

## *Eyewitness News — Sharing the Faith • John 1:41-42a*

Have you ever looked up your own number in the telephone book? Do you know there are 17 pages of Andersons in the Minneapolis phone book? Personally, I think it is a very good name — not just because it's my own name, but also because of its origin. Anderson started out being "Andrew's son" and it seems to me that anyone who is a Christian should be delighted in carrying on the name of Andrew.

Andrew lived in the first century. He was a fisherman by trade. He was a religious follower of that fiery prophet called John the Baptist. In some ways though, it is rather amazing that his name has become so well known through the centuries because the New Testament says comparatively little about him. For example, there are no books of the Bible named after him as there are for Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Peter. He was not included in Jesus' inner circle of friends who sat by him at the Last Supper and who were with him on the mountain when his glory was shown.

The inner circle of Peter, James and John never incorporated Andrew. In fact, when Andrew's name is mentioned, he is identified

as "the brother of Peter." Being the youngest of four sons, I know what it's like to always be identified as someone's brother!

But you know, I really don't care whether he was the most famous. I think that Andrew should be remembered most of all for what he did best. Actually, I find a delight in carrying his name, even at a 2,000 year distance.

Andrew is introduced in the Gospel of John 1:35-42. It's in the middle of the story about John, the political and religious first century leader. And

it goes like this:

*The next day John was there again with his two disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"*

*When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?"*

*They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?"*

*"Come," he replied, "and you will see."*

*So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour.*

*Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.*

***A Christian is someone who has met Jesus personally and has made a choice to follow Jesus for the rest of his life.***

The very best news in this story is that Andrew followed Jesus. The day he met Jesus, however, was not the beginning of his religious

experience, for there is every indication that he was a religious man in a religious country at a religious time. He had known God all his life. He was a follower of John the Baptist. You could say that he was regular in going to church and that he counted God to be an important part of his life. It's just that he was not yet a Christian. A Christian is neither someone who grows up in a religious home like Andrew nor someone who is religious like Andrew. It's not even someone who has heard a lot about Jesus like Andrew, for I am convinced that

he had heard a lot about Jesus from the previous teachings of John. No — none of those things make a person a Christian. A Christian is someone who has met Jesus personally and has made a choice to follow Jesus for the rest of his life.

Andrew heard about Jesus, met Jesus, decided to check him out and when he did he committed to be his disciple. That was the most important day in Andrew's entire life. It was the day he changed from being religious to becoming a Christian.

I often think of how many modern Andrews I meet, good men and good women, who have grown up in religious homes in America. They tell me that they can never remember a time in their lives when they did not go to church or when they did not know at least something about Jesus. They are wonderful, religious people, but they are not yet Christians. To be a Christian requires a personal choice to follow Jesus.

Now maybe that's you. Maybe you have a background that is similar to Andrew. If so, then I invite you to be like Andrew and become a follower of Jesus Christ. Make a deliberate personal choice to be his disciple. Like Andrew, say "yes" to the invitation of Jesus to follow him for the rest of your life. It is a definite and personal decision to abandon sin and to live this great and good life that comes through Jesus Christ.

If you were to make that decision today and if you were to pray that kind of prayer, I suggest that you write down and remember the date for this day would become for you like that day was for Andrew — the most important and memorable day in your life.

The very next thing that Andrew did was to seek out his brother Peter. Peter was the first person that came to Andrew's mind. He had met Jesus and now he wanted Peter, his brother, to meet Jesus, and so John 1:40 says, "The first thing Andrew did was to

find his brother Simon." (By the way, Simon and Peter are the same guy. Like most Jewish people in the first century in Palestine he had a Hebrew name and a Greek name. Simon, Peter — same guy.)

There were two big reasons why Andrew sought out his brother. The first reason was that Andrew was excited about Jesus. The second reason was that he cared about his brother Peter. I know it says that the first thing he did was to seek out Simon Peter, but because it was the tenth hour (late in the day), he probably spent the night wherever Jesus was staying and sought out his brother first thing in the morning.

I can imagine what it was like right before he went to sleep that night as he reflected back on a very long and memorable day. He recalled the look in Jesus' eye. He recalled every word that Jesus spoke. He didn't want to lose them — he wanted to memorize them so that day could live on forever in his memory. He was still filled with excitement as he thought of whom he could tell because, whenever something great and good happens in our lives, inevitably we want to share that with someone else. The first one he thought of was his own brother, Peter.

As soon as Andrew connected with Simon Peter, he shared his faith. That sounds so easy when it's written in the Bible, but a lot of us know from personal experience that often members of one's own family are the most difficult of all to talk to about Christian faith. That is because family relationships are often very complex! They can be so complex that we can't understand them ourselves. And so when it comes to doing what Andrew did, telling about our relationship with Jesus Christ to a brother, for some of us that strikes fear. If we say, "I'm a Christian and you should be a Christian" the answer may be, "What's so good about you? I remember when you . . ." It's difficult to measure up

to the Christian standards that the family member imagines should be. We all fear being rejected or not trusted.

Even though sharing one's faith with brothers and sisters or other family members can be challenging, it is clearly important, for it is those relationships that help define who we are and those people are important to us. That means that we need to learn a valuable lesson from Andrew.

We can do precisely what he did. Andrew simply told what he had experienced; it was his personal report as an eyewitness. It was not an elaborate intellectual argument. He may not have been as eloquent as his brother Peter or as intellectually sharp. He did not talk about denominations and, by the way, they had denominations back then in Judaism, just as we have denominations today. (We go by labels like Catholic, Protestant, Lutheran or Methodist; they were called Sadducees and Pharisees.) Instead, Andrew simply told what he had seen and heard. "We have found the Messiah." There was nothing to debate. Personal experience is personal experience. Andrew probably said those words with genuineness and great excitement, in a way that Peter was attracted, not just to Andrew, but to Jesus Christ, who had changed Andrew.

I'm convinced that sharing our faith in terms of what we have experienced is by far the easiest and probably the best way. It's telling others:

*Jesus Christ has really made a big difference in my life. I pray now more than I have ever prayed, and I know that God hears and that he answers prayer. I find that I'm different. I've experienced God as I've never experienced him before. I have clarity of purpose and*

*direction that I didn't have before. There's a peace in me that gets me through the harshest of times. It isn't that I don't have problems; it's that I know that God is there for me. I used to be so afraid of what would happen. Now my fear is gone and I have assurance of heaven. This is different from religion or church; it's a personal relationship with God through becoming a follower of Jesus. And, well, this is how it happened to me.*

You see, to be a Christian is to share that relationship — to share that faith. In fact, there is nothing more important for a Christian to share than Jesus Christ.

Andrew's goal was more than just to tell his experience. He wanted to introduce his brother to Jesus. He wanted Peter also to experience Jesus. And that's what we want.

Do you know that there are more people becoming Christians today than ever before in history? The best calculations are that every hour there are 3,000 more Christians in the world. It's astonishing, really unprecedented.

A lot of studies have been done to figure out how people are becoming Christians. Is it primarily advertising, reading, evangelistic crusades, church services or books — what is the key? All of those may be factors to consider,

but the research shows that 85 percent of unbelievers who become Christians do so through the influence of a friend. Seventy percent of unbelievers in the United States say that if they were invited to a seminar, a concert or a church service by a friend, they are likely to say "yes" and come.

If most Americans become believers through relationships then the place to begin in sharing our

***...there is nothing more important for a Christian to share than Jesus Christ.***

faith is to befriend others and to introduce non-Christian friends to your Christian friends. Invite others to church activities so they can hear what the Christian message is all about and see it being acted out in the lives of real people.

We have found here at Wooddale Church that unbelievers who start hanging out here with other Wooddalers often come to personal faith in Jesus Christ after about six months of attending church services, hearing the Bible taught and seeing the Christian life practiced.

When you sense that a friend is ready for personal faith, explain what you did. Tell him or her what you prayed when you made the decision to become a Christian. Suggest that they pray something like this: “God, I know I need help. I know that I am a sinner who needs a savior, and I’m going to accept Jesus Christ and trust him to forgive my sin and to make him the Lord of my life.” Then help that person grow spiritually by encouraging Bible reading, prayer, Christian fellowship and church involvement.

Maybe all of this kind of scares you. You think, “Whoa! This is getting kind of heavy –I’m no Andrew.” I think the whole point of God giving us the story of Andrew is that Andrew was just an ordinary guy. He was not brilliant or articulate—he was just an ordinary person who became a Christian and then helped other people become Christians. Every one of us can do what he did!

If you read the rest of the New Testament Gospel of John, you find that while his brother Peter was the first person with whom he shared his faith, he was certainly not the last. He really liked introducing others to Jesus. In fact, every time in the book of John that Andrew’s name is mentioned, he’s introducing someone else to Jesus!

For example, John 6:8-9 tells the story about Jesus teaching thousands of hungry people through

lunchtime and there wasn’t a McDonalds or Burger King in sight. Andrew found a boy who had thought ahead to bring a bag lunch of fish and bread. He brought the boy and his lunch up front and introduced him to Jesus. Jesus took this small lunch and multiplied it out to feed thousands of people. It is one of the greatest miracles in the Bible — all because Andrew introduced a small boy to Jesus.

John 12:22 tells about some Greek tourists who heard about Jesus and wanted to meet him. They met Andrew who said, “I can arrange that.” And so he introduced these two Greek tourists to Jesus.

I began to realize that if every story about Andrew has him introducing somebody to Jesus, he must have been doing it all the time. Imagine what it would be like if all of us did exactly the same thing? What if thousands of us were all sharing our faith, telling others about Jesus, inviting them to church, introducing them to Jesus Christ — wouldn’t that be great? It would multiply into thousands more Christians.

Let’s all be Andrews! Follow Jesus and find others to introduce. Pray every day for specific people. Ask God to give you opportunities. Ask God to tell you what to say and what to do. Be a modern Andrew!

*Faith Matters* is the Broadcast Ministry of  
Leith Anderson and Wooddale Church  
6630 Shady Oak Road  
Eden Prairie MN 55344  
612-944-6300  
[www.wooddale.org](http://www.wooddale.org)  
©Leith Anderson