



# Nathaniel - The Good Guy

Adapted from “12 Disciples” series by Dennis Marquardt.

Nathaniel, also called “Bartholomew,” means “son of Tholmai.” This name is possibly from a group called the “tholmaens” who gave much attention to the study of ancient Scriptures. Nathaniel literally means, “gift of God.”

Nathaniel was the one guy in the group that, even before becoming a disciple of Jesus, was known as a good, moral, honest, and a decent man. He was the good guy in the group, much like the hard working, good moral man of today who genuinely cares about others but has never become a Christian. Such people are often rare since most humans have a sneaky side to them.

The Baltimore Orioles of 1894-96 was the best baseball team up to that time, and also the craftiest. One of their favorite tricks was to plant a few extra balls in

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strategic spots in the tall outfield grass. Then any balls hit into that area where it looked like the other team might make an extra base were miraculously held to singles, they would simply pick up the planted ball near them and quickly throw it in.

They finally got caught during one game when an opposing batter drove a ball to left-center field near one of the hidden balls. The left fielder picked up the hidden ball and threw it in, the center fielder however did not notice his teammate had done this while he chased the real ball and thus he, too, threw in a ball. The umpire saw two balls come flying into second base, called time and awarded the game to the other team. Their deceit was exposed.<sup>1</sup>

Nathaniel would never have played on such a team. He was the picture of virtue though he was not yet a follower of Jesus. He was an idealist, a man of high moral character and values, **but he still needed Christ!** Even the nicest people need the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus sought out this good guy, because **even the best of humanity is lost without Christ!**

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<sup>1</sup> A.D. Suehsdorf, *The Great American Baseball Scrapbook*, (Random House, 1978), 11.



Nathaniel teaches us that even the best and finest of humanity still needs to come to Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sin and to receive eternal life! All the good deeds in the world cannot save you, only Jesus can do this! Once he met Jesus, Nathaniel knew his good works were not enough. Only the Messiah could save him and others. What do you trust in to get you into heaven? There is only one sure way in Jesus.

## “COURAGE” Level Questions

**Exercise #1:** Read and answer or discuss the following.

**John 1:43–51 (ESV)** The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” Nathanael said to him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” Jesus answered him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” And he said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

**C1:** Nathaniel is a good guy. Why do you think he needed to meet Christ?

**C2:** Were his good works enough to get to heaven? Why?

**C3:** A man might have high moral standards but he still needs Christ. Explain why you agree or disagree with this?

**Exercise #2:** Being a true friend of someone means building a relationship with them to get to know their interests. Give examples of how you can build relationships with other men.

**C4:** Before you came to know Christ, did you think being a "good, decent, moral man" was enough to get you to heaven?

**C5:** In the scripture, Jesus tells Nathaniel that he “will see greater things than these.” What does this phrase mean to you?

**Exercise #3:** In the next 60 days, think of good and decent men **who do not know Jesus**. Come up with an action plan on how best to invite them to your church, to meet Jesus.

## “STRENGTH” Level Questions

**Exercise #1:** Read and answer or discuss the following.

**John 1:43–51 (ESV)**

**S1:** How would you tell a good, moral man like Nathanael that he still needs a relationship with Jesus?

**S2:** Philip was Nathaniel’s friend and knew his interests. Who are the friends with which you are building relationships, sharing interests, and sharing life?

**S3:** Nathaniel was a good, religious man and yet did not know Christ. How easy is it to be a good religious man and never enter a relationship with Jesus? Why?

**S4:** In the scripture, Jesus tells Nathaniel that “greater things than these” he shall see. What do you think Jesus means by this statement?

**Exercise #3:** Spend 30 days praying and asking God to see greater things.

**Exercise #4:** In the next 60 days, develop a strategic plan to share Jesus Christ with those you know who are good decent moral men and yet do not know Christ.

## “ENDURANCE” Level Questions

**Exercise #1:** Read and answer or discuss the following.

### John 1:43–51 (ESV)

**E1:** Do you think the longer you walk with Christ, the more your Christian walk becomes about good works for man’s approval rather than God’s?

**E2:** How can you make sure your walk with Christ is fresh?

**E2:** Philip was a true friend of Nathaniel’s. He knew about his interest in ancient scriptures. How well do you know the men you call friends?

**Exercise #2:** Write out a plan to deepen your friendships over the next 90 days.

**E3:** Jesus tells Nathaniel that he shall “see greater things that these.” How important is the Holy Spirit’s baptism in seeing greater things today? Be specific in your answer.

**E4:** A relationship with Jesus is not an end but a beginning. Reflect how you meet Jesus. Why was this relationship a beginning and not an end?

**Exercise #3:** Meeting Jesus takes Nathaniel from being a good, moral man to a good, spiritually redeemed man living for Christ. Write out a 60-day plan to make sure you are a good spiritual man not just a good moral man.

**Exercise #4:** Developing men for Christ takes getting to know them on a personal level. Write out a plan on how to develop men over the next year.