

Why On Earth Did He Pick That Guy? Lessons From the Lord's Apostles

Franklin Church of Christ
Edwin Crozier
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Introduction:

In **Luke 6:12-16**, Jesus spent the night in prayer, preparing to choose a handful of men to train as leaders. He chose 12: "Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor." Do you ever read that list and wonder, "Why on earth did Jesus pick that guy?" I know I do. Having said that, in those moments I find the most comfort. When I see the list of men Jesus chose, I see there is still hope for me to be of service to Jesus. Examine this list and uncover lessons about discipleship.

Discussion:

- I. There is no universal profile of who will make a great disciple.
 - A. Interestingly, the men Jesus chose to be His disciples were all different. There was no universal paradigm of the person who could be or could not be a disciple.
 1. There was Andrew a disciple of John the Baptist, looking for the coming Messiah (**John 1:40**). There was also Matthew, not John's disciple and not looking for the Messiah.
 2. There were Peter, Andrew, James and John, poor fishermen, focused on trade without much education (**Acts 4:13**). There was also Matthew, a tax collector who would have had more education as a part of the Roman government but also more wealthy (**Luke 5:29**).
 3. There was Peter, Andrew and Philip, immediately confident this man was the Messiah (**John 1:35-45**). There was also Nathanael who did not share their immediate enthusiasm.
 4. There was Simon the Zealot, a rebel against the Roman government. But there was also Matthew, an employee of that government.
 - B. Despite these differences, Jesus chose these men to be His apostles. Of course, Jesus demonstrated in **John 1:46-48** He could see their hearts. Perhaps He recognized an internal we cannot see. But, as far as we can see, everyone is a prospect for discipleship. There is no universal profile including job, socio-economic class, background, education, lifestyle, etc. We must never pre-judge whether or not a person can be a disciple.
 - C. Consider Paul, a persecutor of Christians, who would have thought he would make a great disciple (**Acts 8:1-4**). Or the Corinthians in **I Corinthians 6:9-11**, who would have thought they would make disciples. We must not prejudge, but rather offer the gospel freely to all. You never know who will become a disciple until you give them the opportunity to decide.
- II. Disciples must learn to appreciate their differences.
 - A. Not every disciple is going to be just like me. In the inspired record, we see few moments of discord among the 12. The only one of which I am aware is when they argued about who would be greatest in the kingdom (**Luke 22:24**). However, knowing what happens when different people get together, I imagine there were quite a few altercations among the apostles. In order to work together, these 12 had to learn to appreciate their differences.
 - B. **I Corinthians 12:12ff** demonstrates the necessity to recognize differences and because of differences work accordingly. One would be the feet, another the hands, the eyes, the ears, etc. Each disciple in this scenario needs to understand that each disciple is different, has different talents and abilities. We must learn to work together as a body, a unit, capitalizing on each individual's strengths and compensating for each one's weaknesses. In this whole process, we must remember to bestow abundant honor on others (**Romans 12:10**).
 - C. Only when we recognize and appreciate our differences demonstrating what unique perspectives and talents we bring into the combination of this body, can we build up the temple of Christ's church as Paul taught in **Ephesians 4:15-16**.
- III. The cause of Christ unifies enemies.
 - A. One of the most interesting contrasts mentioned in the list of the 12 is Simon the Zealot and Matthew the tax collector. These two individuals represent opposite ends of the political spectrum. Simon was not just opposed to the Roman government, he was part of a rebel group. On

the other hand, Matthew was not only friendly with that government, he was a part of the government. That these two men, who under all other circumstances would have been enemies, were both apostles is amazing and speaks volumes about the reconciling force of discipleship.

- B. Of course, this working relationship between Simon and Matthew is really a microcosm picture of what Jesus' whole ministry was about. Paul speaks of this in **Ephesians 2:11-18**. Jesus removed the enmity that had previously existed between the Jews and Gentiles, making them one body if they would submit to Him. God had planned this all along, finally revealing this mystery through the New Testament apostles and prophets (**Ephesians 3:4-7**).
- C. The lesson for modern American Christianity is not typically an issue of Gentile versus Jew. We have other personal conflicts today. Race, gender, class, politics, etc. all make enemies among modern people. However, discipleship to Christ unifies and reconciles each of these enemies. How? Do we just decide to be friendly to one another? Do we just constantly repeat **Galatians 3:28** that there is no race or gender in Christ? Do we inwardly despise others but act like we like them to their faces, for Christ's sake? NO! As Christians, we recognize we are all on equal footing, sinners who have undeservedly been saved by the grace of Christ (**Romans 3:23ff**). We no longer see ourselves as better than others. Additionally, despite the prior differences, as each of us becomes more like Christ, we become more like each other. Issues over which we previously differed become less problematic as we begin to see them from the same foundation of Christ and His word. Discipleship brings us together reconciling enemies and healing relationships.

IV. Even in the original group, weakness existed, even hypocrisy.

- A. While the list in **Luke 6** does not tell us much about the apostles, we know of their weaknesses elsewhere. We know the misunderstandings, the disbelief, the fighting, the impetuosity, the abandonment and other displays of weakness. These apostles had room to grow. Yet, amazingly, people today often look at weakness in modern Christians and use that as an excuse to avoid discipleship. Today, when people look for a group of perfect people in a church before they will become Christians, they are looking for a group even Jesus didn't put together.
- B. If you are a guest today, let me put forward the truth. We are not a group of people who have perfect understanding, perfect faith or perfect lives. We are like these early apostles, a group of different people brought together by common faith striving to help one another grow in Christ. If you examine our lives, you will find weaknesses that we are working on. But we are working.
- C. In addition to disciples who had weaknesses, I am amazed to find a hypocrite who was not working. He was sold under sin and impenitent. Instead he ended up killing himself. Of course, I am speaking of Judas. Judas' hypocrisy did not begin with his betrayal of Christ, but as a treasurer, pilfering the money box (**John 12:6**). People today can often look at a church and see the hypocrites. Because of this, they refuse to join themselves to Christ believing they are just as good as the Christians. This is regrettable on two accounts: on account of the hypocritical Christian that is hindering the spread of the gospel and on account of the non-Christian who is basing his salvation on the hypocrisy of one who is lost himself.
- D. If you are a guest today, let me tell you the truth. I have no doubt, if you examine the life of every individual here, you will find some hypocrites. While I do not know who they are, I imagine some of our members are like this. But please, do not put your soul on the line because of someone else's sin. You will not be able to use the hypocrites among us to save your soul when you stand before God in judgment. We will each be judged based on our own deeds. You on yours and me on mine (**Romans 2:6**).
- E. Even Jesus' group had weakness, even hypocrites. But surely, we would not turn away the opportunity to have been a part of that original 12 if given the chance. Do not turn away the opportunity to be one of Christ's disciples today just because you see weakness or hypocrisy among our numbers. If we stand for and strive for the truth of God's word, then why not be a part of us and help us as we strive to overcome our weaknesses and restore the hypocrite from his sin.

Conclusion:

While I often wonder why Jesus picked this strange group of men, I am so glad He did. It helps me realize there is still hope for me. If those guys had the potential to be great disciples, then so do I. So do you. Let's learn the lessons from these men and be the most Christ-like disciples we can be.