



## WEEK SIX: THE DISCIPLES

**Read: [Matthew 4:18-22](#) and [10:1-4](#), [Mark 1:16-20](#) and [3:13-19](#), [Luke 5:4-11](#) and [6:12-16](#), [John 1:35-51](#)**

The Bible describes the calling of only seven of the disciples. All the above scriptures give information about the calling of the disciples and there seem to be some variations among the gospels. Confusion can arise because some of the scriptures relate to the introductory meeting of Jesus and some to the calling. For example, Peter had met Jesus previously and had spent time with him. Likewise, Andrew, James, and John.

The important fact is that they were all CALLED by Jesus. Twelve men of diverse backgrounds and education. Excluding Judas Iscariot, the betrayer of Jesus, these men were all part of the founding of the church. **Ephesians 2:20** tells us that the church was built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, **the cornerstone being Christ Jesus himself**. The cornerstone (or foundation stone or setting stone) is the first stone set in the construction of a masonry foundation. All other stones are set in reference to this stone, thus determining the position of the entire structure. This gives a wonderful picture of the church of which we are a part. We are all important, but we have to keep in line with the teachings of Jesus.

By definition a disciple is: **a personal follower of Christ during his life**, in particular, one of the twelve Apostles. So, whilst being a disciple is a learning thing, these men became Apostles when sent out on their mission.

- Why is it important to see ourselves as disciples?
- What does it mean to be a 'personal follower of Jesus'?
- What is the factor that defines a disciple of Jesus? *Read John 13:35.*
- Do we fulfil this criterion?
- Why is it so important that we understand where we fit into this church?
- 1 Corinthians 12 describes the church as the body of Christ where each of us has a specific role.



We read in Luke 6:12 that the night before Jesus called his first disciples, he went up the mountain spent the whole night in prayer.

- Is there a lesson for us in this?

A number of the disciples were fishermen: Peter, Andrew, James, John, and probably Thomas and Bartholomew. Simon the Zealot, who had previously looked for change through revolution to bring political overthrow, became a zealous, but peaceful follower of Jesus. Matthew was a tax collector, employed by the Romans and was called later than the others. Most of the Jews despised these men, seeing them as a traitor to their people. Regardless of their background, Jesus saw something in each of them that he could encourage and develop. He wanted to make them fishers of men.



- Does this help us to believe that Jesus sees us as people who are useful to the building up of his church?

We must not forget the role of John the Baptist in the calling of the disciples. In John chapter 1 we read that he was the man who prepared the way for Jesus. In verse 40 it says that one of the people who heard John making his declarations about Jesus, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He went and found his brother saying, "*We have found the Messiah*", then he took him to Jesus.

- Do we figuratively take our family to Jesus?
- Are our lives an example of what it means to belong to him?

In verses 43-49 of John chapter 1, we read of Jesus, intentionally going to Galilee where he found Philip who came from the same city, Bethsaida, as Andrew and Peter and may well have been a fisherman. Philip then went to find his friend Nathanael to tell him about Jesus being the one of whom the prophets wrote. Perhaps Philip was an enthusiast because Nathanael tries to pour water on his excitement saying, "*Can anything good come out of Nazareth*?" To which Philip replied, "*Come and see*". Nathanael's comment came out of the contempt many Jews had for the people of that town. It was a garrison town so by implication, the people there would do business with the Romans. Also, it may have been that many Jews looked down on Galileans as being *country bumpkins* therefore anyone coming from there was hardly worth of interest.

- Is this a lesson for us in how we jump to conclusions about people?

Jesus, however, did not criticise Nathanael but described him as a man without guile, (or deceit). We must never be anything other than honest in our relationship with Jesus. He sees us and knows us.

The calling of the disciples demonstrates that Jesus looks beyond the outward appearance. A bit like when Samuel saw the sons of Jesse and couldn't understand why one of the handsome, strong men, were not whom God wanted for a king. The reason: "*But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the*

*outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”* 1 Samuel 16:7. You might then ask why Jesus called Judas Iscariot. The simple answer is that it was part of God’s plan.

Why did Jesus call these twelve men? First of all, it was part of the cultural thinking of the times, disciples by definition followers of their leader, so it places Jesus in a leadership role. Also, even though Jesus was divine, he was also human. He couldn’t do it all on his own.

- This is something Christians, disciples of today, must learn. Christianity is not about individuality but collectivity. As mentioned earlier, we are **PART** of the body of Christ, and we must learn to work together because that is how we are most effective.
- There was much work to be done in dealing with the crowds who followed Jesus. Think about the feeding of the five thousand and four thousand. It needed a lot of hands-on deck.
- It was important for them to be taught so that they in turn could teach others. Particularly of course, after Jesus had ascended into heaven.
- Jesus demonstrated the need for disciples when he sent them out: Matthew 20:5-14 and Mark 6:7-13.
- He needed disciples to carry on his work after he had ascended to heaven.

Luke 10:2 and Matthew 9:37-38 both say: *The harvest is so great, but the workers are so few. So, pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send out more workers for his fields.”*



- They were important because they were witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus.

True disciples do not sit around doing nothing. They spend their time and energy in building Christ’s Kingdom here on earth.

There is a great and important work for us to do. We are modern-day disciples, but the call of God is still the same.

- Are we, like those early disciples, willing to answer his call and follow Jesus?

What were the results of the calling of these men? **Read Acts 2 and how they received the promised Holy Spirit, and the church of God was born.**

### Prayer

**Father God, may we be willing to forsake everything to follow you. Help us to remember that “*many lives depend on what I do*”. Breathe your Holy Spirit into us that we might be effective disciples.**

**Amen**