

“BE-ing Spirit-Led Works In Progress”

Matthew 4:18

November 10, 2024

INTRO:

- How in-tune are you... to God’s intentions?
- How personal do you find His presence to be?
- How inspiring are His involvements in your life?

These are loaded questions with loving answers...

PRAYER

CONTEXT:

- mMm - Matthew’s Gospel telling Christ’s Gospel!
- Matthew 1:1 – 4:17...
- Matthew 4:18 = Perspective on above questions...

BIG IDEA: We are ALWAYS living in the context of Christ’s providential plan!

PREVIEW:

1. Missional **PROVIDENCE**
2. Missional **PROGRESSION**
3. Missional **PLACEMENT**

T/S: Before we fully engage Christ's missional preaching / proclaiming (v.17), I pray this verse will help to draw each of us in personally to His mission!

TEXT:

Matthew 4:18

While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.

I. Missional Providence

While walking by the Sea of Galilee,

- How in-tune are you... to God's intentions?
- How personal do you find His presence to be?
- How inspiring are His involvements in your life?

How biblical is your understanding of missional?

How missional is your understanding of providential?

When you get these two right & righteous, the little things in life will be big things... and many of the supposed big things will become little things in the light of God's truth in love.

Where and how does this verse (and its details) fit into the divine design of Almighty God?

- Is it right to assume that it does fit?
- Is it wrong to assume every detail matters?

Spirit-led providence...

Don't miss the fact that He was sent!

- He was Spirit-led in ALL that He did...
- *He was in the process of fulfilling all righteousness*
- He was sent to fulfill the Isaiah's prophecy...
- He was BE-ing multifaceted and on mission...
 - WHAT He's doing & WHERE He's doing it...
 - WHO & WHAT is going on around Him...

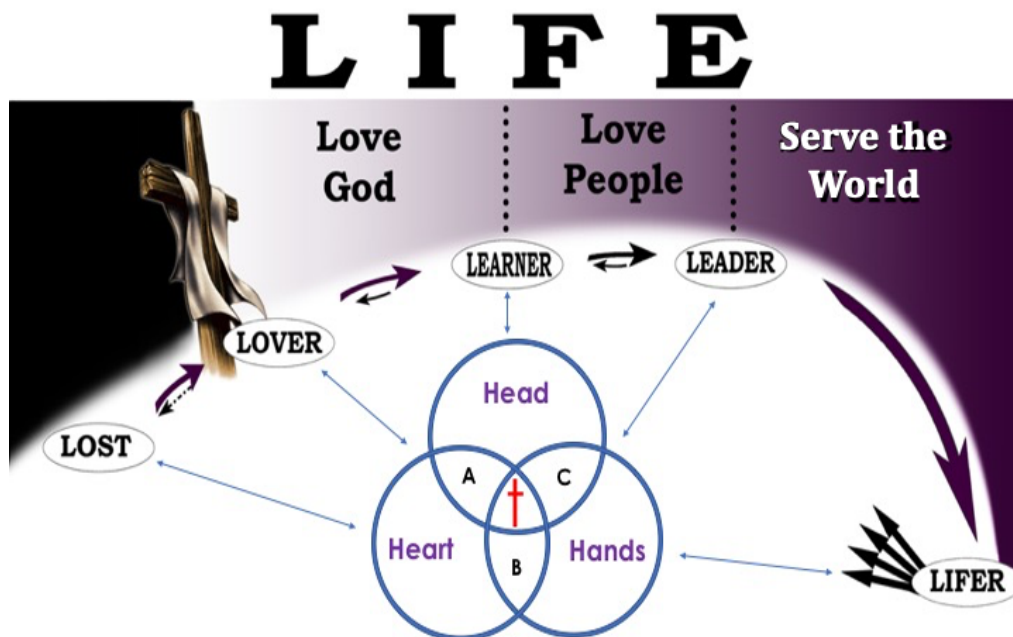
ALL of it is sovereignly & providentially put in place!

**OK... now stop for a minute and look
for your personal application...**

How are you & I to process these truths personally?

- *What details are you ignoring in your life?*
- *What inspirational blessings are you overlooking?*
- *Where is God's power, purposes, & providence calling you to get/BE ready?*

T/S: Now... put/pose those questions in the context of your spiritual life... Where are you in the “Framework” of God’s faith family?



- Your (true) answer will have a lot to do with how you see all this coming together.

II. Missional Progression

He saw

BEWARE unbiblical or misinformed assumptions...

If we accept the biblical & missional understanding of providence, then the fact that Jesus “saw,” underscores the fact that He was looking...

*two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter)
and Andrew his brother,*

- How in-tune are you... to God’s intentions?
- How personal do you find His presence to be?
- How inspiring are His involvements in your life?

I just want to pose a question
that we will dig into more next time...

How is it that Jesus came to choose these guys?

Remember what we've learned...

We need to read our Bibles better...

When we dig for treasure we often find it...

The treasure can be better understanding.

- See our progressive sanctification process!
 - From **DEAD** in **SIN** to **ALIVE** in **CHRIST**!

VIDEO: *"Understanding Atonement"*

- ...**VISIBLE** church to **INVISIBLE** Church

VIDEO: *"Normal Church for Normal People"*

III. Missional Placement

*casting a net into the sea,
for they were fishermen.*

- How in-tune are you... to God's intentions?
- How personal do you find His presence to be?
- How inspiring are His involvements in your life?

What were the fishermen doing? **FISHING!**
How were they fishing? **AS DISCIPLES!**
How were they "doing" both? **THEY WERE BE-ING!**

Biblical BE-ing
is the best way to biblically BE-come!

- JDP

PRAYER

STUDY NOTES:

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

[18](#) While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. [19](#) And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”^b [20](#) Immediately they left their nets and followed him. [21](#) And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. [22](#) Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

The Expositor’s Bible Commentary:

Calling the first disciples (4:18–22)

Since no temporal expression links this pericope with the last one, there may have been some time lapse. Bultmann’s skepticism (Synoptic Tradition, p. 28) about the historical worth of these verses is unwarranted (cf. Hill, Matthew).

The relation of the various “callings” of the disciples in the Gospel records is obscure.

If we take **John 1:35–51** as historical, Simon, Andrew, Philip, and Nathaniel first followed Jesus at an earlier date. On returning to Galilee,

they again took up their normal work. This is inherently plausible. The disciples' commitment and understanding advanced by degrees; even after the Resurrection, they returned once more to their fishing (John 21). Here (Mt 4:20) an earlier commitment may explain their haste in following Jesus. If the miracle of Luke 5:1–11 occurred the night before Matthew 4:18–22 (Mark 1:16–20), that would be another reason for their immediate response to Jesus.

In this connection the meaning of *katartizontas* (“preparing,” Mt 4:21; cf. below) is significant. See further 9:9–13; 10:1–4.

18 In Hebrew “sea,” like the German *See*, can refer to lakes. Classical Greek prefers not to use *thalassa* (or *thalatta*—“sea”) for lakes; and Luke follows the same pattern by using *limnē* (“lake”), though Matthew, Mark, and John prefer “sea.” The Sea of Galilee (named from the district), otherwise known as the “Lake of Gennesaret” (the name “Kinnereth” [Num 34:11; Josh 12:3] comes from a plain on its north west shore; cf. Matt 14:34), or the “Sea of Tiberias” (a city Herod built on the southwest shore: John 6:1; 21:1), is 12 1/4 by 8 3/4 miles at the longest and broadest points respectively. Its surface is 682 feet below sea level. It is subject to violent squalls. In Jesus’ day it supported flourishing fisheries; on its west shore were nine towns, and **“Bethsaida” may be freely translated “Fishtown.”** Simon and his brother Andrew came from Bethsaida (John 1:44), though Capernaum was now their home (Mark 1:21, 29).

Simon, Matthew says, was “called Peter”; but he does not tell us how Peter received this name (cf. 10:2; 16:18; Mark 3:16; Luke 6:14). While uncertainties remain, what is quite certain is that *kêpā* (“rock,” “stone”), the Aramaic equivalent of “Peter,” was already an accepted name in Jesus’ day (cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “Aramaic Kepha” and “Peter’s Name in the New Testament,” in Best and Wilson, pp. 121–32)—a fact that has an important bearing on the interpretation of Mt 16:17–18.

Simon and Andrew were casting a “net” (*amphiblestron*, a NT hapax legomenon [found only once], with a cognate at Mark 1:16). It refers to a circular “casting-net” and is **not** to be confused with the more generic term *diktua* in Mt 4:20.

MacArthur N.T. Commentary: MATTHEW

Fishing for Men (4:18–22)

And walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” And they immediately left the nets, and followed Him. And going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. And they immediately left the boat and their father, and followed Him. (4:18–22)

The following widely told story is a sobering parable of what the church’s concern for evangelism has often been like:

On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks were frequent, a crude little life-saving station was built. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat, but the few devoted crewmen kept a constant watch over the sea. With no thought for themselves, they went out day or night, tirelessly searching for any who might need help. Many lives were saved by their devoted efforts. After a while the station became famous. Some of those who were saved, as well as others in the surrounding area, wanted to become a part of the work. They gave time and money for its support. New boats were bought, additional crews were trained, and the station grew. Some of the members became unhappy that the building was so crude. They felt a larger, nicer place would be more appropriate as the first refuge of those saved from the sea. So they replaced the emergency cots with hospital beds and put better furniture in the enlarged building. Soon the station became a popular gathering

place for its members to discuss the work and to visit with each other. They continued to remodel and decorate until the station more and more took on the look and character of a club. Fewer members were interested in going out on lifesaving missions, so they hired professional crews to do the work on their behalf. The lifesaving motif still prevailed on the club emblems and stationery, and there was a liturgical lifeboat in the room where the club held its initiations. One day a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in many boatloads of cold, wet, half-drowned people. They were dirty, bruised, and sick; and some had black or yellow skin. The beautiful new club was terribly messed up, and so the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside, where the shipwreck victims could be cleaned up before coming inside. At the next meeting there was a split in the club membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's lifesaving activities altogether, as being unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal social life of the club. Some members insisted on keeping lifesaving as their primary purpose and pointed out that, after all, they were still called a lifesaving station. But those members were voted down and told that if they wanted to save lives they could begin their own station down the coast somewhere. As the years went by, the new station gradually faced the same problems the other one had experienced. It, too, became a club, and its lifesaving work became less and less of a priority. The few members who remained dedicated to lifesaving began another station. History continued to repeat itself; and if you visit that coast today you will find a number of exclusive clubs along the shore. Shipwrecks are still frequent in those waters, but most of the people drown.

What a striking illustration of the history of the church. Yet...

The work of evangelism, of spiritual lifesaving, is nonetheless the purest, truest, noblest, and most essential work the church will ever do. The work of fishing men and women out of the sea of sin, the work of rescuing people from the breakers of hell, is the greatest work the church is called by God to do.

Rescuing men from sin is God's great concern. Evangelism has been called the sob of God. Concern for the lost caused Jesus to grieve over unbelieving Jerusalem: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling" (Matt. 23:37).

God sent His Son to earth—to preach, die, and be raised—for the very purpose of saving men from sin. The Father "so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him" (John 3:16–17). The Son Himself came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). The Holy Spirit gives to those who believe "the washing of regeneration and renewing" (Titus 3:5). The whole Trinity is at work in the ministry of saving mankind from sin. Evangelism is the great concern of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

God's concern for redeeming mankind did not, of course, begin when He sent His Son to earth. In the Garden of Eden, He promised that one day sin would be destroyed, that Satan's very head would be bruised (Gen. 3:15). In His covenant with Abraham He promised that in him "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). In the covenant at Sinai God called Israel to "be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6), a kingdom of His witnesses to the world to draw all mankind to Himself.

God's people were to share His concern for the lost. Moses was so desperate for the salvation of his

own rebellious people that he cried to God, “But now, if Thou wilt, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out from Thy book which Thou hast written!” (Ex. 32:32). The writer of Proverbs reminded Israel that “he who is wise wins souls” (Prov. 11:30). The Lord told Daniel, “Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever” (Dan. 12:3).

Evangelism was the great concern of the New Testament church. Immediately after Pentecost, the new believers were totally dedicated to God and to winning others to Him.

As they studied at the apostles’ feet, shared with each other, and praised God, they came to have “favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:42–47). When the first great persecution of the church in Jerusalem began under the direction of Saul, “those who had been scattered went about preaching the word” (Acts 8:1–4). They did not despair over their hardship but took it as an opportunity to expand the Lord’s work.

After Saul himself was converted, his own great concern was evangelism—for building up the movement he had formerly tried to destroy. “I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish,” he would one day write. “Thus, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:14–16). Though he was called to be God’s special apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; Eph. 3:8), Paul had such

an overwhelming desire for the salvation of his fellow Jews that he said, “I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Rom. 9:3). His “heart’s desire and [his] prayer to God for them [was] for their salvation” (10:1). He wanted *everyone* to be saved, and was willing to “become all things to all men, that [he might] by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:22).

Evangelism has been the heartthrob of faithful Christians throughout the history of the church. John Knox pleaded with God, “Give me Scotland or I die.” John Wesley considered the whole world his parish.

Like the Christian life in general, soul-winning involves a paradox. Jesus said, “For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it” (Matt. 16:25). In other words, in saving others we lose ourselves; in losing ourselves in the task we will be used to win others.

Jesus warned His disciples that the Jewish leaders would soon “make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God” (John 16:2)—just as they hated Jesus Himself “without a cause” (15:25).

Those who would reach the world must be willing to be rejected by the world, just as our Lord conquered death by yielding to death.

In a sense, the life of evangelism involves sacrificing the greater for the lesser, the

worthy for the unworthy. It is the opposite of the loveless and brutal survival of the fittest—the way of the fallen, sinful world. God’s way, the way of redemption, is that of the strong being willing to die that the weak might live. God’s Word is clear that, if we are committed to the salvation of those without Jesus Christ, we will lose ourselves in order to reach them.

Preaching the saving gospel is essential, and so is personal witnessing.

Forms of evangelize are used over fifty times in the New Testament.

Evangelization is the primary thrust of the Great Commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations” (Matt. 28:19). To make disciples is to evangelize, to bring men and women under the Saviorhood and lordship of Jesus Christ.

When Jesus called His disciples to Himself, He also called them to call others.

***** BY COMPARING THE GOSPEL ACCOUNTS WE DISCOVER THAT THERE WERE AT LEAST FIVE DIFFERENT PHASES OF JESUS' CALLING OF THE TWELVE. *****

Each gospel writer emphasized those phases which best suited his particular purpose.

- 1.** As would be expected, **THE FIRST CALL WAS TO SALVATION**, to faith in the Messiah (see John 1:35–51; 2:11).
- 2.** The calling that Matthew mentions here was **THE SECOND CALLING, THE CALLING TO WITNESS**. After neither the first nor the second call did the disciples permanently leave their occupations.
- 3.** At the time of **THE THIRD CALL (LUKE 5:1–11)**, **PETER, JAMES, AND JOHN WERE AGAIN BACK FISHING**. Jesus repeated the call to be fishers of men, and the disciples then realized the call was permanent and “they *left everything* and followed Him” (v. 11).

In Luke's account, Simon and the others are still fishermen, and the Lord is teaching the crowd on shore from Simon's boat (v. 3).

After the teaching, He instructed the disciples to go out to the deep water and let down their nets for a catch.

Simon protested that a full night of fishing had yielded nothing, but said that he would obey nonetheless.

When the fish came into the net to the point of breaking it, and the catch filled both boats so that they almost sank with the weight of the fish, Simon knew who Jesus was—the presence of the holy God. His reaction, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (v. 8), reveals the same attitude Isaiah had when he saw God (Isa. 6:1–5)—an overwhelming sense of sinfulness.

The sinner in the presence of God sees only his sin, and shrinks back in fear of judgment. But instead of consuming fire, Peter received a call to discipleship and evangelism. When the call came, he responded with the other three men in total commitment to follow the Lord.

4. MARK TELLS US OF THE FOURTH LEVEL, OR PHASE, OF THE CALL. “AND HE WENT UP TO THE MOUNTAIN AND SUMMONED THOSE WHOM HE HIMSELF WANTED, AND THEY CAME TO HIM. AND HE APPOINTED TWELVE, THAT THEY MIGHT BE WITH HIM, AND THAT HE MIGHT SEND THEM OUT TO PREACH, AND TO HAVE AUTHORITY TO CAST OUT THE DEMONS” (MARK 3:13–15).

5. THE FIFTH PHASE, anticipated in the previous one, is recorded in **MATTHEW 10:1—“AND HAVING SUMMONED HIS TWELVE DISCIPLES, HE**

GAVE THEM AUTHORITY OVER UNCLEAN SPIRITS, TO CAST THEM OUT, AND TO HEAL EVERY KIND OF DISEASE AND EVERY KIND OF SICKNESS.”

God calls all believers in a similar way.

First He calls us to salvation, apart from which no other call could be effective. He then calls us progressively to more specific and ever-expanding service.

CALLING PETER AND ANDREW

And walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” And they immediately left the nets, and followed Him. (4:18–20)

The Sea of Galilee is an oval-shaped body of water about eight miles wide and thirteen miles long, and is nearly 700 feet below sea level. Luke, who was well traveled, always referred to it more properly as a lake. Yet Josephus reports that in the first century A.D. some 240 boats regularly fished the waters of that lake. Much additional fishing was done along the shore, as **Simon who was called Peter** [see Matt. 16:16–18], and **Andrew his brother** were doing on this occasion, **casting a net into the sea.**

In that day, three methods of fishing were used. One was by hook and line, the second was by a throw net cast from the shallow water along the shore, and the third was by a large dragnet strung between two or more boats in the deep water. **Peter and Andrew** were here obviously using the second method. That **net** was probably about nine feet in diameter, and the two brothers were skilled in its use, **for they were fishermen** by trade. The Greek term for that particular net was *amphiblēstron* (related to our *amphibious*, an adjective describing something related to both land and water)—so named because the person using the net would stand on or near shore and throw the net into the deeper water where the fish were.

When Jesus called those first disciples, He gathered together the first fish-catching crew of His church.

They were the first of the original band of evangelists He called to fulfill the Great Commission. They were Jesus' first partners in ministry. **He had the power and the right to accomplish the work of proclaiming the gospel by Himself. But that was not His plan.** He could have done it alone, but He never intended to do it alone.

From the beginning of His ministry,
His plan was to use disciples
to win disciples.

*He would command His disciples to do other things, but His first call to them was,
Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.*

We are given specific details of the callings of only seven of the original twelve.

But Jesus individually selected those who would become part of the first marvelous ministry of winning people to Himself.

“He called His disciples to Him; and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles” (Luke 6:13).

God always chooses His partners.

He chose Noah and Abraham, Moses and David. He chose the prophets. He chose Israel herself to be a whole nation of partners, “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:6).

Jesus told His disciples, *“You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit”* (John 15:16; cf. 6:70; 13:18).

Paul called Epaenetus “the first convert [lit., “firstfruit,” *aparchē*] to Christ from Asia” (Rom. 16:5).

That calling to bear fruit in evangelism is extended to everyone who belongs to Jesus Christ.

The called ones
are themselves to become callers.

Speaking of all Christians, Peter wrote, *“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”* (1 Pet. 2:9).

Christ mandates that all of His followers be **fishermen**.

The command, **Follow Me** (in the Greek an adverb of place expressing a command), literally means “come here.” The term *after* is used in the original to show the place they are to come: **“Your place is following after Me!”**

The disciples' obedience was instant: And they immediately left the nets, and followed Him. The sovereign authority of the Lord had spoken. **Followed** is from *akoloutheō*, which conveys the idea of following as a disciple who is committed to imitating the one he follows.

Many years ago an Italian recluse was found dead in his house. He had lived frugally all his life, but when friends were going through his house to sort out the few possessions he had accumulated they discovered 246 expensive violins crammed into his attic. Some even more valuable ones were in a bureau drawer in his bedroom. Virtually all of his money had been spent buying violins. Yet his misdirected devotion to the instruments had robbed the world of their beautiful sounds. Because he selfishly treasured those violins, the world never heard the music they were meant to play. It is even reported that the first violin the great Stradivarius ever made was not played until it was 147 years old!

Many Christians treat their faith like that man treated his violins. They hide their light; they squirrel away their great treasure. **By not sharing their light and their treasure, many to whom they could have witnessed are left in spiritual darkness and poverty.**

Some researchers estimate that as many as ninety-five percent of all Christians have never led another person to Jesus Christ. If that is true, ninety-five percent of the world's spiritual violins have never been played!

*True love of our riches in
Christ leads us to shine and
share, not to hide and hoard.*

When D. L. Moody once visited an art gallery in Chicago he was especially impressed by a painting called "The Rock of Ages." The picture showed a person with both hands clinging to a cross firmly embedded in a rock. While the stormy sea smashed against the rock, he hung tightly to the cross. Years later Mr. Moody saw a similar picture. This one also showed a person in a storm holding to a cross, but with one hand he was reaching out to someone who was about to

drown. The great evangelist commented that, though the first painting was beautiful, the second was even lovelier.

CALLING JAMES AND JOHN

And going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. And they immediately left the boat and their father, and followed Him. (4:21–22)

When Jesus called **James** and **John** they were tough, crusty outdoorsmen — uncut jewels.

They were in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, a routine but important task in the fishing business.

They had already been called to faith in the Savior (see **John 1:35–51; 2:11**); here He called them to the work of evangelism alongside Himself.

And they **immediately left the boat and their father, and followed Him.**

These disciples had little education, little spiritual perception, and possibly little religious training of any sort. As their new Master began to teach them, even when He spoke in parables, they often lacked full comprehension of His meaning.

They were often self-centered and inhospitable.

When the multitude who had walked a long way around the Sea of Galilee to be with Jesus became hungry, the disciples thought only of sending them away on their own to find food (Matt. 14:15).

When some little children were brought to Jesus for blessing, the disciples rebuked those who brought them (19:13).

Peter thought he would be extremely generous to forgive someone “up to seven times” (18:21).

Even on the night of Jesus’ betrayal, as their Lord agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter, James, and John could not stay awake with Him (26:40, 45).

The disciples were selfish, proud, weak, and cowardly. They showed little potential even for dependability, much less for greatness. Yet Jesus chose them for disciples, even to be His inner circle of twelve. They were raw material that He would make into useful instruments.

All the disciples were probably not as rough and unpromising as the first and most dominant four Jesus called, but not one

was chosen from among the Jewish religious leaders—the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, priests, or rabbis.

It was no doubt partly that fact that caused those leaders to reject Jesus. They could not believe that anyone who Himself was not an official leader, and who chose no official leaders to be His personal students and co-workers, could possibly be the Messiah.

It was beyond their comprehension that God's own Son would bypass the proper leaders of His chosen people when He came to establish His kingdom.

The only apostle who had been a Jewish religious leader was not among the original twelve, and he considered himself “one untimely born.” He knew that his own calling was exceptional and reflected God's exceeding grace (1 Cor. 15:8–10).

He reminded the Corinthian believers,

“For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God” (1 Cor. 1:26–29).

Jesus did not simply command His disciples to become **fishers of men**, but promised that He would **make** them fishermen for men's souls. As He later would make clear on more than one occasion, that promise was also a caution. Not only was He willing to make them into disciplers, but they could never be effective disciplers—or effective disciples in any way—without His power. *“I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).*

A number of qualities that make a good fisherman can also help make a good evangelist.

First, a fisherman needs to be **patient**, because he knows that it often takes time to find a school of fish. Fishermen learn to wait. Second, a fisherman must have **perseverance**. It is not simply a matter of waiting patiently in one place, hoping some fish will eventually show up. It is a matter of going from place to place, and sometimes back again, over and over—until the fish are found. Third, fishermen must have **good instinct** for going to the right place and dropping the net at the right moment. Poor timing has lost many a catch, both of fish and of men. A fourth quality is **courage**. Commercial fishermen, certainly ones such as those on the Sea of Galilee, frequently face considerable danger from storms and various mishaps.

A good fisherman also keeps himself **out of sight** as much as possible. It is very easy for ourselves to get in the way of our witnessing, causing people to turn away.

A good soul-winner keeps himself out of the picture as much as possible.

When Jesus called the disciples to commit themselves to evangelism, He also committed Himself to train them and empower them. Following the Lord's example, the church not only must call its members to evangelize, but must continually train and encourage them in that calling. The Lord not only empowers his disciples to witness but empowers them to train others to witness. In other words, He empowers His disciples to disciple, just as He promised in the Great Commission. “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations” (Matt. 28:18–19).

Jesus first sent the disciples out two-by-two on brief missions, instructing them about what they should and should not do and say (Mark 6:7–11). After three years of teaching and training in short-term assignments, He finally left them permanently on their own. Yet they were not on

their own, because He would henceforth not only be with them but in them (Matt. 28:20; John 16:13–15).

Both in Jesus' teaching and in His example we can see principles that every soul-winner must emulate. First of all, Jesus was available. It seems incredible that the Son of God, who had so very little time to teach and train the slow-learning disciples, would be so open to those who came to Him for comfort or healing. He never turned down a request for help.

Second, Jesus showed no favoritism. The poor and outcast could approach Him as easily as the wealthy and powerful. The influential Jairus and the powerful Roman centurion had no advantage over the Samaritan woman of Sychar or the woman taken in adultery.

Third, Jesus was totally sensitive to the needs of those around Him. He always recognized an open heart, a repentant sinner. Even when the crowd pressed around Him, He noticed the woman who touched the hem of His garment. "Jesus turning and seeing her said, 'Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.' And at once the woman was made well" (Matt. 9:20–22). When we are sensitive to Christ's Spirit, He will make us sensitive to others, and will lead us to them or them to us.

Fourth, Jesus usually secured a public profession or testimony. Sometimes He gave specific instruction, as He did to the man He delivered from demons (Mark 5:19), whereas at other times the desire to witness was spontaneous, as with the woman of Sychar (John 4:28–29).

Fifth, Jesus showed love and tenderness to those He sought to win. Again His experience with the woman at Sychar gives a beautiful example. She not only was a religious outcast in the eyes of Jews but was an adulteress. She had had five husbands and was then living with a man to whom she was not married. Yet Jesus firmly but gently led her to the place of faith. Through her, many other Samaritans were led to salvation (John 4:7–42).

Finally, Jesus always took time. In contrast to many of His followers, Jesus always had time for others. Some Christian workers are so busy with "the Lord's work" that they have no time for others—though that was a primary characteristic of Jesus' own ministry. Even while on His way to heal Jairus' daughter, Jesus took time to heal the woman who had suffered from a hemorrhage for twelve years (Mark 5:21–34).

The response of Peter, Andrew, James, and John to Jesus' call was the same. **They immediately left** what they were doing **and followed Him**. Their obedience was instant and without hesitation. At this time they had little knowledge of Jesus' teaching or of what following Him would cost. But it was enough for them to know who He was and that His call to them was a divine call.

From many subsequent accounts in the gospels we know that none of the disciples at this time had a passion for souls, or a passion for any part of the Lord's work. In fact, their response to unbelief was to call for instant divine destruction (see Luke 9:51–56). Passion came only after understanding and obedience. They developed compassion, humility, understanding, patience, and love as they learned from and obeyed Jesus. Obedience is the spark that lights the fire of passion. The way to develop a love for souls is to obey Jesus' call to win souls. As we do that, God will kindle that spark of obedience into a great flame of passion. This is the time of gracious

evangelism, not of consuming judgment, as our Lord made clear in the parable of the tares (Matt. 13:24–30, 36–43).

David Brainerd, the great missionary to the American Indians, who died while still in his twenties, said, “Oh, that I were a flame of fire in my Master’s cause.” His selfless obedience proved the sincerity of that desire, and God gave him a burning heart for lost souls that has few parallels in the history of the church. Henry Martyn, missionary to India and Persia, prayed that he might “burn out for God,” and that is what God graciously allowed him to do.

Such burning desire comes only from the pilot light of obedience. Like David Brainerd, Robert Murray McCheyne died before he was thirty. Of him Courtland Myers wrote: “Everywhere he stepped Scotland shook. Whenever he opened his mouth a spiritual force swept in every direction. Thousands followed him to the feet of Christ.” Visitors who came to see the church where McCheyne had preached were shown a table, chair, and open Bible. They were then told how that man of God spent hours with his head buried in the Bible, weeping for those to whom he would preach. Myers then comments, “With such a passion for souls, is it any wonder that the Holy Spirit gave McCheyne a magnetic personality which drew so many to the Savior?”

The hymn “Let the Lower Lights Be Burning” is based on a story told by D. L. Moody. A ship was coming into Cleveland harbor on Lake Erie on a stormy night. The harbor had two sets of lights to guide incoming vessels. One set was high on the bluff above the harbor and could be seen for many miles. The other set was down near the coastline and was used to guide the ships through the rocks as they came nearer to port. On that particular night the wind and rain had extinguished the lower lights, and the pilot suggested they stay out in the lake until daylight. The captain, however, was afraid of the ship’s being destroyed by the storm and decided to risk making the harbor. But without the lower lights to guide it, the ship was wrecked on the rocks, and many of the men drowned. In applying that story to Christian witnessing, Moody said, “The upper lights in heaven are burning as brightly as ever they’ve burned. But what about the lower lights?”¹

GotQuestions.org

Why is the order of Jesus’ calling His disciples different in some of the gospels?

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., [Matthew](#), vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 111–120.

Each of the four gospels includes the calling of Jesus' first disciples; the **Synoptic Gospels** (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) also provide lists of the Twelve, whereas John simply mentions them as a group (**Matthew 4:18–22; 10:2–4; Mark 1:16–20; 3:16–19; Luke 5:4–11; 6:13–16; John 1:35–51**).

The order in which the disciples were called and the order in which their names are given in the lists vary by account.

In **Matthew 4:18–22**, the first disciples to be called are listed like this:

***Simon Peter and Andrew,
James and John***

Mark 1:16–20, lists the first disciples in the same order:

***Simon and Andrew
James and John***

Luke 5:4–11 lists the first disciples as

***Simon Peter
James and John***

John 1:35–51 relates Jesus' early encounters with these men:

Andrew and an unnamed man — almost certainly John, who never names himself in his own gospel

Simon Peter

Philip

Nathanael (also called Bartholomew)

The first six disciples, then, were Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, and Bartholomew.

The differences between John's account and the Synoptics' account are easily explained. John relates the first, introductory meeting of Jesus with Andrew, John, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael. The Synoptics describe the actual calling of these men to follow Jesus. When Jesus told Peter in the fishing boat to "follow Me," and Peter immediately left his nets and

obeyed, Peter was not following a total stranger. He had met Jesus previously and had spent time with Him. The same is true for Andrew, James, and John.

Matthew (also called Levi) was called separately, sometime after the first six
(Matthew 9:9–13; Mark 2:13–17; Luke 5:27–32).

The Bible does not describe the calling of the other five disciples.

Jesus had many people following Him early on in His ministry.

Luke 6:12–16 tells us that, after a night of solitary prayer, Jesus officially named His twelve disciples, whom He also called apostles:

Simon Peter
Andrew
James
John
Philip
Bartholomew (Nathanael)
Matthew
Thomas
James son of Alphaeus
Simon who was called the Zealot
Judas son of James (elsewhere called Thaddaeus)
Judas Iscariot

The order in which the apostles were called is not the primary focus in the accounts of their calling. Rather, the emphasis is on the fact that they were called at all.

None of them/us were worthy
of Jesus' calling.

Few, if any, were of noble background, and none of them had religious clout. At least four of the disciples were fishermen. Simon was a Zealot, part of a political group that sought to overthrow the Roman government. Matthew worked for the Roman government as a tax collector and would have been viewed essentially as a traitor to the Israelites. Judas Iscariot eventually betrayed Jesus.

DESPITE THE DIVERSITY OF BACKGROUNDS

**AND EDUCATION LEVELS AMONG THESE MEN,
THEY HAD AN IMPORTANT CALLING AS THE
ORIGINAL TWELVE DISCIPLES OF JESUS.**

Theirs was an honorable work.

They became eyewitnesses of Jesus' works on earth as well as His resurrection. It was these men (excluding Judas Iscariot) who laid the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:20). It was through their Spirit-empowered witness that the church began (Acts 2). Their work helped provide the New Testament writings we have today. The twelve foundations of the wall of the future New Jerusalem will have engraved on them the names of the twelve apostles (Revelation 21:14).

NIV Application Commentary:

Matthew 4:12–25

WHEN JESUS HEARD that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee. ¹³Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali—¹⁴to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁵“Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
the way to the sea, along the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles—
¹⁶the people living in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death
a light has dawned.”

¹⁷From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”

¹⁸As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.

¹⁹“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” ²⁰At once they left their nets and followed him.

²¹Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, ²²and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

²³Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. ²⁴News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them. ²⁵Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

Original Meaning:

JESUS' RETREAT TO the desert to fast may have seemed inconsistent with what some anticipated from a messianic deliverer. But although he was weak at the end of a fast, Jesus vanquished Satan with a word of command.

This “deliverer” did not fit stereotypical messianic molds, because the power and authority Jesus displayed was neither militaristic nor political. But his authority and power were staggering nonetheless. Jesus was powerful enough to conquer the devilish ruler of this world, universal enough to include both Jews and Gentiles in his messianic gospel, authoritative enough to transform simple men into leaders of a movement that changed the course of history, and effective enough to attend to the basic needs of the people—body, soul, and spirit. This is the kind of messianic deliverer that advances the kingdom of God.²

² Michael J. Wilkins, [Matthew](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 170–171.

Jesus Messiah Calls Fishers of Men (4:18–22)

THE KINGDOM OF God advances in a unique way as Jesus walks along the shore of the sea of Galilee, probably near Capernaum, and calls fishermen to join him.

The “Sea of Galilee,” located about sixty miles north of Jerusalem, is called “Sea of Kinnereth” in the Old Testament.¹⁷

Elsewhere in the New Testament it is called (1) the “Sea of Tiberias” (John 6:1; 21:1), because Herod Antipas’s capital city, Tiberias, lay on the west shore;

(2) “Lake of Gennesaret” (Luke 5:1), derived from a town and plain by that name situated above the west/northwest shore; and

(3) sometimes simply “the lake” (Luke 5:2; 8:22; 23:33).

This lake is located in the great Jordan rift valley, at least 636 feet below sea level.

The Jordan River enters the lake in the north and exits to the south, where it finally terminates in the Dead Sea about 65 miles to the south.

Ancient writers all acclaim the Sea of Galilee for its fresh waters and pleasant temperatures, unlike the Dead Sea. It had clear sandy beaches rather than swampy marshes along the seashore, and it was well stocked with fish. The lake’s low elevation provides it with relatively mild, year-round temperatures, so that people could sleep outdoors in the surrounding areas (e.g., 15:32; Mark 8:2).

However, **encompassed as it is with mountain ranges to the east and west that rise over 2,650 feet from the level of the lake, its low-lying setting results in sudden violent downdrafts and storms (cf. Matt. 8:24; Mark 4:37; Luke 8:23; John 6:18).**

As Jesus walks along, he sees two men, Simon Peter and Andrew his brother, “casting a net” (lit., “throwing a cast net”) into the sea (4:18). The “cast net” (*amphiblestron*) was used by a single fisherman. It was circular, about 20–25 feet in diameter, with lead sinkers attached to the outer edge. Gathering the net on his arm, the fisherman would throw it out onto the water,

either while standing in a boat or in shallow water. The net was pulled down by the sinkers on the outer ring (like a parachute), sinking to the bottom with fish trapped inside. This is tedious work.

Jesus approaches these men and calls out, *“Come, follow me ... and I will make you fishers of men”* (4:19).

Surprisingly, in the middle of their workday, they immediately leave their nets and follow him (4:20).

The expression *“left their nets”* implies that they are leaving behind everything, including livelihood and home.

Peter states it emphatically later:

“We have left everything to follow you!”
(19:27).

Peter turns his home, in which his wife and mother-in-law live (cf. 8:14–15), into the base of operations for Jesus’ Galilean ministry.

They heed Jesus’ call to change their primary occupation from fishing for fish to fishing for human souls.

Next,

Jesus sees a bit farther down the beach two other brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who are mending their fishing nets (*diktya*) in their boat with their father. These nets are most likely the trammel net, which is a compound net of three layers, made up of five units each over a hundred feet long, which were used by at least two crews of boats at night when the fish couldn't see the entangling nets.

The recent extraordinary discovery in 1986 of an ancient fishing boat at Galilee from the time of Jesus gives us an idea of the kind of boat the sons of Zebedee may have owned. It was equipped for cooking during nightlong commercial fishing expeditions on the lake.

Probably after a night of fishing with their father and others of their hired crew (cf. Mark 1:20), James and John are preparing their nets for the next commercial excursion on the lake.

Caring for this equipment took up much of a morning after a night of fishing. But as with Peter and Andrew, Jesus interrupts their busy activities and calls them. They also leave everything behind to follow Jesus, including their boat and their father (4:21–22).

By obeying Jesus' call, they are relinquishing commitment to the family business, their assets, and their livelihood, surely having an impact on varied family relationships, responsibilities and obligations.

Several important points underscore the significance of Matthew's account of this scene of Jesus' first public activity.

(1) *Focus on Jesus.*

The primary focus of this incident is on Jesus and the kingdom of heaven he has announced.

The calling scene especially highlights Jesus' authority.

When he calls, people obey.

It is by virtue of Jesus' authority alone that one can embark on the life of discipleship and sustain it.

Jesus is the Spirit-anointed messianic Son, in whom the kingdom has arrived.

The only appropriate response is to obey immediately.

(2) *Kingdom workers.*

Jesus is enlisting workers to join him in his kingdom mission

Jesus is also offering a promising outcome:

“I will make you fishers of men” (4:19).

In the future, “they will be as effective in seeking men as they have been in catching fish.”

They not only will be sent out on a short-term mission with Jesus’ message of the arrival of the kingdom (cf. 10:5–7), but they also will go out on a worldwide mission making disciples of all the nations (28:18–20).

These four will become the inner circle among the Twelve around Jesus (see comments on 10:1–4), and

Peter himself will provide much of the leadership in the early days of the apostolic church (see comments on 16:17–20).

(3) A prior relationship.

It is important to note that the call and response of the four brothers is based on an extended prior relationship that they had enjoyed with Jesus.

THIS IS NOT THE FIRST ENCOUNTER BETWEEN THEM AND JESUS.

**The Fourth Gospel helps to fill in
some of the background to the relationship.**

Andrew was one of the two disciples of John the Baptist who left him to become a disciple of Jesus, and he immediately brought his brother Peter to Jesus (**John 1:35–42**).

The other unnamed disciple has been traditionally identified as the apostle John. In all likelihood at least, Andrew, Peter, and John (and perhaps James?) were the ones who accompanied him to the wedding at Cana, where they observed the miracle and believed in Jesus (John 2:1–2, 11).

They also most likely are the disciples of Jesus who ministered with him in Judea during the first year of his ministry (cf. **3:22–23; 4:1–3**).

Thus,

by the time of the incidents here in Galilee, about a year later, they have had plenty of time to consider Jesus' mission.

We are nowhere told why they had gone back to fishing, but...

Matthew highlights the urgency of their response to Jesus' call by emphasizing with identical wording in 4:20, 22: (lit.) **"immediately leaving - they followed him."**

This was no emotional, spur-of-the-moment decision.

They must have been waiting for this momentous occasion to join Jesus as he embarks on his kingdom mission, so they respond at once when he calls.

(4) Personal commitment to Jesus.

While the emphasis of the story is primarily on calling the four to join in Jesus' kingdom mission, that task is accomplished above all as an outgrowth of their relationship to Jesus: ***" 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said"*** (4:19).

Allegiance

to his person is *the* decisive act.

But what might this tell us about the spiritual condition of the brothers at the time of their call, and how much do they know about Jesus?

As noted, these four had extensive prior acquaintance with Jesus and even believed in him as Messiah (cf. John 1:41; 2:11).

We should emphasize that they are responding as much as they can to as much as they understand.

Throughout Jesus' ministry there is an increasing understanding of who he is, and that increased understanding requires a corresponding adjustment of their commitment to him.

Comparing incidents in the later ministry, we see Peter making a confession about Jesus' identity that is only at a later point revealed to him (16:16), and the Fourth Gospel tells of an incident some time later in which Peter makes a statement of commitment to Jesus for eternal life (John 6:66–68).

As we watch various persons encounter Jesus, we must always recognize that this is a unique time, where the full significance of the entrance of the God-man to history is only slowly comprehended.

In fact, it takes the resurrection and Pentecost to finally bring full comprehension.

Although the explicit intention of the call is to join Jesus in fishing for men, these brothers are first and foremost being called to commit themselves to Jesus.

(5) A distinctive call to a unique form of discipleship.

Finally, this “call” sets a distinctive mark on Jesus’ form of discipleship.

Although Matthew does not here refer to the four as “disciples,” they are the ones assumed to be in view when Jesus sits down and teaches his “disciples” in the following scene at the Sermon on the Mount (**5:1–2**).

On the surface, Jesus has many of the characteristics of a Jewish rabbi. He teaches in their synagogues and on the Sabbath, he teaches in accordance with Jewish customs, he is given respect due a teacher of

the law, his disciples follow him around, and he is even called “rabbi” (26:49; Mark 9:5; John 1:49).

But as Jesus’ ministry unfolds, he establishes a form of discipleship that is unlike that of the rabbis.

The normal pattern in Israel was for a prospective disciple to approach a rabbi & ask to study with him (e.g., 8:19).

Later rabbinic disciples followed their master around, often imitating the master’s teaching of Torah, because “imitating the master is imitating Moses’ imitation of God.”³²

In the early stage of the Jesus movement various people came to Jesus in similar fashion (e.g., John 1:38, 49; 3:2).

But at the inauguration of his kingdom mission, Jesus establishes a new pattern, because he is the one who takes the initiative to seek out and call these brothers to enter into a permanent relationship with him.

Even though it is probable that Jesus' disciples memorized much of his teaching and passed it on as the tradition of the church, they were ultimately committed to his person, not just his teaching.

The goal of a Jewish disciple was someday to become a master, or rabbi, himself, and to have his own disciples. But Jesus' disciples were always to remain disciples of their Master and Teacher, Jesus, and to follow him only (cf. **23:1–12**).

This had long-reaching implications.

Discipleship to Jesus was going to be different from what many might have anticipated. It was not going to be simply an apprenticeship program. Discipleship was a life that began in relationship with the Master and moved into all areas of their experience. This is the beginning of kingdom life.

Bridging Contexts:

JESUS AT CENTER STAGE.

The story that Matthew recounts has a variety of settings and characters that move on and off the narrative stage.

If we think back through chapters 1–4, several situations & persons immediately spring to mind.

In the remote village of Nazareth, **Joseph**, with his remarkable integrity, takes center stage in chapter 1 as he receives the announcement of the miraculous conception of his betrothed,

Mary. In chapter 2, several diverse scenes and characters receive the limelight:

the **Magi** arriving from the east,

evil King Herod carrying out his dastardly deeds from the holy city of Jerusalem,

Joseph heroically saving the threatened child and mother by fleeing Bethlehem to go to Egypt and then returning to Nazareth.

From the Judean desert **John the Baptist** makes a grand entrance in chapter 3 as the long-awaited prophet who commands repentance from the people of Israel, including

the **religious leaders**.

At the Jordan River the descent of **the Spirit** and

the voice of **the Father** add dramatic effect to the baptismal scene of Jesus.

We hiss in chapter 4 as the epitome of evil arrives on the stage in the person of **the devil**, but we applaud as he is beaten in the first skirmish of the war between Jesus and Satan.

By the Sea of Galilee, we try to put ourselves in the sandals of **the four fishermen** as they amazingly sacrifice their livelihood to go fish for souls.

Excitement rises as **people from all over Galilee** and the surrounding regions experience healing from many maladies.

Each of these scenes and characters captures our attention as the story unfolds—and rightly they should, since each plays an important role in the historical narration.

However, as we think back through these characters, one figure often is left out of the picture—Jesus.

We are often so focused on other characters and details of the narrative scene because of what we can learn from them that we overlook the one about whom the entire story is told. Jesus almost seems to recede into the backdrop.

But as we discussed in 1:18–25...

although we will learn from the roles of other characters and the scenes in which they appear...

center stage
always belongs to Jesus.

From 1:1, where he is declared to be the culmination of the line of David and of Abraham, to 28:20, where he declares that he will be with his disciples until the end of the age, Jesus is the One about whom this entire Gospel is written.

Although this may seem obvious, unfortunately it is a fundamental hermeneutical principle that is violated on a regular basis by those reading the Gospels and by those teaching or preaching from them.

In our search to make the bridge from the text to our world, we can be so focused on the supporting cast and details that most intrigue us that we look right past the primary figure about whom the story was written.

Although other characters and the scenes in which they appear serve an invaluable role by highlighting various facets of Jesus and his ministry, first and foremost Matthew tells a story about Jesus.

This is evident from the present passage, as Matthew features significant truths about Jesus from the setting of his ministry, the four supporting figures, and the multitudes who respond to him.

Galilee.

Surprisingly, the scene where Jesus conducts his public ministry is Galilee.

One familiar with Israel's history may have expected Messiah to focus his ministry on Jerusalem, the center of religious power and prestige and prophetic hope.

Galilee is the antithesis of Jerusalem.

But Jesus does not associate with the high and the mighty, and he does not attend to the religious hierarchy.

He goes to the land of darkness,
where the light of the gospel
will shine the brightest.

The prophetic hope of Isaiah 9:1–6 will be fulfilled, but it begins in Galilee, far from Jerusalem, where many hoped the restoration of power and glory would come to the house of David.

It is in Galilee that the hint of the Old Testament hope for all the nations begins.

The incidents unfolding in Galilee require that the people's expectations of the messianic ministry must be adjusted.

The brothers.

The response of the two sets of brothers is hugely significant, but only because of what it tells us about Jesus' call.

Their response is remarkable evidence that Jesus wields a different kind of messianic authority.

Without army, without sword, and without the backing of the religious establishment, Jesus' authority as the inaugurator of the kingdom demands unqualified obedience.

When he calls, people must obey.

Matthew's abrupt narration of the calling of the four brothers assumes a prior relationship with Jesus, and they join Jesus as fellow workers in his kingdom mission.

But Matthew's account of the call is general enough that it could summon readers at various stages of faith—for example, the person being called to repentance and faith in Jesus as the messianic Savior, or the person hearing a call to leadership in the church, or the person being called to repent of half-hearted devotion and give himself or herself fully to Jesus.

Discipleship to Jesus is different from what is found among relationships to other religious leaders.

Jesus is the authoritative inaugurator of the kingdom, which indicates for Matthew's readers that their lives will find true fulfillment only as they follow Jesus' call to join him in the advancement of the kingdom of God.

The crowds.

The crowds are also evidence of the nature of Jesus' identity and ministry, but their testimony is mixed.

On the one hand, the crowds are an enthusiastic witness that the inauguration of the kingdom includes compassionate care for all of the vagaries of the fallen human condition: physical, emotional, and spiritual. Jesus heals all types of conditions.

But on the other hand, the enthusiasm of the crowds is fickle. The response of the crowds at first seems to set an assured, optimistic future for Jesus' ministry. But we know a different ending.

What happened to change the response of the crowds?

Apparently,
the initial enthusiasm was more of a testimony to their own needs being

met than a testimony of their
commitment to Jesus as Messiah.

*Perhaps Matthew wants to encourage his
own audience that
appearances can be deceiving.*

**IF THE CROWD THAT FOLLOWED JESUS
ENTHUSIASTICALLY AT THE BEGINNING
COULD TURN AND REJECT HIM AT THE
END, THEN THE RESPONSE TO
MATTHEW'S READERS' MISSION MAY
NEED A "REALITY CHECK."**

*The initial response of the crowds is not the
final validation of Jesus' messianic ministry.³*

Contemporary Significance:

THE APPROPRIATE BRIDGE from the narrative
of Matthew's text to contemporary significance
lies in **determining what the various characters**

³ Michael J. Wilkins, [Matthew](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 183–185.

and settings tell us about Jesus and his historical ministry.

When we have traversed that bridge, we are much more likely to draw appropriate significance for our own situations.

Three points surface from the inauguration of Jesus' ministry to Israel.

1. The light that dispels darkness brings life.

The geographical region into which Jesus goes to initiate his ministry was Galilee of the Gentiles, which Matthew says is metaphorically a land of darkness, a land under the shadow of death. But the sun doesn't shine any less brightly in Galilee than in Jerusalem or Bethlehem. The disease rate in Galilee is no higher than Judea or even Samaria. Rather, "darkness" in both the Old and New Testaments is an evocative word. **If light symbolizes God, darkness connotes everything that is anti-God: the wicked (Prov. 2:13–14; 1 Thess. 5:4–7), judgment (Ex. 10:21; Matt. 25:30), and death (Ps. 88:13).**

But few in Galilee can see the darkness or the shadow of death. The Galilee region to this day is one of the most beautiful areas in all of Palestine. The magnificent lake, flowing rivers, rolling hillsides, and luscious agriculture all are found in Galilee.

The mansions and theater at Sepphoris and the palaces and stadium at Tiberias indicate that Galilee was not a cultural backwater. Nonetheless, the

darkness of this world is real, even though most do not notice it. It is a region under the influence of Gentiles, with their gods, their lifestyles, their worldview.

Although darkness is opaque to humankind, it is transparent to God (Ps. 139:12), and long ago he promised to send light.

With the arrival of Jesus,
a great light now shines in the darkness
(Matt. 4:16).

Those responding to the light were ushered into the sphere of life in which darkness and even the shadow of death are dispelled (cf. Job 22:28; Ps. 27:1).

Other New Testament authors emphasize this theme, declaring that Jesus is life-giving light in whom is life (John 1:4), and those who follow him “will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life” (John 8:12). Believers are “sons of light” (John 12:36; Eph. 5:8) and “children of light” (1 Thess. 5:5). Light possesses powers essential to true life, so “to be in the light” comes to mean simply “to live.” This indicates life eternal, but also life temporal on earth. The one who comes into the light of Jesus Messiah is brought into the life that is characterized by light.

This is an essential theme for us to lay hold of.

The darkness of our own world is real even when we, or those around us, don't notice it.

Darkness is most directly the absence of light, so to be away from Jesus is to be in darkness.

This is a necessary perspective to maintain as we go about our day-to-day activities.

We don't have to be among the dregs of society to find ourselves in darkness.

I live in a beautiful little beach community in Southern California, where the sun shines brightly for most days of the year. Yet even in the brightness of this little world, people are without Jesus and are living under the cloud of the darkness of this world.

We can't let the superficial appearances of people mask the real needs that even they might not recognize. To reach them most effectively we must take as our calling the joy of living in the light of Jesus and continually allowing our lives to shine into theirs with the true kingdom life.

2. Jesus' call today.

On the historical level, the call of the brothers serves foremost to highlight Jesus' authority to enlist mission workers as the inaugurator of the kingdom.

The brothers' response illustrates how obedience is the only appropriate answer to Jesus' authoritative call.

When Jesus calls, we also must obey. Jesus has authority over every area of a disciple's life, and to whatever he calls us, we must immediately obey.

While this does have significance for those who are heeding a call to salvation, because of the significant prior relationship between the brothers and Jesus, we cannot assume that Matthew intends this scene to be understood predominantly as a paradigm for evangelism.

As **John Calvin** states, *this is “not merely a general description of the call to faith, but a particular one for a certain task.”*

Modern readers must hear in Jesus' call a challenge for all of us to put aright our lifelong ambitions.

These four brothers were already Jesus' disciples, ones who had committed themselves to Jesus as Messiah (cf. **John 1:41; 2:2, 11**). But in this scene, they are

being called to put their profession in proper perspective in the light of the needs of reaching their world with the message of salvation.

As the four are ultimately called to a role as apostles in the foundation of the church, they personally will be required to leave their prior profession.

But not every disciple of Jesus is called to leave behind his or her profession. One of the more striking examples we will see later is Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus but retained his position in society, along with his great wealth, and offered an indispensable service to Jesus at the moment of greatest need that only he could offer (cf. 27:57–60).

Whatever our profession, whether preacher or plumber, teacher or technician, hotel maid or hospital orderly, discipleship means that we place as the priority of our lives joining with Jesus in reaching our daily world with the good news of life in the kingdom of heaven.

I cannot reach non-Christian police officers as efficiently as committed Christian police officers. No pastor can enter into the complex world of corporate finance as effectively as a committed and knowledgeable Christian businessperson. We each have a privileged

place of ministry that is unique to following Jesus in our own daily lives.

Nor does the brothers' immediate obedience deny common sense or appropriate accountability to their personal, familial, and professional responsibilities. Although they "left everything," Peter continues to live in his own home with his wife and mother-in-law, and likely so does his brother Andrew and his family (8:14–15). **There is a sense in which Peter and the rest of the Twelve give up everything to play their foundational role in the church, yet we never hear of them abandoning their responsibilities to provide for their families.**

The apostle Paul will later rebuke believers who were ministerial busybodies and did not care for the needs of their family (2 Thess. 3:6–13; 1 Tim. 5:8).

On one level the passage gives insight to the historical circumstances of Jesus' announcement of the kingdom of heaven and his recruitment of four crucial partners in that historically unique pronouncement. **Yet the incident is a paradigm for disciples of all ages to recognize that we must see ourselves as fishers of men in whatever our calling.**

Our lives find fullest meaning as we follow Jesus' call to join him in advancing the kingdom of heaven.

3. A life-transforming message of the kingdom of God.

Al Green is a modern-day "fisherman." He was the superstar singer of soul hits in the 1970s, such as "Love and Happiness" and "Let's Stay Together." As uplifting as those early melodies were, he experienced a change in his career path that brought an even more powerful message in song. He was "born again" at the height of his popularity, and today

he is “the Reverend Al Green,” pastor of a church in Memphis, Tennessee, where he sings hits like “Saved,” and “Straighten Out Your Life.” An interviewer for a secular magazine seemed stumped by the transformation he saw in Green’s life, which he describes as “his chameleon-like nature.”

But the tale of Green’s life is not simply a decision to change styles of music. In his words, it was a calling. While performing a soul concert in Cincinnati in 1979, he slipped from the stage, miraculously avoiding serious injury. Al Green interpreted the event as a calling from God to retire from secular music and lift his voice in praise unto God. His calling brought peaceful wholeness to his life, where he could use his natural talent in the service of the kingdom of God. The rewards of fame don’t hold the same attraction, he says. “Now they have become unimportant to me. The riches are in the souls of men.”⁴⁷

Whether or not our calling is as dramatic as Al Green’s, the story of the ancient call of the four fishermen provides enough incentive for each of us to recognize our responsibility to serve Jesus in the mission of the kingdom of God.

Jesus describes his disciples as light and light-bearers (Matt. 5:14–16), and Paul indicates to the churches in Asia Minor and Macedonia that believer’s lives are a shining light of witness to the world around them (Eph. 5:8; Phil. 2:15). So, it is our task now to pass on the divine light we have received, because the world out there will die eternally without it.

*What we have received in the secret intimacy of the
community of believers we are to proclaim
fearlessly “in the light”
(Matt. 10:27; Luke 12:3).*

All those who have entered into the light now bear the responsibility as missionaries of Christ, shining out as “lights in a dark world” with the light of Jesus himself

(Phil. 2:15).

In a chapel message at our seminary, guest speaker and pastor **E. V. Hill** made the statement that the church throughout the centuries has struggled with the temptation to be “keepers of the aquarium instead of fishers of men.”

Those words hit home to each of us in attendance.

There is a world of hurt outside the walls of our churches and organizations, but we can be so intent on building our ministries that we don't go to where people are hurting.

Instead, we just take care of our own.

As Jesus' disciples, we all have the incredible privilege, and obligation, to carry the message of the gospel of the

*kingdom to those who live in the
darkness all around us.*

The Gospel Coalition:

Harmony of the Gospels

AN ESSAY BY Andy Naselli

SUMMARY

When you carefully read the four Gospels, you will inevitably compare accounts and wonder, “Now how does what John writes here fit with what Matthew writes there?” In other words, you will encounter what might appear to be discrepancies or contradictions between the Gospels. How should you approach apparent contradictions? The following four starting points will help readers of the Gospels approach apparent contradictions in a helpful way.

1. Presuppose That the Gospels Do Not Contradict Each Other

Your heart's posture toward the Bible is important. A big difference exists between approaching the Bible as a skeptic or as a humble worshiper.

God says,

“This is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word” ([Isa 66:2b](#)).

The Gospels are God's words, so we should presuppose that they do not contradict each other.

A presupposition is “a thing tacitly assumed beforehand at the beginning of a line of argument or course of action” (*New Oxford American Dictionary*). **We all have presuppositions. The issue is whether what we presuppose is true.** We should presuppose that the Gospel accounts are completely true—that they harmonize without error—for at least two reasons.

Reason 1: The Gospels Are God-breathed Scripture. ¹

This reason is based on the character of God and the nature of Scripture.

The Character of God. God is entirely truthful—without error (inerrant) and incapable of error (infallible). [God does not and cannot lie](#) ([Num 23:19](#); [1Sam](#)

[15:29](#); [2Sam 7:28](#); [John 3:33](#); [14:6](#); [Rom 3:4](#); [Titus 1:2](#); [Heb 6:18](#); [1Jn 5:6](#)).

The Nature of Scripture. The Bible is inspired—that is, God-breathed: “All Scripture is breathed out by God” ([2Tim 3:16](#)). How? “Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” ([2Pet 1:21b](#)). God the Holy Spirit carried along the Bible’s authors to write God-breathed Scripture.

If the entire Bible is God-breathed, then it necessarily follows that the Bible is entirely true—that is, it is without error and incapable of error.

But that does not mean that the Bible is without difficulties or apparent discrepancies.

We cannot perfectly interpret the Bible because (1) we do not have all the data relevant to understanding the Bible (e.g., archeology continually discovers new facts), (2) we are finite and sinful and thus misinterpret the data we already have.

We cannot demonstrate inerrancy to everyone’s satisfaction until all the facts are available and it is possible to perfectly interpret the Bible.

In the meantime, **the proper way to respond to God’s words is to trust that what the all-knowing, all-good God has spoken is completely true.**

Some might object, “You are deriving your doctrine of the Bible from the Bible. That seems like circular reasoning.” Yes, but that does not necessarily invalidate the reasoning. The evangelical doctrine of the Bible is no more circular than scientific theories.

Everyone uses circular reasoning to defend the ultimate authority for beliefs. Although the ultimate standard of truth for evangelicals is God and his Word, for most others it is something else—usually themselves.

The debates about whether the Bible is God-breathed and without error hinge on one issue: *Do you accept what the Bible claims about itself?*

Many useful arguments show that what the Bible claims about itself is reasonable (e.g., its historical reliability and fulfilled prophecies), but ultimately God’s Spirit must convince us that what the Bible claims is true because sin has distorted how we perceive reality.

We cannot prove that the Bible is God’s Word by appealing to any authority besides the Bible itself because such an authority must be superior to God—and such an authority does not exist.

Reason 2: The Gospels Are Historically Reliable

The Gospels are historically reliable for at least three reasons: (1) They date early—in the first century. And their manuscript evidence is far better than for any other ancient literature outside the Bible. (2) They feature credible eye-witness testimony. They include details that someone fabricating an apologetic account would exclude (e.g., women are the first people to witness that Jesus rose from the dead). (3) They are strikingly consistent with the historical-cultural context of first-century Judea (e.g., proper nouns and details about geography and customs). They do not falsely report facts.²

2. Understand Why the Gospels Have Apparent Contradictions

Three days ago, my school's IT person planned to transfer my previous MacBook Pro to a new (refurbished) one. (I say "my" MacBook, but my school owns it.) The plan was for a seamless transfer. I was supposed to receive a carbon-copy of my previous computer on the new one. But the transfer was unsuccessful, and it damaged the hard drive on my previous MacBook. Then I discovered that my online backup program had not backed-up my digital library for the past nine months. Among other things, I lost over 2,300 PDFs of books and articles plus any annotations I made on PDFs in the past nine months. I have shared this story with some friends over the past few days but with different levels of detail. With my tech-savvy friends, I shared more details. With others, I may have

simply said, “My computer crashed, and I had to start from scratch on a new one.”

If someone examined all of my statements, what would you think if they accused me of making contradictory statements? (1) The MacBook does not belong to *you*; your school owns it. (2) The computer is not *new*; it is a refurbished one. (3) Your computer did not *crash*; someone accidentally damaged the hard drive while trying to transfer it to another computer. (4) You did not have to start *from scratch*; you had backed up most of your documents.

That would not be a fair way to evaluate what I said, would it? The critique is nitpicky and does not respectfully consider what and how I intended to communicate.

Some critics of the Bible are far more nitpicky—unfairly and unreasonably so—in how they critique apparent contradictions in the Gospels. But Mark Strauss explains,

Most claims of contradictions result from demanding more historical precision than the Gospels intend to provide. The Gospels were never meant to be videotapes of events or word-for-word transcripts. It is the normal method of history writing—both ancient and modern—to summarize accounts, paraphrase speeches, omit extraneous details, and report events from a particular vantage point. Most

supposed contradictions in the Gospels can be readily explained from common practices in history writing.³

The Gospels have apparent contradictions for at least four reasons. (What follows paraphrases Strauss.)⁴

Reason 1: The Gospels Paraphrase and Interpret Events and Sayings

Jesus probably spoke in Aramaic most of the time, and the Gospels are in Greek. That means the Gospels translate and thus interpret to some degree.

For example, compare “Blessed are you who are poor” ([Luke 6:20](#)) with “Blessed are the poor *in spirit*” ([Matt 5:3](#)). Jesus may have spoken exactly those words on different occasions, or Matthew (who is already condensing what was probably a longer sermon) may be clarifying what Jesus intended.

We cannot be certain when the Gospels either *authoritatively explain* or *cite verbatim* what Jesus said. But it does not follow that such instances are contradictions.

Reason 2: The Gospels Abbreviate and Omit Events and Sayings

The authors of the Gospels select what events and sayings to include and exclude. And when they choose to include the

same events and sayings, they may present them in different ways.

Matthew often abbreviates events that have more details in Mark or Luke such as when Jesus curses the fig tree ([Matt 21:18–22](#); [Mark 11:12–14, 20–25](#)) or heals Jairus' daughter ([Matt 9:18–26](#); [Mark 5:21–43](#); [Luke 8:40–56](#)) or heals the centurion's servant ([Matt 8:5–13](#); [Luke 7:1–10](#)).

Sometimes one Gospel mentions two individuals ([Matt 8:28; 20:30](#); [Luke 24:4](#)), and another mentions one ([Mark 5:2; 10:46; 16:5](#)). But in such cases, the author who identifies one person does not specify that there was *only* one. The author may simply be highlighting the primary figure and omitting the other.

Reason 3: The Gospels Reorder Events & Sayings

The authors of the Gospels do not always present events and sayings in strictly chronological order. They may arrange them topically or theologically.

For example, when Satan tempts Jesus three times in the wilderness, temptations two and three are in reverse order in [Matthew 4:1–11](#) and [Luke 4:1–13](#). The chronological order is unclear. In Luke's third temptation, Jesus is "on the pinnacle of the temple" (Luke's Gospel emphasizes Jerusalem and the temple). In Matthew's third temptation, Jesus is on "a very

high mountain” (Matthew’s Gospel pictures mountains as places where one receives revelation). But an event is still historical if the author reorders it.

Reason 4: The Gospels Report Similar Events and Sayings

Some episodes are sufficiently different that they must be separate events. **For example, the Gospels present Jesus calling Peter and other disciples gradually in three episodes: Peter ([John 1:35–42](#)); then Andrew, Peter, James, and John ([Matt 4:18–22](#); [Mark 1:16–20](#)); then Peter, James, and John ([Luke 5:1–11](#)).**

Jesus did a lot of teaching and miracles. So it should not surprise us that he told similar stories on various occasions—such as parables about feasting ([Matt 22:1–14](#); [Luke 14:16–24](#)) or money ([Matt 25:14–30](#); [Luke 19:11–27](#)).

And it should not surprise us that he performed similar miracles on various occasions—such as feeding large crowds ([Matt 14:13–21](#); [15:32–39](#)) or healing two blind men ([Matt 9:27–31](#); [20:29–34](#)).

Yes, the Gospels are different.

But they do not *contradict* each other.

3. Compare the Gospel Accounts with Each Other, and Responsibly Discern How They Harmonize

This is where “harmony of the Gospels” books are helpful. They attempt to portray the four Gospels as a single, chronological, historical biography. When events and sayings overlap, harmonies of the Gospels typically use multiple columns (two, three, and sometimes four columns) and place the events and sayings parallel to each other.⁵

It is important to *responsibly* discern how Gospel accounts harmonize. In our zeal to affirm everything the Gospels teach we might notice different details in how different Gospels recount an event and then mistakenly conclude that they are reporting different events. For example, in a polemical book that argues for inerrancy, Harold Lindsell argues that Peter denied Jesus *six* times!⁶ (Jesus told Peter, “You will deny me *three* times” [[Matt 26:34b](#)].)⁷

If you get stuck when trying to harmonize Gospel accounts, then you may consult outstanding resources that helpfully consider options. **You might want to start with study Bibles⁸ and then check out commentaries⁹ and other resources.¹⁰**

4. Focus on Understanding Gospel Passages in Their Literary Context

If you become preoccupied with trying to harmonize every detail in the four Gospels (e.g., calculating the precise chronological storyline), then you may miss out on how each Gospel is distinctively portraying Jesus the Messiah.

The New Testament preserves four perspectives on the one gospel: the Gospel according to Matthew, the Gospel according to Mark, the Gospel according to Luke, and the Gospel according to John.

These Gospels are similar in that they focus on what Jesus taught and did—especially during the final week in his life up to his death on the cross and victorious resurrection. But these Gospels differ in how they present what Jesus taught and did.

Each Gospel has its own theological message:

- In **Matthew**, *Jesus the Messiah-King climactically fulfills the Old Testament.*
- In **Mark**, *Jesus the Messiah and Son of God is a Suffering Servant and a model for his followers.*
- In **Luke**, *Jesus the Messiah fulfills God's plan by seeking and saving the lost.*

- In **John**, *Jesus the Messiah and Son of God gives eternal life to everyone who believes in him.*

The starting point for understanding what a particular passage means is its immediate literary context.

Then you can work outwards to sections within the book and the book as a whole.¹¹ If you do not understand what a Gospel passage means in its literary context, then you will be more likely to misunderstand how it compares to a passage in a different Gospel...

Although it is helpful to ask historical questions about how the Gospels harmonize, our primary interpretive task is to understand Gospel passages in their literary context.¹²

FOOTNOTES

¹For a popular defense, see Andrew David Naselli, “Scripture: How the Bible Is a Book like No Other,” in *Don’t Call It a Comeback: The Same Faith for a New Day*, ed. Kevin DeYoung (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 59–69. (This section updates some of that chapter.) For an academic defense, see D. A. Carson, *Collected Writings on Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010); D. A. Carson, ed., *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).

²See Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John’s Gospel: Issues and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL:

InterVarsity Press, 2002); Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007); Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament: Countering the Challenges to Evangelical Christian Beliefs*, B&H Studies in Christian Apologetics (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2016); Paul Barnett, *Is the New Testament Reliable? A Look at the Historical Evidence*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003); Mark D. Roberts, *Can We Trust the Gospels? Investigating the Reliability of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007); J. Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity: A Homicide Detective Investigates the Claims of the Gospels* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook, 2013); Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016); Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017); Peter J. Williams, *Can We Trust the Gospels?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018); Craig S. Keener, *Christobiography: Memories, History, and the Reliability of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019).

³Mark Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus: An Introduction to Jesus and the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 388.

⁴Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus*, 388–92.

⁵See Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry, *A Harmony of the Gospels with Explanations and Essays: Using the Text of the New American Standard Bible* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978); Steven L. Cox and Kendell H. Easley, eds., *Harmony of the Gospels* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2007). For a harmony of the end of Jesus' earthy ministry (but without multiple columns), see Andreas J. Köstenberger and Justin

Taylor, *The Final Days of Jesus: The Most Important Week of the Most Important Person Who Ever Lived* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014).

¶Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 174–76.

⌘See Craig Blomberg, “Are the Differing Narratives of Peter’s Denials Reconcilable?” The Gospel Coalition, 12 December 2011, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/you-asked-are-the-differing-narratives-of-peters-denials-reconcilable/>.

⌘My top two recommendations: Wayne Grudem, ed., *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008); D. A. Carson, ed., *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018).

⌘On Matthew, see R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *Matthew–Mark*, 2nd ed., Expositor’s Bible Commentary 9 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 23–670; Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010). On Mark, see Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008); Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014); Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark*, TNTC 2 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017). On Luke, see Darrell L Bock, *Luke: Volume 1: 1:1–9:50*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994); Darrell L Bock, *Luke: Volume 2: 9:51–24:53*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996); David E. Garland, *Luke*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011); R. T. France, *Luke*, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013). On

John, see D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991); Colin G. Kruse, *John: An Introduction and Commentary*, 2nd ed., TNTC 4 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017).

¹⁰In addition to the above resources on the historical reliability of the Gospels, see, for example, Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *The Gospels and Acts*, The Holman Apologetics Commentary on the Bible (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2013).

¹¹See ch. 7 in Andrew David Naselli, *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017).

¹²For helpful resources on the Gospels, see Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus*; Craig L. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009); T. Desmond Alexander, *Discovering Jesus: Why Four Gospels to Portray One Person?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010); Dane Ortlund, *Defiant Grace: The Surprising Message and Mission of Jesus* (Carlisle, PA: EP Books, 2011); Darrell L. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture: Restoring the Portrait from the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017).

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

4:18-22 When Christ began to preach, he began to gather disciples, who should be hearers, and afterwards preachers of his doctrine, who should be witnesses of his miracles, and afterwards testify concerning them.

He went not to Herod's court, not to Jerusalem, among the chief priests and the elders, but to the sea of Galilee, among the fishermen.

The same power which called Peter and Andrew, could have wrought upon Annas & Caiaphas, for with God nothing is impossible.

But Christ chooses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.

Diligence in an honest calling is pleasing to Christ, and it is no hinderance to a holy life. Idle people are more open to the temptations of Satan than to the calls of God.

It is a happy and hopeful thing to see children careful of their parents, and dutiful.

When Christ comes,
it is good to be found doing.

Am I in Christ? is a very needful question to ask ourselves; and, next to that, Am I in my calling?

**They had followed Christ before, as common disciples,
John 1:37;**

now they must leave their calling. Those who would follow Christ aright, must, at his command, leave all things to follow him, must be ready to part with them.

This instance of the power of the Lord Jesus encourages us to depend upon his grace. He speaks, and it is done.

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers

(18) ***And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee.—***

In no part of the Gospel history is it more necessary to remember St. John's record as we read that of the Three, than in this call of the disciples. Here, everything seems sudden and abrupt. There we learn that those who were now called had some months before accepted Him as the Christ (**John 1:35-43**), and had, some or all of them, been with Him during His visit to Jerusalem.

Simon had already received the surname of Cephas or Peter or the Rock. Putting these facts together, we have something like a clear outline picture of their previous life.

The sons of Jona and the sons of Zebedee had grown up in Bethsaida (probably on the north-west shore of the Lake of Galilee), and were partners in their work as fishermen.

The movement of Judas of Galilee, in his assertion of national independence, had probably served to quicken their expectations of a good time coming, when they should be free from their oppressors.

When they heard of the preaching of the Baptist, they joined the crowds that flocked to hear him, and received his baptism of repentance.

Then they were pointed to the Lamb of God, and received Him as the Christ.

Then for a short time they were His companions in His journeyings. When He began the first circuit of His Galilean ministry He was alone, and left them to return to their old calling.

They could not tell whether He would ever care to use their services again, and it was under these circumstances that the new call came.

St. Matthew's narrative and St. Mark's ([Mark 1:16-20](#)) agree almost verbally; St. Luke's presents more difficulty. Is it another and fuller version of the same facts? or, if different, did what he records precede or follow the call which they relate? The first view seems the most probable, but see Notes on [Luke 5:1-11](#).

[Benson Commentary](#)

[Matthew 4:18](#). *And Jesus, walking, &c., saw two brethren* — One of the two, at least, namely, Andrew, had been a disciple of the Baptist.

And the Apostle

John “informs us, [John 1:40](#); [John 1:42](#), that they had both before been called to the knowledge of Christ, upon the banks of Jordan, and that the name of *Peter* had been given to *Simon*. And it is probable that, from their first acquaintance with him, they followed Jesus for some time, and went with him to Cana and Capernaum, [John 2:3](#); [John 2:12](#); and afterward to Jerusalem, [John 2:13](#); [John 2:17](#); and tarried with him while he continued in Judea, [John 3:22](#). But when the Pharisees grew jealous of the number of his followers, and Herod was offended at the popularity of John, we may suppose that Jesus, at his return to Galilee, might think it prudent to dismiss his disciples for a time, till he himself had gone about from place to place to preach the gospel, and had informed the people more particularly of the character of his person, and the nature of his doctrine: or, possibly, they might leave him at the time when the Samaritans prevailed upon him to go with them to their city, [John 4:40](#).

Be this as it may, we read no more of his disciples being with him, till he now found them at the sea of Galilee. For they no sooner were gone home, but they returned again to their old employment, and continued in it till they were now taken off from any further regard to their worldly business, and were particularly called by Christ to a constant attendance upon him.” – Doddridge.

Casting a net into the sea. – Namely, to wash it, for, according to [Luke 5:2](#), they were *washing their nets*, when he called them.

For they were fishers – He called such mean persons to show, 1st, the freedom of his grace, in choosing such weak instruments; 2d, his power, in that by such men he could subdue the world; 3d, the depth of his wisdom, in providing thus for his own honour, that the instruments might not carry away the glory of the work.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE TWELVE DISCIPLES?

The World into Which Jesus Came

The New Testament says that Jesus personally handpicked twelve men to be His inner core of disciples, the Twelve Disciples of the Twelve Apostles. Some of them have become famous while others of them are little-known. From the Scripture we can make the following observations about these particular men who Jesus chose.

Simon Peter

Simon Peter is probably the most well-known of Jesus' disciples. Simon is a Greek name, but in the New Testament, it is probably a contraction of the Hebrew Simeon. From Scripture, we can learn much about this man.

1. His Name Is First on Every List of Disciples

To begin with, Peter is first in every list of the apostles (**first among equals**) and plays a prominent role in the gospels. His father's name was Jonah or John. **He was a native of Bethsaida a town on the Sea of Galilee**. We read of this in John's gospel. It says,

Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ([John 1:44 NKJV](#))

Here Peter is mentioned in connection with his brother Andrew as well as another disciple of Jesus, Philip.

Jesus would later condemn Bethsaida for their unbelief in Him. Matthew records the Lord saying the following against this city:

Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ([Matthew 11:21](#) NRSV)

This town, which was exposed to the miracles of Jesus, rejected His testimony. Consequently they received greater condemnation.

Interestingly, the reference of Peter being first among the apostles is not found in Mark. Since Mark wrote his gospel from Peter's perspective, likely recording Peter's very words, it is understandable why this reference would be omitted.

2. He Was a Fisherman by Trade

The gospels tell us that **Peter and his brother Andrew were fisherman** who worked on the Sea of Galilee. **They were disciples of John the Baptist before becoming disciples of Jesus**. John wrote of this,

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples... One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ([John 1:35](#), [40](#) NRSV)

Thus, Peter and Andrew were John's disciples before they followed Jesus.

3. Jesus Gave Simon the Name Peter

Jesus gave to Simon, when he first approached Him, the surname Cephas which in Aramaic signified a rock or a stone. Again, we read about this in the Gospel of John:

Andrew brought Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked at Simon and said, “You are Simon, son of John. Your name will be Cephas” (which means “Peter”). ([John 1:42](#) God’s Word)

This was translated into Greek as Petros, which also means “rock.” The Latin form is Petrus, and in English it is Peter.

The Aramaic form of his name, Cephas, is always used by the Apostle Paul in describing him. It is found nowhere else in the New Testament except [John 1:42](#).

4. Peter Is the First Who Confessed Jesus as the Christ

Peter is the first of Jesus’ disciples who confessed Him as the Christ, or Messiah. Matthew records the event as follows:

Then Jesus asked them, “But who do you say I am?” Simon Peter spoke up, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” ([Matthew 16:15](#), [16](#) CEV)

Peter vocalized what the rest of the disciples were thinking about Jesus. Indeed, they came to believe that He was truly the Christ, God the Son.

5. Peter Wrote Two New Testament Books

Peter wrote two New Testament books ([First and Second Peter](#)) as well as being the [source for the Gospel of Mark](#). In fact, **it is possible, even likely, that the Gospel of Mark was taken down word for word from Peter’s speeches given in Rome.**

Therefore, three of the twenty-seven writings which became our “New Testament” have Peter’s authority behind them. Peter was indeed an important figure in the spread of the Christian gospel.

Andrew

Andrew was the brother of Simon Peter. His name is Greek. It has the meaning of “manly.” The facts concerning his parentage, residence, occupation and early discipleship are all mentioned in connection with Peter.

His life, however, has a great lesson for believers. Andrew was the one who brought to Jesus his own brother Simon. John records the incident as follows:

One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone). [\(John 1:40-42 NKJV\)](#)

Thus, [the usefulness of Simon Peter is, in one sense, due to the brother who told him of Jesus](#). Therefore, we learn an important lesson here. [We should never underestimate what it can mean to bring someone to the knowledge of the Savior](#). While the life and ministry of Andrew may not have been remarkable the life of Simon Peter certainly was. Yet, if it were not for Andrew, Peter would have never met Jesus.

Jacob (James) the Son of Zebedee

James (Jacob) was the brother of John. He was probably the elder since he is usually mentioned first. While John is sometimes placed first ([Luke 9:28](#); [Acts 12:2](#)) it is probably because he was the more prominent of the two.

[Jacob \(James\) was the first martyr among the Twelve Apostles. This is recorded for us in the Acts of the Apostles.](#) It says of [Herod Agrippa I](#).

[He had the apostle James \(John's brother\) killed with a sword \(Acts 12:2 NLT\).](#)

James is originally the same name as Jacob being written in Greek Iacobos, and transliterated into Latin, as Iacobos.

John the Son of Zebedee

[John, the brother of James, the son of Zebedee, was the author of the fourth gospel. He describes himself as follows in that gospel.](#) He said,

This is that disciple who saw these events and recorded them here. And we all know that his account of these things is accurate. [\(John 21:24 NLT\)](#)

[John saw the events in the life of Jesus. Therefore, his testimony is one of an eyewitness.](#)

[James and John, with Peter made up a kind of inner circle of the disciples. They both appeared together with Peter in the Transfiguration.](#) Matthew records what took place:

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. [\(Matthew 17:1 NRSV\)](#)

It was only these disciples to whom Jesus showed His glory. **Why Jesus chose only these three is not revealed to us.**

James and John also appear in connection with their mother's special request. Mathew records the following:

Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, and kneeling before him, she asked a favor of him. ([Matthew 20:20](#) NRSV)

The favor she asked Jesus was for her sons to sit in the places of power, or authority, in Jesus' kingdom. The request made the other disciples unhappy.

John the son of Zebedee wrote five books that make up the New Testament. They include the **Gospel of John, 1,2,3 John, and Revelation.** Obviously, he was a very important figure in the spreading of the message of Jesus Christ.

Philip

This name Philip in Greek means "lover of horses." **He must be distinguished from Philip the evangelist, of whom, we read about in the Book of Acts.**

1. The Call of Philip

The Scripture tells us **Philip immediately answered Jesus' call to follow Him.** In John's gospel, we read of that call:

The next day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee. He found Philip and told him, "Follow me!" ([John 1:43](#) God's Word)

Philip followed Jesus when the Lord called. This is certainly a good example for us to follow.

2. Philip and the Feeding of the Five Thousand

When Jesus fed the five thousand He asked Philip what He should do. We read about this in the Gospel of John:

When Jesus saw the large crowd coming toward him, he asked Philip, "Where will we get enough food to feed all these people?" He said this to test Philip, since he already knew what he was going to do. ([John 6:5](#), [6](#) CEV)

Notice that Jesus was not asking Philip for advice. Indeed, Jesus already knew what He was about to do.

3. Philip Wishes to See God the Father

We also find Philip asking Jesus a question on the night of His betrayal. John records the dialogue between the two:

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be content." Jesus replied, "Have I been with you for so long, and you have not known me, Philip? The person who has seen me has seen the Father! How can you say, 'Show us the Father?'" ([John 14:8-9 NET](#))

Philip wanted Jesus to show them God the Father. Jesus replied by saying the one who has seen Him has seen the Father.

This is all that is said about Philip. We hear no more from him in Scripture.

Nathaniel

Nathaniel is probably the same person mentioned in Matthew's gospel as Bartholomew. Bartholomew is not a name. He is actually Bar Talmi (the son of Talmi). The only account we have of Nathaniel is found in John's gospel. It reads as follows:

Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the man whom Moses wrote about in his teachings and whom the prophets wrote about. He is Jesus, son of Joseph, from the city of Nazareth." Nathanael said to Philip, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Philip told him, "Come and see!" Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and remarked, "Here is a true Israelite who is sincere." Nathanael asked Jesus, "How do you know anything about me?" Jesus answered him, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." Nathanael said to Jesus, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the king of Israel!" Jesus replied, "You believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that." Jesus said to Nathanael, "I can guarantee this truth: You will see the sky open and God's angels going up and coming down to the Son of Man." ([John 1:45-51](#) God's Word)

We learn a number of interesting things from this encounter.

First, Nazareth was not the place where the people were looking for the Messiah to come out of. Indeed, Nathaniel's statement may reflect jealousy between the various cities or it may reflect the view that Nazareth was a place where nothing good came from. In other words, it was a hopeless place.

We also find that **Jesus knew certain things about Nathaniel which caused him to confess that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God.** Many people have speculated as to what Nathaniel was doing under the fig tree. He may have thinking about the Messiah or studying about Him. Possibly he was in the act of teaching others about Him. We just do not know. Since we are not told any speculation is fruitless. What we do know is that whatever he was doing, Jesus had some insight into what was occurring.

Nathaniel is not mentioned elsewhere.

Thomas

Thomas is the well-known “doubter.” The name Thomas means “twin” as does the Greek Didymus. The Gospel of John describes him responding in the following manner when Jesus told the disciples they must go back to Judea:

Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.” (John 11:16 NRSV)

Thomas obviously knew of the impending danger.

1. Thomas Asks Jesus a Question

We also find Thomas asking Jesus a particular question which caused Jesus to give one of His most memorable statements:

Thomas said, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus replied, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you have known me, you will know my Father too. And from now on you do know him and have seen him.” (John 14:5-7 NET)

Jesus told Thomas, as well as the others, that He was the way, truth, and the life. Apart from Him, nobody could come to God the Father.

2. Doubting Thomas

Thomas is famous for doubting the disciple’s testimony of seeing the risen Christ. John wrote about the famous episode of Thomas wanting to touch the body of the risen Christ before believing in Him. John writes,

Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, “We have seen the Lord.” So he said to them, “Unless I

see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” (John 20:24, 25 NKJV)

Thomas had to see for himself. When Thomas saw that Christ had indeed risen, he testified that he too believed:

Thomas responded to Him, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28 HCSB)

Thomas confessed that Jesus was both Lord and God. He recognized that Jesus had truly risen from the dead.

This is the last of the details which we read of Thomas. He is not mentioned again in Scripture.

Matthew

Matthew was author of the first gospel. He is known as the tax collector or a customs official. **The gospels tell us that Jesus called Matthew and he immediately followed.** We read about his conversion in the gospel that he wrote:

As Jesus was leaving, he saw a tax collector named Matthew sitting at the place for paying taxes. Jesus said to him, “Come with me.” Matthew got up and went with him. (Matthew 9:9 CEV)

Matthew immediately followed Jesus when Jesus invited him. Matthew then invited Jesus and others to his house for a meal. This caused a problem with the religious leaders. Matthew explains what took place:

While He was reclining at the table in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came as guests to eat with Jesus and His disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked His disciples, “Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” But when He heard this, He said, “Those who are well don’t need a doctor, but the sick do. Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I didn’t come to call the righteous, but sinners.” (Matthew 9:10-13 HCSB)

The religious leaders did not think a Teacher such as Jesus should mingle with “sinners.” This provided Jesus with the occasion of explaining why He came into our world.

Nothing more is said of Matthew after this event.

James the Son of Alphaeus

The “son of Alphaeus” distinguishes him from the other James, the brother of John. He may have been the brother of Matthew who was also a son of Alphaeus. Yet this is nowhere stated as a fact.

Basically, we know nothing of him other than he was one of the Twelve. He is never singled out for us in the gospels or in the remainder of the New Testament. Indeed, he is one of those among the Twelve who is only known from his name in the list.

Thaddaeus (Judas, Perhaps Lebbaeus)

The disciple is known by a number of different names. This includes Thaddaeus, Judas the son of James, Judas, not Iscariot, and possibly Lebbaeus.

First, the name Thaddaeus is only mentioned in two of the gospels, Matthew and Mark. Matthew listed the disciples as follows:

Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus. ([Matthew 10:3 NET](#))

In this list, he is mentioned with James the son of Alphaeus.

He is probably to be equated with Judas, the son of James, who is mentioned in Luke and the Book of Acts. Luke lists the Twelve in this manner:

And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles... Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. ([Luke 6:13, 16 ESV](#))

Here he is distinguished between Judas Iscariot. The name Judas may have been superseded by a new one, Thaddaeus, in order for there to be one Judas among the Twelve.

This name is also used of him in the Book of Acts. We read,

When they had entered Jerusalem, they went to the upstairs room where they were staying. Peter and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James were there. ([Acts 1:13 NET](#))

It is also possible that after the betrayal of Judas Iscariot that he did not want the stigma that would be attached with the name Judas.

Indeed, in John's gospel, we find him asking Jesus a question about making Himself known to the world:

Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me." ([John 14:22-24 ESV](#))

Notice that John makes the distinction between this Judas and Judas Iscariot. He did not want his readers to be confused.

Lebbaeus

In [Matthew 10:4](#), some manuscripts add the name Lebbaeus to Thaddaeus: Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus. ([Matthew 10:3 NKJV](#))

Most modern translations do not have this name in the text. They believe that it was a later addition and thus, not one of the names of Thaddaeus.

Simon the Cananean

Some believe that the word "Cananean" is derived from Canaan or Cana. However others contend that it comes from the Aramaic word qanan meaning "zealot" or "enthusiast" The name is thus equivalent to the label "zealot" given to Simon in the lists of Luke and Acts and may refer to his intense nationalism and hatred of Rome.

If this is correct, then Simon was working with others to see the Roman rule overthrown. The zealots would use force, if necessary, to achieve their goal. Jesus taught Simon that there is indeed something worse than the bondage of Rome; it was the bondage of sin. By following Jesus, Simon was set free from this real bondage.

Judas Iscariot

Judas is mentioned more often than any of the other disciples except for Peter. The name "Iscariot" is the Greek equivalent of the transliterated Iscarioth (man from Kerioth). Kerioth is located in southern Judea, twelve miles south of Hebron.

1. Judas the Thief

John describes Judas as a thief. When Mary of Bethany anointed Jesus with perfume in anticipation of His impending death, we find that Judas objected. John explains why:

But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was going to betray him) said, **“Why wasn’t this oil sold for three hundred silver coins and the money given to the poor?”** (Now Judas said this not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief. As keeper of the money box, he used to steal what was put into it). (John 12:4-6 NET)

The motives of Judas were not pure.

2. Judas the Betrayer

Judas would eventually betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Luke explains the plot:

The Festival of Unleavened Bread, which is called Passover, was drawing near. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to put Him to death, because they were afraid of the people. Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, who was numbered among the Twelve. He went away and discussed with the chief priests and temple police how he could hand Him over to them. They were glad and agreed to give him silver. So he accepted [the offer] and started looking for a good opportunity to betray Him to them when the crowd was not present. (Luke 22:1-6 HCSB)

Judas eventually brought the authorities to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

3. The Betrayer Hangs Himself

Judas then hanged himself in remorse. The Bible explains it in this manner:

Judas threw the money into the temple and then went out and hanged himself. (Matthew 27:5 CEV)

Such was the end of his pathetic life.

4. Matthias Replaced Judas

Judas was replaced by Matthias. We read of this in the first chapter of the Book of Acts. Peter stood up and said the following to the other ten disciples:

“Therefore, from among the men who have accompanied us during the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—beginning from the baptism of John until the day He was taken up from us—from among these, it is necessary that one become a witness with us of His resurrection.” So they proposed two: Joseph, called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed, “You, Lord, know the hearts of all; show which of these two

You have chosen to take the place in this apostolic service that Judas left to go to his own place.” Then they cast lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias. So he was numbered with the 11 apostles. ([Acts 1:21-26](#) HCSB)

Matthias was the twelfth disciple who replaced Judas. However, we hear nothing whatsoever of him after this episode.

The Disciples of Jesus Were a Diverse Group

Notice the diverse character of the twelve. **They include: fishermen, a former tax collector, a zealot, and a traitor.** The twelve represent the core of the new movement that will reveal the new activity of God. **They were not taken from the elite of society, neither from the lowest levels.**

There were two sets of brothers, Peter and Andrew and James and John. There was possibly a third set with Matthew and James the son of Alphaeus.

This sums up what we know for certain about these twelve men which Jesus chose to be His disciples.

Summary

What Do We Know about the Twelve Disciples?

While here on earth Jesus chose twelve disciples to be His intimate pupils. However, not all of them were prominent. In fact, **we know almost nothing about a few of them. This includes Simon the Cananean, Thaddaeus, Nathaniel and James the son of Alphaeus.**

The New Testament gives us more information about the other eight. We can highlight them as follows.

Peter is the one most prominently mentioned in Scripture. Indeed, he is placed first in every list of disciples. It was Peter who first publicly confessed Jesus as the Messiah, or Christ, when the Lord asked

the group who they believed that He was. Peter went on to write two books that became part of our New Testament as well as the person behind the Gospel of Mark.

Andrew was the brother of Peter. His is only mentioned in connection with Peter. However, Andrew is the one who brought Peter to Jesus. Therefore, his contribution to the spread of the gospel cannot be underestimated.

James and John were also brothers. **They were called the “sons of Zebedee.” James was the first martyr of the Christian church.** He was murdered by the evil King Herod Agrippa I.

John seemingly lived to a ripe old age. In fact, seems to be the only one of the Twelve who was not martyred. John is the writer of the fourth gospel. He testifies that he was an eyewitness to the life and ministry of Jesus. John also wrote the three letters which bear his name, 1,2,3 John, as well as the Book of Revelation. He was indeed an important New Testament character.

Philip is specifically mentioned on three occasions. First, his calling by Jesus is recorded. He then tells Nathaniel that they have found the Messiah. Next, we find Jesus asking Philip as to how they could feed five thousand people with a few loaves and fish. Finally, on the night of Jesus' betrayal, Philip asks Jesus to show God the Father to them.

Nathaniel is probably the same person known as Bartholomew. The only thing known about him concerns the time he first met Jesus. **When Jesus said that he saw Nathaniel under a fig tree this caused Nathaniel to confess Jesus as the Messiah.**

Matthew was a customs official who collected taxes for Rome. This position was hated by the Jews. Matthew's conversion is recorded for us in his own gospel. After this, he arranged a great feast for Jesus and many others. Nothing else is known of Matthew apart from these two episodes.

Thomas is the famous doubter. He is specifically mentioned on three occasions in the New Testament. First, **he warned the disciples if they went to Judea with Jesus they would probably die with Him.** Thomas also asked Jesus to show them where He was going when Jesus spoke of going away. Finally, we have the episode of Thomas demanding to see the scars on the body of the risen Christ.

Almost nothing is known of James the son of Alphaeus except for his listing among the Twelve.

Thaddaeus is also called Judas (and perhaps Lebbaeus). He is distinguished from Judas Iscariot. The only thing known of him is a question he asked Jesus on the night of His betrayal.

Simon the Cananean is Simon the Zealot. This means that he belonged to the political party that was attempting to overthrow Rome. We know absolutely nothing about him apart from the fact that he is listed as one of the twelve.

Apart from Peter, Judas Iscariot is the disciple whom the most is said about. **We know that he held the money bag for the Twelve. John tells us that he was a thief. Of course, he will always be known as the one who betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Judas then went out and hanged himself when he realized he had betrayed an innocent man.**

After Jesus' ascension into heaven, Judas was replaced by Matthias. Nothing else is known of Matthias.

This basically sums up what we know about these men from the New Testament. While there are sources outside of the Bible which tell us other things about them, the only information that we can be certain about is that which we find in the New Testament.

CONTENT DISCLAIMER:

The Blue Letter Bible ministry and the BLB Institute hold to the historical, conservative Christian faith, which includes a firm belief in the inerrancy of Scripture. Since the text and audio content provided by BLB represent a range of evangelical traditions, all of the ideas and principles conveyed in the resource materials are not necessarily affirmed, in total, by this ministry.

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IMPORTANT NOTICE:

The article below is being included with my study notes so as to highlight a BAD EXAMPLE! While there are helpful insights and trusted facts, there is also a VERY DANGEROUS and widely held misunderstanding.... As you read, especially in the introductory set up and closing summary, SEE HOW SUBTLE the error is... Note the author's positive perspective on Christ's discernment and insights regarding the would-be apostle's character and inner potential – as criteria for His selection of them.

The error is in the well-intended perception that Jesus chose these men because of what they brought to the ministry and/or what they would be capable of becoming (based on what they already had in them).

Instead, Jesus chose them for His own purposes, not based on what they had in them already, but based on what He would put in them in the future.

Like with Satan, demons, and angels... when it comes to the Apostles, we need to be very careful not to make too much of them, nor too little of them!

Thirdmill Study Bible

Notes on Luke 6:12-16

Jesus Chooses Twelve Apostles - [Luke 6:12-16](#)

Jesus devoted himself to a night of prayer in preparation for choosing twelve disciples who would be named apostles (6:12). Just as Israel was organized around twelve tribes, Jesus was organizing a new covenant people around the gospel preached by these twelve men (see [Matt. 19:28](#); [John 4:22](#); [Rev. 21:12-14](#)). These men were from diverse backgrounds and social standings. Yet, they were unified by faith in Christ and would eventually lead his church ([Eph. 2:20](#)).

[Luke 6:12](#)

pray. Jesus had a life of humble dependence on God the Father's empowering presence through the Holy Spirit. This is partly seen in his constant habit of prayer (3:21; 4:42; 5:16; 9:18, 28; 11:1; 22:31-32). This was an example seen by his disciples (11:1) and should be imitated (18:1). **all night in prayer.** The time spent in prayer marks the importance of the decision and Jesus's next steps in ministry.

Luke 6:13

called . . . chose twelve. We have no idea how many disciples Jesus has following him at this time. Later, he will call out another group of seventy-two to be sent out (10:1). This indicates that the twelve were called out of a much larger group of followers (v. 17). From these, Jesus made a God directed *choice* (v. 12). Luke emphasized Jesus's authority in calling and choosing the twelve. **named apostles.** The term apostle means *one who is sent*. There is a sense in which all of Jesus's disciples are apostles (11:49; 24:10; [John 20:21](#); [Acts 14:14](#)). However, this term is also used to mark out a unique group of Jesus's disciples. They were a group who had been following Jesus since the beginnings of his ministry ([Acts 1:21-22](#)). They were sent with authority to preach and heal, acting as Jesus's official representatives (9:1-6; [Matt. 10:40](#); [Mark 3:14](#)).

Luke 6:14

Simon. Also named **Peter** by Jesus ([Matt. 16:18](#); [John 1:42](#)). He always appears first in lists of disciples ([Matt. 10:2-4](#); [Mark 3:16-19](#); [Acts 1:3](#)), which indicates his leadership role as first among equals ([Matt. 16:18](#)). **Andrew.** Previously a fisherman, like his brother, Simon (5:2-9). He was from Bethsaida ([John 1:44](#)). **James. . . John.** The sons of Zebedee (5:10), also called the sons of thunder ([Mark 3:17](#)). Their mother, Salome, was Jesus's aunt, being Mary's sister ([Matt. 27:56](#); [Mark 15:40](#); [John 19:25](#)). This made James and John his cousins. They worked as fishermen with Simon and Andrew (5:10-11). John was known as the beloved disciple ([John 13:23](#); [19:26](#); [20:2](#); [21:7](#), [20](#)). He wrote the Gospel that bears his name, three letters (1, 2, 3 John), and Revelation. James was an early martyr for the faith ([Acts 12:1-2](#)). **Philip.** From Bethsaida, he brought Nathanael to Jesus ([John 1:43-48](#)). **Bartholomew.** Probably also called

Nathanael ([John 1:45](#)). This would account for Bartholomew not being mentioned in John's Gospel and Nathanael's absence from the other Gospels. Moreover, Nathanael is elsewhere mentioned among the apostles ([John 21:2](#)).

Luke 6:15

Matthew. Also called Levi, he was a wealthy tax collector (5:27-29; [Matt. 9:9-13](#)). After following Jesus, he hosted a feast and invited other sinners to meet Jesus (5:29-32). **Thomas.** Also called Didymus ([John 11:26](#); [20:24](#); [21:2](#)) his name meant *twin*. **James son of Alphaeus.** Because Levi is also called the son of Alphaeus ([Mark 2:14](#)), this could be his brother. **Simon.** Being a **Zealot** meant that he had been part of a group dedicated to holy war against Rome. Ironically, this would make Simon deeply opposed to Matthew's work of collaborating with Rome. Nevertheless, the grace of Jesus brought these men together.

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Jesus Chooses 12 Apostles

Scripture Reference:

[Matthew 4:18-22](#); [Matthew 9:9](#); [John 1:35-50](#); [Matthew 10:1-4](#)

Suggested Emphasis: Follow Jesus.

Memory Work: Name the 12 Original Apostles: Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Thomas, Matthew, Bartholomew, James (the less), Simon, Thaddeus, Judas

Story Overview:

Many people followed Jesus. These followers were called disciples. There were many disciples, but Jesus chose twelve men to be His special followers. These men were granted special abilities and were called Apostles.

Background Study:

After spending [forty days in the wilderness after his baptism](#), Jesus returned to the area around the Jordan River. John the Baptist was still preaching in the area, and many people had become disciples or pupils of John. Disciples liked spending lots of time with their teachers because they wanted to be like them.

John the Baptist immediately encourages his disciples to follow Jesus. Andrew and Simon Peter were disciples of John and were the first disciples called by Jesus. Andrew heard about Jesus first and then went to get his brother, Simon ([John 1:40-41](#)). They were fishermen. Simon was already known by the name "Peter," a Greek name. Jesus tells him that he will be known as "Cephas," which is the Aramaic translation of Peter and means "rock" [John 1:42](#). This will have more meaning later when Jesus uses Peter's name to teach a lesson about the Kingdom ([Matthew 16:18](#)). Peter is mentioned in the Gospels and Acts more than any other apostle. He preached the first Gospel Sermon ([Acts 2](#)) and wrote two New Testament books.

The disciples must have had very tender hearts to follow Jesus so quickly. They immediately left their careers (fishermen, tax collectors, etc.) to travel with Jesus. Most of them did this based on His simple invitation to "Follow Me." It was not their education or talent that made them special – it was their commitment to Jesus.

All followers of Jesus who try to be like Him are His disciples in the general sense (including you and me). In the early church, disciples were eventually called "Christians" ([Acts 11:26](#)). In the ministry of Jesus, there were many disciples, but twelve of them had a particular role. These were sometimes referred to as "the 12 Apostles," "the Apostles," or even "the Twelve." In

addition to the 12 apostles, the word “apostle” can also have a more general meaning of one sent on a mission.

Just before the crucifixion, there were 12 apostles, including Judas Iscariot. After Judas betrayed Jesus and then hung himself, only 11 apostles remained. Matthias replaced him in [Acts 1:12-26](#). So Matthias then became one of the twelve.

Later, Jesus came to Paul and named him a special apostle to the Gentiles ([Acts 9](#) – especially verse 15).

The names of the apostles can be confusing. Some have the same name, and others are known by multiple names.

There were two Simons, Simon Peter (Cephas) and Simon the Zealot. A Zealot was a member of a Jewish revolutionary group that was trying to overthrow the Roman government and free the Jews.

There was James, the son of Alpheus (sometimes called “James the Less” because he was younger than the other James), and then James, the son of Zebedee.

James, the son of Zebedee, had a brother, John (not to be confused with [John the Baptist](#)), and these both numbered among the 12. The brothers, James and John, worked together in their father’s fishing business before following Jesus. They were known as the “sons of thunder” because of their tempers.

This John was one of Jesus’ closest friends. Later, when Jesus was dying on the cross, Jesus asked John to take care of Mary. This John is traditionally the author of the Gospel of John, 1-3 John and the book of Revelation.

Matthew was also known as Levi ([Matthew 9:9](#) and [Luke 5:27-28](#)). He was a tax collector for the Romans when Jesus called him to be an apostle.

Bartholomew's other name was "Nathanael," and he seemed almost always to be mentioned with Philip. [Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14; John 1:45-49, 21:2; and Acts 1:13.](#)

Thaddeus is called "Judas" in [Luke 6:16](#), and he is sometimes referred to as "Judas not Iscariot." Judas Iscariot was the one who later betrayed Jesus.

Way to Introduce the Story:

Before the group gathers, write the names of the 12 Apostles on the chalkboard, whiteboard or on a piece of paper.

Play a "follow the leader" game and lead the children around the room or a space outside. Talk about what it means to lead and what it means to follow. "Who should be the leader in our lives?" (Jesus) "What does it mean to follow Jesus?" (Love Jesus and obey God. Do what Jesus did. Act the way He did. Do what He wants because He is the leader.)

Today's story will teach us about some men who followed Jesus. Some of them used to be fishermen but they decided to leave their fishing and follow Jesus. Jesus told them that they would not be fishing for fish anymore. They would be fishing for men. Jesus would make them fishers of men. Here are the names of the men who became fishers of men (show the children the names of the apostles).

How many of you can make "fish lips?" Today, as I tell the story, I want you to make fish lips every time I say the name of one of the men on this list."

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The Story:

Have you ever played the game "follow the leader?" One person is the leader, and everyone else follows. Whatever the leader does, every follower copies it and does exactly the same. The followers want to be like the leader.

In the New Testament times, a follower was called a disciple.

When Jesus began His ministry, He asked people to follow Him and become His disciples. One day, when Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Andrew and Simon Peter casting nets to catch fish. Jesus called out to them, saying, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of people."

What do you think Jesus meant by fishers of men? Fishermen usually cast out nets and bring fish in. Fishers of men go fishing for men. They teach people and then bring them to God. Peter and Andrew wanted to become fishers of people. They left their fishing immediately and followed Jesus.

Then they saw two other brothers, James and John, mending nets with their father, Zebedee. Jesus called them and said, "Follow me."

James and John left their boat and their father and began to follow Jesus.

Jesus' group of followers was growing. Now, Jesus had four disciples – Peter, Andrew, James and John. On His way to Galilee, Jesus found Philip and invited him to come along, too. Philip was from Bethsaida, the town where Andrew and Peter lived.

Philip went to find his friend Nathanael. "Nathanael, we've found the one that Moses wrote about in the Scripture! He is Jesus from Nazareth."

When Nathanael met Jesus, he was very surprised. He had never met Jesus before, but Jesus knew all about him. Because of this, Nathanael knew that Jesus was someone very special sent from God. He started following Jesus, too. You might know Nathanael by his other name. His other name was Bartholomew.

Jesus called others to follow him. Matthew was a tax collector in the town of Capernaum. Some people thought that Matthew could never be like Jesus. Tax collectors were often cheaters. But Jesus knew that Matthew could have a good heart. When Jesus said, "Matthew, come follow me," Matthew got up from the table and began following Jesus.

Jesus invited others to follow Him. Soon, James (called “James the Less” because he was younger than the other James) and Thomas followed Jesus. After this, another Simon, Thaddeus and Judas Iscariot.

More and more people became disciples (followers) of Jesus. Even though many followed Jesus, twelve men were with Him almost all of the time. This group of twelve men became known as the “Twelve Apostles.” Jesus gave these men special responsibilities and even special powers to do miracles.

Peter, Andrew, James and John. Philip, Thomas, Matthew and Bartholomew (Nathanael). James (the less), Simon, Thaddaeus and Judas.

Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download the slideshow](#), or [click here to download the pictures to print](#).

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasize in this lesson.

Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story, while reflection questions encourage them to internalize its meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child’s spiritual development and help them connect to God. [Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.](#)

REVIEW:

1. What did Jesus say to the fishermen named Andrew, Peter, James and John? (“Come, follow me”)

2. What kind of fishermen did Jesus tell the apostles that they would be? (Fishers of men)
3. What is a disciple of Jesus? (someone who follows Jesus and lives like Him)
4. What is an apostle of Jesus? (Jesus chose 12 disciples to follow Him and be His special students and close friends. They would be given power from God to do certain miracles and were with Jesus during His ministry)
5. What were some of the jobs of the apostles before following Jesus? (fishermen, tax collectors, zealots)
6. How many original apostles were there? (12)
7. Name the twelve apostles. (Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Thomas, Matthew, Bartholomew, James the Less, Simon, Thaddeus, Judas)
8. Why do you think the disciples who were fishermen quit their jobs and left everything to follow Jesus?
9. Did Jesus' disciples and apostles have to be intelligent, rich, or powerful? (No, anyone can follow Jesus)
10. What did you learn about God or Jesus from this story?
11. What does it mean to follow Jesus?

REFLECTION:

1. What do you think Jesus' 12 disciples looked or acted like?
2. How well do you think the 12 apostles got along? Do you think they became friends?
3. What part of the story did you find most interesting?
4. The fishermen immediately dropped their nets and followed Jesus when He said, "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Would you stop everything and follow Jesus if He said this to you?
5. How do you think the 12 apostles felt when Jesus called them to follow Him?
6. Of Jesus' 12 apostles, Andrew and Peter were brothers, and so were James and John. Do you think it would have been a great or difficult experience to follow Jesus with a sibling?

7. What do you think it means to follow Jesus?
8. Do you follow Jesus?
9. What is your favourite part of following Jesus?

Song Suggestions:

- [Apostle Song](#)
- [Fished All Night and Caught No Fishes Song](#)
- [Fishers of Men Song](#)
- [Apostle Song with slideshow \(outside source on YouTube\)](#)
- [The Books of the New Testament.](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

ACTIVITIES:

- Sing: [The Apostle Song \(Jesus Called Them One by One\)](#) You could take the song a step further to add a visual element. Write the lyrics on a whiteboard or piece of paper that is big enough for everyone to see. As you go through the song, have the children identify the names of the apostles and circle them.
- Play "Apostle Bingo." Make a bingo grid and put the names of the apostles (instead of numbers) in the squares. Play like normal bingo, but use names instead of numbers.
- Play "Apostle Concentration." Make up 12 matching pairs of cards (2 with Andrew written on them, 2 Peters, 2 Johns, etc.). Mix up the 24 cards and lay them face down on the table. Children take turns turning two cards over. If the two cards they turn over match, then they get a point for the matching pair – and also win an extra turn. Keep playing until all cards have been matched. The child who has won the most pairs wins. [Printable pictures of the apostles from Bible Fun for Kids and More](#)

- Write the apostles' names on 12 separate cards. Hide the cards before the group gathers. At the appropriate time, let the children find them.

CRAFTS:

- Visit the [Teaching Ideas](#) page for additional activities and crafts.

Allacin's Free Illustrated Summaries of Christian Classics

Tuesday, April 24, 2018

Illustrated Summary of Twelve Ordinary Men (the Apostles) by John MacArthur

1. Common Men, Uncommon Calling

We have 4 lists of the 12 apostles in the New Testament: [Matthew 10:2-4](#), [Mark 3:16-19](#), [Luke 6:13-16](#), and [Acts 1:13](#). In all 4 biblical lists, the same 12 men are named, and the order in which they are given is strikingly similar. The first name in all 4 lists is Peter (originally known as Simon). He stands out as the leader and spokesman for the whole company of 12. **The Twelve are then in 3 groups of 4. Group 1 always has *Peter* at the**

head of the list, and that group always includes *Andrew, James, and John*.

Group 2 always features *Philip* first and includes *Bartholomew (also called Nathanael), Matthew, and Thomas*.

Group 3 is always led by *James the son of Alphaeus*, and it includes *Simon the Zealot, Lebbaeus (also called Thaddeus and Jude), and Judas Iscariot, the traitor*.

The groups appear to be listed in descending order based on their level of friendship with Christ.

The members of Group 1 were probably the first disciples Jesus called to Himself
(John 1:35-42).

Therefore, they had been with Him the longest.

They are often seen together in the presence of Christ at key times.

Group 2 does not have such a high profile, but they are still significant figures in the Gospel accounts.

**Group 3 is more distant,
and they are rarely mentioned.**

The only member of Group 3 we know much about is Judas Iscariot because of his treachery at the end.

This suggests that even a relatively small group of 12 is too large for one person to maintain close friendship with each group member.

Jesus kept 3 men very close to Himself:
Peter, James, and John.

Next came Andrew, and then the others in declining degrees of close friendship.

Since Christ in His perfect humanity could not pour equal amounts of time and energy into everyone He drew around Him, no leader should expect to be able to do that.

2. Peter: The Apostle with the Foot-shaped Mouth



Peter was eager, aggressive, bold and outspoken. He can be called the apostle with the foot-shaped mouth because he had the bad habit of speaking before thinking.

The first person in Group 1 is described as **"Simon, whom Jesus also named Peter"** and "Simon Bar-Jonah," meaning Simon son of Jonah. Simon was a very common name. There are at least 7 Simons in the Gospels alone.

Among the Twelve were 2 named Simon: Simon Peter and Simon the Zealot.

Peter was a fisherman by trade.

"Peter" was a nickname. It means "Rock." *Petros* is the Greek word for rock; the Aramaic or Hebrew equivalent is *Cephas*.

John 1:42 describes Jesus' first face-to-face meeting with Simon Peter: "*When Jesus looked at him, He said, 'You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas' (which is translated, A stone).*"

Those were apparently the first words Jesus ever said to Peter.

And from then on, Rock was his nickname!

Three years later, foretelling Peter's temporary betrayal, Jesus said, "*Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat*" (Luke 22:31).

Later, in the Garden of Gethsemane, when Peter should have been watching and praying with Christ, he fell asleep. Mark writes, "Jesus came and found His disciples sleeping. He said to Peter, 'Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak'" (Mark 14:37-38).

Thus, usually when Peter needed correction, Jesus referred to him as Simon. It must have reached the point where whenever the Lord said "Simon," Peter cringed.

He must have been thinking, *Please call me Rock!* And the Lord might have replied, "I'll call you Rock when you act like a rock."

After the resurrection, Jesus instructed His disciples to return to Galilee, where He planned to reappear to them ([Matthew 28:7](#)). Impatient Simon apparently got tired of waiting, so he announced he was going back to fishing ([John 21:3](#)).

As usual, the other disciples followed their leader. They caught nothing after fishing all night.

But Jesus met them on the shore the following morning, where He had prepared breakfast for them. [The main purpose of the breakfast meeting seemed to be the restoration of Peter \(who sinned by denying he knew Christ on the night the Lord was betrayed\).](#)

Three times Jesus addressed him as Simon and asked, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" ([John 21:15-17](#)). Three times, Peter affirmed his love.

That was the last time Jesus ever had to call him Simon. [A few weeks later, on the Day of Pentecost \(50 days after the Passover during which Jesus was crucified\), Peter and the rest of the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit. It was Peter, the Rock, who stood up and preached that day.](#)

Peter was exactly like most Christians: both carnal and spiritual. He gave in to the lower habits of the flesh sometimes; he operated by the Spirit other times. He was bad sometimes, but other times he acted the way a good man ought to act.

Simon Peter had a wife. We know this because in [Luke 4:38](#) Jesus healed his mother-in-law. The apostle **Paul said in [1 Corinthians 9:5](#) that Peter took his wife on a missions trip.** That may indicate either that they had no children or that their children were already grown.

Peter's name is mentioned in the Gospels more than any other name except Jesus.

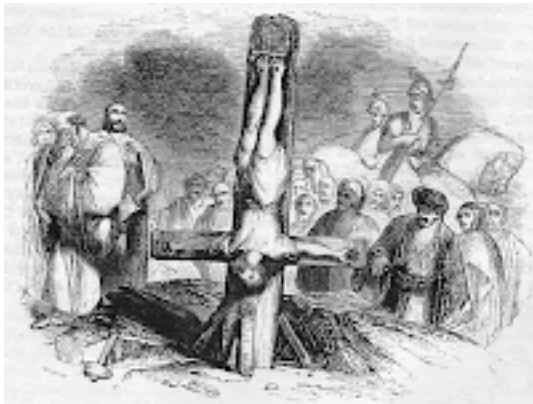
No one speaks as often as Peter, and no one is spoken to by the Lord as often as Peter.

No disciple is so frequently rebuked by the Lord as Peter, and no disciple ever rebukes the Lord except Peter ([Matthew 16:22](#)).

No one else confessed Christ more boldly or acknowledged His lordship more clearly, yet no other disciple ever verbally denied Christ as forcefully or as publicly as Peter did.

No one is praised and blessed by Christ the way Peter was, yet Peter was also the only one Christ ever addressed as Satan.

All of that contributed to making him the leader Christ wanted him to be.



How did Peter's life end?

We know Jesus told Peter he would die as a martyr (John 21:18-19), but Scripture doesn't record the death of Peter.

The records of the early church tell us Peter was crucified. Before that happened, he was forced to watch the crucifixion of his own wife.

As he watched her being led to her death, Peter called out to her by name, saying, "Remember the Lord." **When it was Peter's turn to die, he pleaded to be crucified upside down because he didn't feel worthy to die as his Lord had died, so he was crucified head downward.**

Peter's life could be summed up in the final words of his last letter:

*"Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ" (**2 Peter 3:18**).*

That is exactly what Simon Peter did, and that is why he became **Rock**: the great leader of the early church.

3. Andrew: The Apostle of Small Things

Peter's brother, Andrew, is the least-known of the 4 disciples in the lead group.

We know he had a particularly close relationship with Christ because he was so often the means

by which other people were personally introduced to the Master.

ANDREW WAS THE FIRST OF ALL THE APOSTLES TO BE CALLED (JOHN 1:35-40).

He was responsible for introducing his more dominant brother, Peter, to Christ (verses 41-42). Peter and Andrew had probably been lifelong companions with the other set of fishermen: the brothers James and John. The 4 of them shared common spiritual interests even before they met Christ. They evidently took a break from the fishing business, visited the wilderness where John the Baptist was preaching, and became disciples of John.

That is where they met Christ.

Andrew lived in the shadow of his better-known brother. Many of the verses that name him add that he was Peter's brother, as if that were the fact that made him significant.

In such situations, where one brother overshadows another, it is common to find resentment, strong sibling rivalry, or even estrangement. But **in Andrew's case, there is no evidence that he begrudged Peter's dominance.**

Again, it was Andrew who brought Peter to Christ in the first place. He did this immediately and without hesitation.

Almost everything Scripture tells us about Andrew shows that he had the right heart for effective ministry in the background. He did not seek to be the center of attention. He did not seem to resent those who labored in the spotlight. He was evidently content to do what he could with the gifts and calling that God had given him, and he allowed the others to do the same.

Whenever Andrew speaks—which is rare in Scripture—he always says the right thing, not the wrong thing. Whenever he acts apart from the other disciples, he does what is right.

Scripture never attaches any dishonor to Andrew's actions when it mentions him by name.

Andrew's name means "manly." **He was bold, decisive, and deliberate.** **Nothing about him is feeble or wimpish. He was driven by a hearty passion for the truth, and willing to subject himself to hardship.**

When it came to dealing with people, Andrew fully appreciated the value of a single soul. He was known for bringing individuals, not crowds, to Jesus. Almost every time we see him in the Gospel accounts, he is bringing someone to Jesus.

At the feeding of the 5,000, for example, it was Andrew who brought the boy with the loaves and fishes to Christ. John 12 tells of some Greeks who sought out Philip and said, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip told Andrew, and then they both told Jesus. Why didn't Philip just take them to Jesus himself? **Andrew was obviously poised and comfortable introducing people to Christ because he did it so often. He apparently knew Jesus well, and had no insecurities about bringing others to Him.**

The most effective evangelism takes place on an individual, personal level. Most people do not come to Christ as an immediate response to a sermon they hear in a crowd. They come to Christ because of the influence of an individual.

BOTH ANDREW AND HIS BROTHER PETER HAD EVANGELISTIC HEARTS, BUT THEIR METHODS WERE DRAMATICALLY DIFFERENT.

Peter preached at Pentecost, and 3,000 people were added to the church. Nothing in Scripture indicates that Andrew ever preached to a crowd or stirred masses of people. But remember, he brought Peter to Christ.

All the fruit of Peter's ministry is also the fruit of Andrew's faithful, individual witness.

Andrew is a picture of all those who labor quietly in humble places, "not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart" ([Ephesians 6:6](#)).

This is a lesson many Christians today would do well to learn. **Scripture cautions against seeking roles of prominence, and it warns those who would be teachers that they face a higher standard of judgment:** "My brothers, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we will receive a stricter judgment" ([James 3:1](#)). Jesus taught the disciples, ***"If anyone desires to be first, the same shall be last of all and servant of all"*** ([Mark 9:35](#)).



Andrew is not mentioned in the rest of the New Testament. Tradition says he took the Gospel north, perhaps as far as Russia and Scotland, which is why Andrew is the patron saint of both countries. He was ultimately crucified in Achaia (southern Greece). One account says he led the wife of the Roman governor there to Christ, and that infuriated her husband. He demanded that his wife recant her devotion to the Lord. When she refused, he ordered that Andrew be tied--not nailed--onto an X-shaped cross

(called a saltire) to prolong his sufferings. By most accounts, he hung on that cross for 2 days, exhorting passersby to turn to Christ for salvation. Andrew remained faithful, still endeavoring to bring people to Jesus right to the end.