationship with Peter to invite him to follow Jesus. Don't underestimate the impact you can have through your relationships, and the power of invitation. Hopefully this is something we can all engage in to witness to those around us.