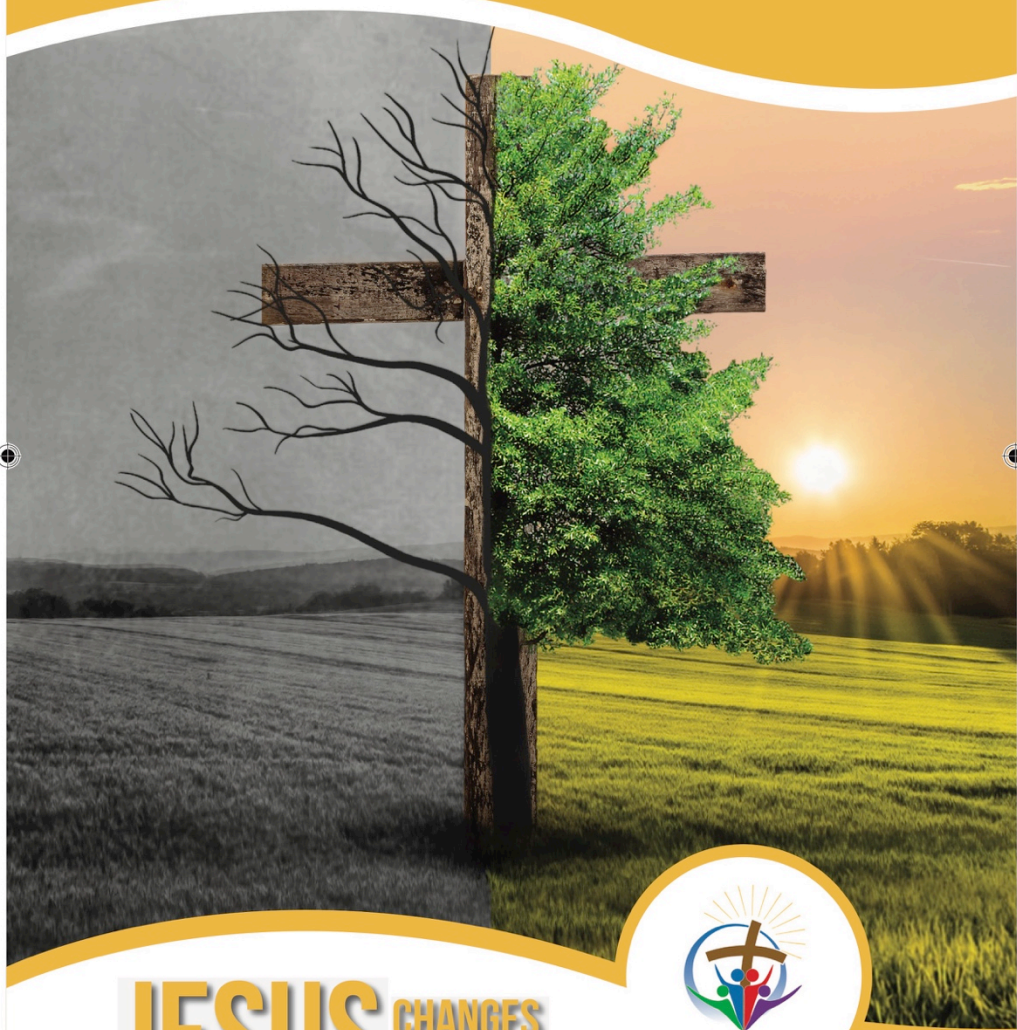


JESUS CHANGES ORDINARY PEOPLE



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JESUS CHANGES EVERYTHING

INTRODUCTION

We have come to our last study in the series, *Jesus changes everything.*”

Jesus changed the world by using *ordinary men and women*. He is also changing me, you and the church daily. He uses ordinary people to do this.

In Luke 6:12-16 we read: “*One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, son of Alphaeus, Simon, who was called the Zealot, Judas, son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.*”

You may wonder about the difference between disciples and apostles. The word apostle means “one who is sent”. In other words, a messenger, delegate or an official

representative. A disciple is a follower of and believer in Jesus Christ as Saviour. Therefore, we can say that all apostles were disciples, but all disciples were not apostles. In this study we will refer to the 12 chosen men as disciples.

When Jesus chose His apostles, the people who were to take the wonderful message of salvation into the world, He didn't choose a rabbi, or a scribe, or a Pharisee, or even a priest. He chose twelve ordinary men with no theological training. These ordinary men had a powerful impact on the world. And He still does it today. He chooses ordinary men and women.

Of His twelve disciples, seven were fishermen, one of them was a tax collector. One of them had previously been part of a terrorist group and another was a thief and a traitor.

Sometimes people disregard the disciples, but they changed the world forever. It seems from the Biblical accounts of the disciples that Peter was a leader of the group. Whenever the New Testament refers to the list of disciples, Peter's name is first. *“Although Peter was unstable and impulsive, he became the rock upon whose confession the church would be built. Though he failed*

Jesus by denying Him on the night of His betrayal, the Lord restored him and used him to win 3,000 converts on the Day of Pentecost.” (MacArthur, 2006)

Peter and Andrew were brothers so were James and John, who were also cousins of Jesus. James was the first martyr. His brother John lived the longest and died when he was in his 80's. He was the only one of the disciples who did not die a martyrs' death.

We don't know much about the rest of the disciples, but we know that these ordinary men went out into the world, made more disciples and changed the world by the power of the Holy Spirit.

All believers are disciples of Jesus. The word means a student or an apprentice. Disciples learn to be like their Teacher, Jesus. Like the first disciples, Jesus also chooses us, ordinary people, to be His followers.

The disciples struggled with the same things that we are daily struggling with in the church. They struggled with lack of humility, lack of faith or commitment and powerlessness. They sinned, they denied, they back stabbed and they fled. Jesus saw their weakness, but

behind it He saw potential to change the world. They were perfect candidates for God to use.

Jesus took them just as they were, and He taught them. He set an example for them, He prayed for them and with them and He gave them the Holy Spirit. Nothing has changed since then. He still wants to change the world through us, ordinary people, who have faults and flaws and sins. We must just be willing to be changed and used for His glory.

We pray that this study will help you to see where you fit into God's plan for you, your family and friends, your church, the community and the world. Be an agent of change!

Deo Gloria – To God all the Glory!!

JESUS CHANGES ORDINARY PEOPLE

Week **1**

Peter

Memory verse:

“I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

Matthew 16:18-19 (NIV)

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Day 1: Simon – Peter

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Begin today's study with prayer.

Read John 1:40-42 and Luke 6:12-14

Why do you think Jesus gave Simon, the nickname, Peter "rock?"

Simon was a very common name in the time of the New Testament. Simon was the son of John (Jonah). Luke refers to him as Simon, whom Jesus also called Peter. Jesus picked this nickname, "Peter", for a purpose. It comes from the Greek word *Petros* which means "a piece of rock or a stone." The Aramaic equivalent was Cephas.

It appears that Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter, to be a continuous reminder to him about who he should be. The times that Jesus called him Simon, it was a constant reminder to Peter that he is not fulfilling his potential to be a rock for Christ, but rather that he was acting like his old self. When Jesus called him Peter (Rock), He reminded Peter that he is acting as he should.

How can you identify with Peter?

Throughout the Bible it is apparent that God uses ordinary, most of the time, unqualified people, to advance the kingdom of God. Peter was no different. One minute he was walking on water in faith, and the next moment he was sinking because of his doubt. He was impulsive, arrogant, emotional and once he even denied Jesus. Yet God still used him.

No one is, by nature, qualified to do God's work. With different temperaments, different skills, human frailties and diverse backgrounds, we are all unqualified for it. Yet Jesus wants to use us to change the world around us.

Most of the time Peter did not act like the rock on which Christ wanted to build His church. However, Jesus doesn't want perfect people. The church is the ideal place for imperfect people. Jesus is looking for people like Peter and me and you, who are full of sin and flaws, but who are available and willing to be used and to be changed.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 2: The character of Peter

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Begin today's study with prayer.

What do you learn about the character of Peter from the following verses?

Read Matthew 14:22-33, 17:4 and John 18:10

Peter had an impulsive nature. He had the wonderful opportunity to see Jesus as He really was and to meet Moses and Elia. Instead of enjoying the moment and keeping his mouth shut, he blurts out an inappropriate suggestion, *"I can build you three tents if you like"*. The same thing happens with the last supper. Without thinking, he refuses that Jesus wash his feet. And when Jesus was arrested, without thinking, he took out his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus. No one knows why on earth he took a sword with him.

Read Matthew 26:33-35 and 57-74

One moment Peter strongly professes his loyalty to Christ and declares that even if everyone else should desert Jesus, he will not do so, even if it means dying with Him.

Only to deny Jesus a few hours later. This after Jesus told him that he would deny Him. Peter demonstrated on the one hand self-confidence and on the other how fallible we all are.

Are you aware of any weaknesses you may have? Are you able to recognise them and depend on God's power to overcome them?

Maturity is being able to recognise your weaknesses as well as your strengths.

Read Matthew 26:75 and Luke 24:12

After the cock crowed three times, Peter remembered the words of Jesus, and he broke down and wept bitterly. Yet after Simon Peter repented of his failures, he became the leader of the disciples.

Someone has described the difference between remorse and repentance in this way: "Remorse says 'I am sorry', but repentance says, 'I am sorry enough to quit.'" It means we are sorry enough to stop doing what is wrong. Do you only have remorse, or do you repent of you sins?

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 3: The Call of Peter

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Begin today's study with prayer.

How did you become a follower of Christ?

Read Luke 5:1-11

Describe in your own words how Jesus called Peter and the reaction of Peter.

Ask yourself: Where did this man come from? Why was he so powerfully used by God? Where did he learn to preach like this? Where did he get such authority? Why does he speak with such conviction about Jesus, his life, his death and his resurrection? What is his story? How did it all begin?

Jesus called Peter to Him, to be in relationship with Him. This is the foundation of all people being called to Christ. We are all called to be in a relationship with Jesus. If the

relationship is established and growing, Jesus can call on us for more. Jesus also called Peter to be a disciple and a student, to learn from Him, to see the glory of God through Jesus. The call to follow Jesus is the call to a new way of life, a life as a *“fisher of men.”* Follow me (relationship), be my disciple (student) and become fishers of men (ministry).

We often want to do things for God and then we are so busy in our ministries, that we forget that we are called to be disciples. In the first place, we should be followers, not only workers.

Jesus called a simple fisherman, an ordinary family man, with a boat and a house, like many of us. Peter made blunders, he had limitations, he was impulsive. Yet he allowed Jesus to change him to become an agent of change. No matter what we are by nature, with Christ's help and sustaining grace, we can become the man or woman God wants us to be. Peter was a reed, tossed in the wind, but he became a rock. Something similar can happen to you.

Take some time and think of your relationship with Jesus. How eager are you to learn from Jesus? Do you understand your calling?

**Pray now and ask Him to use you in His Kingdom
and for His glory.**



Day 4: **Peter - The Leader**

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Begin today's study with prayer.

Read Acts 2:14 - 41

What struck you the most about this passage?

On the day of the Pentecost there were large crowds in Jerusalem. Jesus previously promised that His followers will be filled with the Holy Spirit. Suddenly the Holy Spirit came with fire and empowered the disciples. It was the birth of the church. Jesus was building His church on Peter, the rock. Through the testimonies of Peter and the other disciples, the Good News of salvation for all mankind continues.

During these history-making times, Peter is at the forefront of this new movement. A few days prior to this, he forsook Christ and denied that he knew Him. Now he stood up and without preparing a sermon, he begins to preach the sermon of his life.

Jesus through His Holy Spirit transformed Peter the fisherman, to become Peter the leader, Peter the man of

God. That day Peter made an appeal and about 3000 people responded to his message and became followers of the Way. They became Christians and were baptised.

And this continues right through the book of Acts and in the early church.

Read Acts 3:11-16 and 10:44-48

What do you learn about Peter from these passages?

If you have influence, you are a leader. Every one of us has influence. We tend to think we must be born as leaders, but by the Holy Spirit all are called to be leaders, even if we influence only one person. Learn from Peter. He was willing to be used and God used him, He changed the world through Peter. We are not different. Ask God to use you as a person of influence, to change the world you live in, by the power of the same Holy Spirit, that “overpowered,” Peter. Be available and willing. God will enable you.

End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 5: Peter – The Rock

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Begin today's study with prayer.

**Read Matthew 16:13-20, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 and
Ephesians 2:19-20**

Who is building the church? On what would Jesus build it? What does it mean to us today? How are we supposed to build on the foundation?

Jesus builds His church through faithful believers and He started with Peter. Jesus is the foundation, the cornerstone of God's spiritual house. God builds the church on the truth about Himself. Because the apostles were endowed with His truth in a unique way, by their teaching and preaching, they were also the foundation of God's church. The building of God's church is a never-ending process.

Read 1 Peter 2:4-5 and 9-10

What is your calling in this world?

Tradition tells us Peter died 34 years after the crucifixion of Jesus in the city of Rome. He was crucified upside down, by his own request. He said he wasn't worthy to die as Jesus died. So much happened to him between his calling and his crucifixion. He started his journey with Jesus when he offered his boat for Jesus to preach from. He left his business and boat and followed Jesus. Later he walked on water, he was there when Jesus met with Moses and Elijah. It was Peter who fell asleep in the garden of Gethsemane as Jesus prayed. It was Peter who cut off Malchus' ear when Jesus was arrested. When they arrested Jesus, it was Peter who denied Jesus. It was Peter who ran to the empty tomb on Easter morning. It was Peter who stood up and preached on the day of the Pentecost. It was Peter who preached the message of Jesus worldwide. All those things can be traced to one experience, his calling. On that day, he had no idea how much his life was going to change. That day started like every other day. Today started like every other day, ask God to make today a turning point in His story. Just think how mightily He might use you.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



GROUP DISCUSSION

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Prayer

Memory verse:

"I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Matthew 16:18-19 (NIV)

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

John 1:35-42, Luke 5:1-11, Matthew 16:13-20, Matthew 26:57-75 and Acts 2:14

Discussion questions

Read John 1:35-42. What was the message that convinced Peter to go and meet Jesus? Who was responsible for initially bringing you to meet Jesus? What impact has that had on your life?

Read Luke 5:1-11. How does Jesus use this fishing trip to get Peter's attention? Share how God has used events in your life to get your attention.?

Read Matthew 16:13-20. Who does Peter say that Jesus is? How is Peter's statement about Jesus the foundation of the church? How must we build on this foundation?

Read Matthew 26:57-75 and Act 2:14. Why did Peter deny Christ? What caused Peter to go from denying Christ to boldly proclaiming Christ before men? How can God use you to proclaim the Gospel boldly?

Close in prayer

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Week 2

James

Memory verse:

and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

Mark 1:20(NIV)

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Day 1: James

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Begin today's study with prayer.

There are several men with the name James in the New Testament. There was James, brother of John and the son of Zebedee; James the son of Alpheus (often called James the Lesser) and James who was the son of Mary and Joseph and therefore a half-brother of Christ. This James became a leader in the church in Jerusalem and penned the New Testament epistle that bears his name.

This week we are going to study James, the son of Zebedee, who was chosen by Jesus to be one of the twelve.

Read Mark 1:16-20 and Luke 5:10

James was the older brother of John and was part of the closest inner circle of Jesus, but he is the least familiar to us. We do not find a lot of information on his character and actions in the Bible. We do know that his father, Zebedee, was a man of importance, because he had a fishing business big enough to employ several people.

What was James' reaction when Jesus called him and John?

James left everything and followed Christ immediately.

Read Luke 9:57-62

Some people made a lot of excuses of why they could not follow Jesus immediately and why they did not see themselves as fit for serving the Kingdom.

Have you made excuses of why you couldn't follow Jesus, even when you knew that you had to do something? Why?

God does not make mistakes – also not in calling you.

1 Thessalonians 5:24 teaches us that *He who calls is faithful* and will make you holy and keep you whole.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 2: Part of the Inner Circle

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Begin today's study with prayer.

Being part of the close inner circle of Jesus, gave James the privilege to witness Jesus' power and glory.

Read the following passages and describe the events that James witnessed.

Mark 5:36-43	
Matthew 17:1-7	
Mark 13:1-5	
Mark 14:32-34	

All these events that James witnessed, must have strengthened his faith. *He was privileged to witness the power of Jesus in raising the dead, he saw His glory when Jesus was transfigured; he saw Christ's sovereignty in the way the Lord unfolded the future to them on the Mount of Olives and he saw the Saviour's agony in the garden. All these events must have strengthened his faith immensely and equipped him for the suffering and martyrdom that he would eventually face.* (John MacArthur, Twelve Ordinary Men, p79)

Do you think it is possible for us to have such an intimate relationship with Jesus? How?

Despite all our shortcomings, Christ wants us to be in an intimate relationship with Him. He wants us to be part of His inner circle.

What is it that are preventing you from having such an intimate relationship with Christ?

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.
Ask Father to help you to have an intimate relationship
with Him.**



Day 3: A Fearless Follower

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Begin today's study with prayer.

Read Mark 3:17

Why do you think Jesus gave James and John the nickname: "Sons of Thunder"?

James was a man of intense fervour and passion. The Greek word, *Boanerges* (sons of Thunder), defines his personality. He was zealous, thunderous and passionate. But zeal without knowledge and wisdom can be dangerous.

Read Luke 9:51-56

Why did James and John want to call fire down from heaven on the Samaritans?

The Samaritans treated Jesus with deliberate contempt even though Jesus has ministered to them and had always been full of kindness and goodwill toward them. James and John missed the spirit of what Jesus taught – therefore Jesus did not allow them to take revenge.

Read Psalm 18:29

What does this verse teach us about being fearless in the right way?

James was outspoken, intense and impatient with evildoers. Such fearlessness can be a virtue when it is for righteousness sake. What drives you to be a fearless follower of Christ?

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 4: **Called to serve**

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Begin today's study with prayer.

Read Matthew 20:20-24 and Mark 10:35-45

Identify the different characters in this drama. What did they ask and what do you think is motivating them?

The arrogance of this request is consistent with the fact that Zebedee was a man of wealth and influence. James and John were ambitious and overconfident and tried to gain status over the other disciples. In Matthew we read that their mother asked Jesus, and in Mark they asked Jesus themselves. Even though Matthew says their mother spoke to Jesus – we can safely deduct that they were the instigators and put their mother up to talking to Jesus on their behalf.

How did Jesus respond to this request? What did He grant and what did He withhold in His response?

Why do you think the other disciples were put off by James' and John's request?

What attitude does this behaviour of the Twelve disciples warn you to be cautious about?

The key word in Mark 10 is service. Jesus came to serve people and He expects the same from His followers.

For Jesus' followers, it must be about so much more than power and honorary positions. Jesus set the example by humbling himself to become human and die on the cross for sinners.

Think about what you can do to serve others. Ask God to show you He wants you can serve in His Kingdom.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 5: Persecuted for Faith

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Begin today's study with prayer.

Read John 15:18-21

What warning does Jesus give His disciples?

Read Acts 12:1-2

Why did Herod kill James?

James became the first disciple to be killed for his faith. Herod started his persecution of believers to gain the Jews' good favour.

Read 2 Timothy 3:12

Do you think it is a given that believers will suffer opposition and persecution for their faith? Why?

In what ways are we as believers experiencing opposition and persecution in our daily lives?

As believers we can expect persecution. Even today, it still happens that people are killed for their faith.

Read 1 Peter 4:14

What comfort can we gain from this passage?

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.
Pray for the people experiencing persecution for their
faith and for those persecuting believers.**



GROUP DISCUSSION

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Prayer

Memory verse:

and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

Mark 1:20(NIV)

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

Hebrews 3:7-8, Colossians 4:5-6, 1 Peter 4:10 and Matthew 5:10-12

Discussion questions

Read Hebrews 3:7-8. Does God still call people for a specific task? What should we do when we hear God's voice? How do we hear God's voice? Discuss.

Share with each other if you have received a specific calling from God.

Read Colossians 4:5-6. Can one be too fearless to be a follower of Christ? What guidelines do we find in Colossians 4 to follow when confronted about our faith?

Read 1 Peter 4:10. How can we serve one another?

Read Matthew 5:10-12. Can you be happy when you are persecuted for your faith? What will be your reward?

Close in prayer

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Week **3**

John

Memory verse:

The disciple Jesus loved was sitting next to Jesus at the table.

John 13:23 (NLT)

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Day 1: John

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Begin today's study with prayer.

Read Mark 1:19-20 and Mark 3:17

The apostle John is familiar to us because he wrote so much of the New Testament. He was the author of a Gospel and three epistles that bear his name, as well as the book of Revelation. Aside from Luke and the apostle Paul, John wrote more of the New Testament than any other human author. Scripture is therefore full of insights into his personality and character.

John was the younger son of Zebedee. His older brother, James, was also called to be a disciple of Jesus. After their subsequent call by Jesus to leave their father and their fishing, He nicknamed James and John Boanērges, 'sons of thunder'. This was probably because they were high-spirited, impetuous Galileans, whose zeal was undisciplined and sometimes misdirected.

John was right there with James, eager to call down fire from heaven against the Samaritans. He was also in the

thick of the debates about who was the greatest. His zeal and ambition mirrored that of his elder brother.

John is not mentioned by name in his Gospel, but there are different references to him as the disciple *whom Jesus loved*. Read the following verses and explain why it shows that Jesus loved him:

John 13:23	
John 19:26-27	
John 20:2,8	
John 21: 1-14	

John began his discipleship as a zealous follower of Jesus. He was not gentle and considerate and had to learn about the love that should characterize a follower of Jesus. But he had faith, and Jesus changed him into the disciple whom He loved.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.
Ask Jesus to change you to be the follower He wants
you to be.**



Day 2: In the presence of Jesus

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Begin today's study with prayer.

John was part of the inner circle of Jesus and was especially closest to the Master. The three disciples in the inner circle were selected to be with Jesus on many great occasions. We have studied a few such occasions on day 2 of week 2 and will now study 3 more.

Read the following passages and describe the events that John witnessed and was part of.

Matthew 8:14-17	
Luke 5:5-11	
Luke 22:8-13	

Passages like these show that John was highly esteemed among the apostles and that he was especially close to Jesus.

How do you feel about your relationship with Christ? Do you think you spend enough time with Him in His company to learn from Him? What should change?

When we think of the apostle John, we usually think of a tender-hearted, elderly apostle. Someone filled with wisdom and love. John did not start like that. Under the control of the Holy Spirit, John changed. As we continue our study you will see his greatest weaknesses developed into his greatest strengths. His life teaches us what should happen to us as we grow in Christ.

What do you see as the greatest strengths and weaknesses in your spiritual life?

Talk to the Father about it in prayer. Ask Him to change your weaknesses into strengths.



Day 3: Balancing Love and Truth

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Begin today's study with prayer.

Read John 1:35-37 and John 3:30

In what way does these verses show us that John had knowledge of the scriptures and that he sought and wanted to follow the truth?

John the disciple was interested in the truth; he hadn't followed the Baptist in order to join a personality cult. Therefore, he left John to follow Jesus as soon as John clearly identified Him as the Lamb of God. He uses the Greek word for truth twenty-five times in his Gospel and twenty more times in his epistles. He wrote, *"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth"* (3 John 4).

But sometimes in his younger years, John's zeal for truth was lacking in love and compassion for people. He needed to learn the balance.

Read Mark 9:38-41

What did John confess he has done? What was Jesus' response?

John condemned a man who was ministering in the name of Jesus, just because the man wasn't part of the group. He had always been zealous and passionate for the truth, but now the Lord was teaching him to love. This is a major turning point in his life. He was beginning to understand the necessity to balance truth with love.

How do you balance the truth and love in your life?

The kingdom needs people who have courage, ambition, drive, passion, boldness and a zeal for the truth. Manifesting both truth and love is only possible for the mature believer who has grown into their relationship with Christ.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 4: Balancing Ambition and Humility

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Begin today's study with prayer.

In his youth, John had some ambitious plans for himself. It's not inherently wrong to aspire to have influence or to desire success. But it is wrong to have selfish motives, as John apparently did. And it is especially wrong to be ambitious without also being humble.

Read Mark 10:35-39

What do these verses teach us about John's ambition?

The brothers' request shows amazing audacity. It reveals how devoid of true humility they were. There is nothing wrong with ambition. In fact, there was nothing wrong with James and John's desire to sit next to Jesus in the kingdom. Who would not desire that? Their error was in desiring to obtain the position more than they desired to be worthy of such a position. Their ambition was untempered by humility. And Jesus had repeatedly made

clear that the highest positions in the kingdom are reserved for the humblest.

Read Mark 9:35-37

In what way does Jesus illustrate humility in these verses?

Jesus showed them how to be a servant through the way you live. If the disciples wanted to be first in the kingdom, they needed to be servants. If they wanted to be truly great, they needed to be more childlike. Instead of arguing and fighting with each other, instead of putting each other down, instead of rejecting each other and exalting themselves, they needed to serve each other.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-5

In what way does the model of servanthood also teach us about love?

Love is manifested in service to one another, not by lording it over each other.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 5: **A pillar of the Church**

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Begin today's study with prayer.

Sometime, during his time with Jesus, John's ambition found balance in humility. John himself was mellowed—although he remained courageous, confident, bold, and passionate. John became a pillar in the church and his influence has been felt throughout the centuries.

Read Acts 4:1-19

What do we learn about John's ministry and the way he suffered in this passage?

Read Acts 8:14-17

Where did the Church commission John to go? Who was he with?

Read Galatians 2:9

What does this verse teach us about the way the church perceived John's ministry?

Read Revelation 1:9

Which two words does John use to describe himself to his readers?

In what way does these words reveal John's modesty?

Jesus changed John completely. John got the message and he learned the lessons. He grasped the character of Christ in a powerful way. He became a choice human example of what righteous Christlike character ought to be.

How would your friends and family describe you? Do you have a Christlike character?

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



GROUP DISCUSSION

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Prayer

Memory verse:

The disciple Jesus loved was sitting next to Jesus at the table.

John 13:23 (NLT)

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

1 Corinthians 13:4-5, John 13:34-35 and 1 John 4:19

Discussion questions

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-5. Rewrite these verses in your own words to explain how you understand Paul's words.

Which of the characteristics of God's kind of love do you find most lacking in your life?

Although Paul is credited with writing the "love chapter" of the Bible, John mentions love more than any other New Testament writer. Read John 13:34-35 and 1 John 4:19: What (who) is the origin of love? What is the result when Christians love each other as God teaches us?

Do you think you can be a follower of Christ and not love other people? Explain your point of view.

Close in prayer

JESUS CHANGES ORDINARY PEOPLE

Week **4**

Andrew

Memory verse:

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him.

Matthew 4:19-20(NIV)

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

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DeoGloria
Family of Churches



Day 1: Andrew

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Begin today's study with prayer.

Read John 1:44 and Matthew 4:18

Andrew was Simon Peter's quieter brother. They were originally from the village of Bethsaida. But that is not where they are living when we met them in the Gospel according to Matthew. Where have they relocated to and what do you know about this place?

Andrew lived his life in the shadow of his better-known brother. Often, when he is mentioned in the Bible, the fact that he is Peter's brother is added. We would have thought that there would be sibling rivalry, but there is no evidence that Andrew was ever jealous of Peter's dominance. He even led Peter to Jesus!

Not much is revealed about Andrew in the Bible. Yet Jesus chose Him and used him – a modest fisherman from Bethsaida on the sea of Galilee. Do you see

yourself as an Andrew – just a fisherman, tradie, housewife or teacher?

Almost everything Scripture teaches us about Andrew shows that he ministered in the background. Where do you minister?

In his book, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, MacArthur says: *Andrew's name means manly and it seems fitting. As a fisherman, the kind of net-fishing he and the others did, required no small degree of physical strength. But Andrew also had other characteristics of manliness. He was bold, decisive and deliberate. He was driven by a passion for the truth.* (John MacArthur, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, p 64)

What drives you? What is your passion?

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 2: Seeker to Believer

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Begin today's study with prayer.

Read John 1:29-37 and verse 41

Who was Andrew following before he met Jesus?

Andrew was following John the Baptist – who was preparing the way for Jesus. Immediately, when they met Jesus, they left John the Baptist and followed Jesus.

Do you think Andrew and John lacked commitment to a cause because of the way they left John the Baptist?

John the Baptist was the one who showed Jesus to them. They were all expectantly waiting for the Messiah. When John the Baptist pointed them to Jesus, they did the right thing to follow Christ.

Read verse 38 again. What do you think Andrew was seeking?

Andrew was seeking the truth and when Jesus asked: “What are you looking for?”, his answer revealed that he was seeking a Rabbi (teacher) to follow. Unknowingly, he was seeking Truth Himself. He became one of Jesus’ first disciples.

Who are you seeking in life?

How can you make this your highest priority?

Andrew and John were privileged to spend the afternoon and evening in private fellowship with Jesus. You can also enjoy such an intimate fellowship with Him.

End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 3: Believer to Revealer

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Begin today's study with prayer.

Read John 1:40-42

What was the first thing that Andrew did when he learnt the truth about Jesus?

Andrew was focused on bringing individuals to Jesus, not crowds. This set the tone for his style of ministering.

What does the following passages teach us about having a passion to tell others about Jesus?

John 6: 1-14	
John 12:20-22	

Andrew was comfortable in introducing people to Christ. His nature reflects his love for Jesus and his desire to reveal Jesus to them. It is usually as a result of the influence of one individual who encouraged that person to listen and follow, that a person is converted to Christianity.

Who do you think credits your invitation to share with their Salvation?

People react differently to the gospel. Do not give up sharing if they do not (initially) respond.

Ask God to show you one person who needs Him and ask Him to show you how to reach out to them.

Andrew became a quiet leader, who never sought the limelight. He had lived his whole life in the shadow of Peter and he apparently accepted that role. That was the very thing that made him so useful. His willingness to have a supporting role often helped him to have insight into things that the other disciples had trouble understanding. Therefore, whenever he does come to the forefront, his uncanny ability to see immense value in small and modest things, shines through.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 4: Fisherman to Full-time Follower

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Begin today's study with prayer.

Read Matthew 4:18-22

On this occasion when Jesus called Andrew, it was the final call to follow Him permanently, daily – to become a fulltime leader. This event took place several months after Andrew's initial meeting with Jesus in the wilderness. Why do you think he was called again?

What is the significance of the word "immediately" that is used in verse 20?

Andrew wasn't unsure. He reacted immediately. Maybe he was just so heartbroken that he really didn't want to socialize.

Read Mark 16:10-13

Write down two sentences that use the word “immediately” to describe the decisions you made or actions you took based on God’s Word.

Read Mark 8:34-38 and John 10:27

For Andrew “following Jesus” meant physically following Him. What does it mean today when Jesus commands someone to “follow” Him? How can you follow Jesus daily, permanently?

Read Mark 9:35

It takes a special person to be a leader with a servant’s heart. Andrew was such a person. Do you have a servant’s heart? Explain why or why not.

**End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.
Pray Psalm 119:133-136 for yourself.**



Day 5: A Heart for the Nations!

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Begin today's study with prayer.

Read John 20:20-22

Why is it significant that Greeks wanted to worship and see Jesus?

How did Andrew respond when Philip brought them to him?

Jesus promised that Andrew will become a *“fisher of men”*. In bringing Greeks to Jesus, Andrew had faith that Jesus' intention was to save all men, and he was right: Jesus responded by referencing His crucifixion, saying, *“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified”*.

Andrew was one of the first to be involved in an evangelical effort that extended beyond the Jewish people. The incident with the curious Greeks anticipated

the day when God would reveal to Peter, Andrew's brother, that all people are welcome to come to Jesus (Acts 10:1–48).

Andrew had a heart for the nations. Not only did He introduce Jews to Jesus, He was one of the first to introduce gentiles to Jesus. How do you interact with other culture groups? Do you have a heart for the nations?

The Bible does not record what happened to Andrew after Pentecost. He remained the one working behind the scenes. Church tradition has it that Andrew took the Gospel north, to Scythia (modern day Russia).

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.
Ask God to open your heart to reach all nations.**



GROUP DISCUSSION

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Prayer

Memory verse:

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him.

Matthew 4:19-20(NIV)

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

Mark 9:33-37 and Acts 10:1-48

Discussion questions

Read Mark 9:33-37. Why did the disciples hesitate to tell Jesus what they had been discussing on the road?

How did Jesus define greatness?

Andrew is an example of servant leadership. What is it about servanthood that is hard to swallow for most?

Read Acts 10:1-48. Discuss the importance of prayer, obedience, the Word of God and the Holy Spirit in reaching others and spreading the gospel.

Close in prayer

Ask God to show your group how you can meet other culture groups with the intentions of sharing the gospel with them.

JESUS CHANGES ORDINARY PEOPLE

Week **5**

Philip and Nathanael (Bartholomew)

Memory verse:

Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

John 1:45(NIV)

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

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Day 1: Philip

**JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING**

Begin today's study with prayer.

Read John 1:35-44

"Philip" is a Greek name meaning "lover of horses". He must also have had a Jewish name, because all 12 apostles were Jewish. But his Jewish name is never given in Scripture.

The only Biblical information about Phillip is found in the gospel according to John. Phillip grew up in Bethsaida in Galilee, the same town as the brothers Andrew and Peter (John 1:44). Like these two brothers, Phillip and Bartholomew were also professional fishermen (John 21:1-3).

We believe it was because of their devotion to their faith that they were in the wilderness where John the Baptist was baptizing when he announced that Jesus was the Messiah.

Philip's personality was completely different from the others. He was a "process person". He's one of those

people who is fascinated with facts and figures. (He would read the instructions before putting something together.) He was practical minded but did things by the book.

Phillip wasn't what you would call forward thinking. John MacArthur describes Phillip as *"the kind who tends to be a corporate killjoy, pessimistic, narrowly focused, sometimes missing the big picture, often obsessed with identifying reasons that things can't be done rather than finding ways to do them."* He was too much concerned about methods and protocol. He lacked boldness and vision, which made him timid and apprehensive.

Read John 12:20-22

Why did the Greeks sought out Philip to make an appointment to meet Jesus?

What was Philip's reaction? Who introduced them to Jesus instead?

Phillip was the administrator in the group of 12 (the logistics man). As he also had a Greek name, they thought he would be the best contact person to arrange a meeting with the Lord. But he too was indecisive and unsure what to do because they were Gentiles. So, rather than not “going by the book” and making any mistake, he enlisted help and took the Greeks to Andrew to take the responsibility.

Isn't it sad? Phillip really was the best person to ask. But he was indecisive and so pre-occupied by the protocols and procedures that he wasn't sure of what to do.

Do you fall into that same trap? Are you so pre-occupied with doing God's things that you do not have the time to share the love of God and the Good News of Salvation in Christ with others? What should change in your life?

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 2: Sought and Found

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Begin today's study with prayer.

Read Psalm 139:1-6

Jesus is God – and therefor together with the Father, our Creator. From Psalm 139, it is clear that He knew every disciple whom He had called better than they knew themselves. He did not choose them for what they were worth or have already achieved – He called each one of them for the potential that they had to be active in His kingdom.

Read John 1: 40-43

On His way to Galilee, Jesus literally found and called Philip to follow Him. What did this imply for Philip?


Phillip unhesitatingly received Jesus. This was out of character for him as his natural tendency might have been to doubt and hold back, to wait and see. But this time Phillip was so overcome by Jesus' invitation – he

immediately accepted and found his good friend Nathanael and invited him. The reason is found in the words he used to witness to Nathanael in John 1:45: *“We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph”*. Because Phillip had a seeking heart, he was prepared. The Lord found Phillip, but Phillip felt he found the Lord – and from that day on Phillip became a willing disciple who followed Jesus as the Messiah and his own Saviour.

Isn't it remarkable that despite what Jesus knew of Philip, He actively sought him out, found him and called him as a disciple? Is that an encouragement to you as you review your obedience of the past week, or is it a conviction?

When was the last time you sensed Jesus speaking to you about a decision or choice in your life and saying: *“Follow me”*?

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 3: Solid Conviction, but Weak Faith

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Begin today's study with prayer.

Philip had a solid knowledge of the Old Testament and believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Jesus knew this and that Phillip had accepted Him unconditionally. But Jesus also knew that Phillip had personality traits that hindered his faith that he needed to overcome. Therefore, from the very beginning Jesus tested him and spent time with him until he became one of the pillars of the church in the 1st century!

Read John 6:1-7

Why do you think Jesus pointed out the enormity of the crowd out to Phillip? What do you think was the issue that Jesus wanted him to notice and learn?

Jesus tested Phillip if He would trust Him, but Phillip became overwhelmed by the impossible. He was ready with the figures and responded with total unbelief: *It cannot be done!* All that he actually needed to do was to let go and let God: *"Lord, if You want to feed them, feed*

them – I’m just going to watch You do it! Phillip however failed to recognize Jesus as being the very image of God and therefor being the God of wonders.

According to the following passages, what benefits are there to episodes of testing of faith?

1 Peter 1:6-9	
James 1:2-8	
1 Timothy 3:10	

Read John 14:1-11

What was the problem with Phillip’s comment and how would you describe Jesus’s reaction and correction?

Phillip, like the other apostles, was a man of weak faith and imperfect understanding. He was sceptical, analytical, pessimistic, and unsure. He wanted to go by the book all the time. But Jesus just couldn’t be contained in Phillip’s book. With His question: *“Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me?”*,

Jesus assured Phillip that he was already in the presence of the living and eternal God. He didn't need to see any further proof.

Phillip eventually got the message. Many believers came to Christ under his preaching. He was a founding Father of the early church and among the first to be martyred.

Jesus can change ordinary people with character flaws to become dependable true examples of faith and loyal ambassadors of His kingdom. Has He changed you?

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 4: **Nathanael - Bartholomew**

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Begin today's study with prayer.

Read John 21:2

Nathanael is listed as Bartholomew in all four lists of the Twelve in the Bible. But in the Gospel of John he is always called Nathanael. Bartholomew is his Hebrew surname meaning "Son of Tolmai". Nathanael means "God has given". Nathanael came from the little town of Cana in Galilee, the place where Jesus did His first miracle. Cana was very close to Jesus' own hometown, Nazareth.

Read John 1:45-46

What was the first thing Philip did after accepting Jesus' calling?

What was Nathanael's first reaction? (refer to verse 46)

Nathanael's first reaction was based on sheer emotion and was filled with prejudice towards the people of Nazareth. (Not that the little town of Cana was much bigger or better!). So, at first, Nathanael was not very impressed.

Prejudice is ugly, it prevented Jesus' contemporaries from being able to see Him as the Messiah. Do you have a problem with prejudice when you meet people? How does it impact your sharing of the Gospel?

Nathanael was an ordinary man, he had sinful faults, but his heart was not poisoned by deceit. Because of his love for scripture and knowledge of what Scripture said about the Messiah, he was able to recognize Jesus instantly! Nathanael received Him on the spot and from that moment forward he was devoted to Jesus!

How convinced are you that Jesus is the Saviour – and how devoted are you to Him?

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 5: An Israelite with no deceit!

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Begin today's study with prayer.

Read John 1:47-51

Given the fact that Nathanael sometimes falsely categorized people, how is it that Jesus recognized him as one who did not have deceit in his heart?

What was Nathanael's response to what Jesus said?

All Nathanael's doubts were swept away when Jesus answered, *"I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."* Houses in that culture generally only had one room – and the cooking was done inside! Trees were planted around houses to keep them cool and shaded. One of the best trees was a fig tree as it provided a large, shady, protected place outdoors. It was a kind of private outdoor space – perfect for meditation, reflection, and solitude. It's no doubt that this is where Nathaniel went to study the scriptures and pray.

And that is where Jesus saw him previously and how He knew his heart.

Because his heart was sincere and his faith was real, Nathanael overcame his prejudice. Being known as a person in whose heart there is no deceit does not require you to be sinless. It requires a heart that is sincere and a faith that is real. Could Jesus say those same words about you?

If not, what needs to change?

Nathanael was an authentic Jew, one of the true spiritual offspring of Abraham. He never was a half-hearted follower of Christ. He trusted the Lord from his first meeting with Jesus and the tree years with Him was just an unfolding panorama of supernatural reality – just as Jesus promised him in verse 51.

How close is your relationship with Christ?

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



GROUP DISCUSSION

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Prayer

Memory verse:

Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

John 1:45(NIV)

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

John 14:6-14 and John 1:47-51

Discussion questions

Read John 14:6-14. What does Jesus reveal about Himself and His intentions in this passage? Does Philip's lack of understanding surprise you? Why or why not?

Read John 1:47-51. When Nathanael questioned whether anything good could come out of Nazareth, Philip said: "Come and see". Why was this response out of character for him? Why do you think he answered that way?

From the start Nathanael confessed: "*Rabbi, You are the Son of God.*" What was it that led him to believe this from day one when Philip still did not recognize it after three years?

The fig tree is a symbol of a place of solitude and prayer. Discuss the importance of having such a place.

Close in prayer

JESUS CHANGES ORDINARY PEOPLE

Week 6

Thomas

Memory verse:

Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

John 20:27-28(NIV)

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

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Day 1: Thomas

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Begin today's study with prayer.

Read Luke 6:12-16

What comes to mind when you think of Thomas?

Chances are good that you know Thomas as “doubting Thomas.” His reputation as a doubter is universal. We even call people “Doubting Thomases.”

There's a good chance that Thomas was one of a twin. Thomas was his Hebrew name and John tells us that Thomas was known as “*Didymus*”, the Greek word for twin.

Although all the Gospels mention Thomas, it's only the Gospel of John that records any of Thomas' words. He liked to ask questions when others might just have been wondering about things but were hesitant to ask. By nature, Thomas was a pessimist. He was a bewildered man. Yet, he also showed some courage. He was a man who could not believe until he had seen, but he was also a man of devotion and of faith.

Where do you think Thomas is today?

Read Matthew 19:27-28, Luke 22:28-30 and Revelation 4:1-4.

Who are the people on the thrones in Revelation?

Despite the very few references to Thomas in the New Testament, we know where Thomas is today. Jesus promised that his apostles would sit in a very special place “on twelve thrones.” Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth. He gave his disciples authority to rule, under the Kingship of Christ.

Thomas, together with the other apostles, worshipped God daily. According to Luke, Thomas and his friends are eating and drinking at the Lord’s table in His kingdom.

Thomas was an ordinary man, used by an extraordinary God. He can use you with all your fears and doubts.

End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 2: The Brave

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Begin today's study with prayer.

I wonder if the title for today's lesson shouldn't have been *Thomas – The Pessimist*. The three times that the words he spoke were recorded in the Gospel of John; it seems that Thomas could only look into the darkest corners of life. He could only anticipate the worst in every situation. But he represents more than that. His questions were the unasked questions of his fellow disciples - he was the only one brave enough to ask them.

Read John 11:4-16

Based on what you know about Thomas, what surprises you about him in these verses?

Was Thomas sarcastic in his comments to Jesus or was he brave? What does his comments suggest of his love and faith in Jesus?

This is the very familiar story about the resurrection of Lazarus. The previous time Jesus and his disciples were in Jerusalem it was very dangerous. Now they received news of the illness of Lazarus in Bethany, just a few kilometres outside of Jerusalem, on the east side. And when Jesus said that they are going back to Jerusalem, his disciples murmured. But Jesus had a lesson of faith in mind. He wants to teach them to see and believe, a lesson to demonstrate the power of Jesus.

Were you ever pessimistic and negative whilst God is busy teaching you a valuable lesson?

The disciples were afraid. They did not want to go and certainly did not want to die. It was Thomas, the brave pessimist, that worded their concern. *"Let us also go that we may die with Him."* This is Thomas at his best. It is hard to be a pessimist. If he was an optimist, he would have said: "Let's go, it will work out, we have got Jesus with us." But if you're a pessimist you say, "there is no hope, let's go and die." It is harder for a pessimist to be loyal, because he always expects the worst. But Thomas was loyal and brave enough to go and die with Jesus.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 3: Show me the way

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Begin today's study with prayer.

Read John 14:1-7

What comes to mind when you think about heaven? What will heaven be like? Does the thought of heaven and what waits for you there, help you to weather the storms of life?

This conversation took place the night of Jesus' arrest. He had just finished washing the feet of his disciples, Thomas' feet included. Jesus explained to them that he must go to His Father, to prepare a place for them. Thomas didn't understand what Jesus was talking about and therefor he asked a valid question, "*We don't know where You're going. How do we know the way?*" Not one of the other disciples asked the question, but they surely were also worried about their future.

It was Thomas, the pessimist, that took the lead and asked the question, "*If you are gone, we'll never get there. How are we supposed to get there? We don't know how to get there.*"

You can sense his deep love for Jesus. For three years he spent day and night with Jesus. There was a special relationship between him and Jesus and he didn't want to be separated from Him. His heart is really broken as he speaks; he is shattered.

When Thomas asked those questions, Jesus responded in a way that was not only clear to Thomas, but also for all the Christians over all the ages.

Read John 14:6 again

What does this verse say about the identity, work and words of Jesus and what He offers?

We should not judge Thomas too harshly. It seems that he didn't grasp the full divinity of Jesus. Jesus had to spell it out for them. With these words Jesus explained that He is the way (the cross) and He is the truth (God's works) and He is the life (the gift of new life). Jesus emphasised that He is the only person to bring people to the Father. Interestingly, for many centuries, the followers of Jesus were called, "*people of the way*."

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 4: The Doubter

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Begin today's study with prayer.

Read John 20:19-25

Where do you think Thomas was that evening when Jesus appeared to His disciples? How do you think you would have felt if you had been Thomas?

For some reason Thomas was not there on the evening when Jesus appeared to his disciples. Thomas must have been heartbroken, having all his hopes crushed when Jesus died on the cross. Because he was pessimistic by nature, his dreams most probably were destroyed and maybe he was somewhere wallowing in his misery.

He always sees the worst and now his worst fear had been realized. Jesus was gone and Thomas might have been thinking that he would never see Him again and that he would never find the way to get where Jesus was. Maybe he felt alone, betrayed, rejected and forsaken.

Maybe he was just so heartbroken that he really didn't want to socialize.

Read Mark 16:10-13

Was Thomas the only doubter?

The disciples were not any less doubting than Thomas was, because after Jesus' death, they were in hiding and had the doors locked for fear of the Jews, perhaps thinking that they would be next.

On the road to Emmaus two of the disciples were walking and they were miserable because Jesus had been killed. They only started to believe when Jesus revealed Himself to them. And later when He showed up in the upper room where the disciples were gathered, only then did they believe. But up until that point they didn't believe either.

Maybe you are also going through times of doubt and fear. Do not fear, do not doubt, because Jesus is always near. He waits for the right moment to reveal Himself.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 5: The Believer

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Begin today's study with prayer.

Read John 20:25-28(NIV)

Why did Thomas not believe the disciples' account of having seen the risen Lord?

What conditions did Thomas require of Jesus before he would believe the resurrection?

Thomas thought seeing is believing. That was just his nature, but we mustn't be too harsh on him. People gave Thomas this nickname, "Doubting Thomas", not Jesus. Jesus graciously gave Thomas another chance. How many of us would have doubted, just as Thomas had, if we were eyewitnesses of the death of Christ?

What does Jesus say to Thomas that challenges him not to rely so much on physical proof?

Jesus understood him perfectly, after all He called him to follow Him. Jesus knew even though he was doubting, he had a profound love for Him.

How did Thomas respond when he realized the person standing before him really was the risen Christ?

The response to Jesus' appearance was a game-changing moment. He was the first to confess that Jesus was Lord and God. And this great testimony of Thomas, *"My Lord and my God,"* transformed him from a pessimistic doubter to a great evangelist.

Thomas was an ordinary fisherman, a pessimist, a doubter, but also someone who loved the Lord. He became a missionary and wasn't afraid to die for what he saw and believed. Church tradition has it that he may well have taken the gospel as far as India and maybe into Indonesia.

God can do amazing things with the raw material. Maybe you are a pessimist and a doubter too. You still qualify because Jesus makes you qualified. He uses ordinary men and women. Be available!

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



GROUP DISCUSSION

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Prayer

Memory verse:

Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

John 20:27-28(NIV)

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

John 11:4-16, 14:1-7, 20:19-25 and 20:27-31

Discussion questions

Read John 11:4-16. Was Thomas sarcastic in his comments to Jesus? Or was he brave? What does his comments suggest of his love and faith in Jesus? Discuss.

Read John 14:1-7. Discuss to what extent Thomas' question in verse 5 reflects our society today? Why does it undermine the popular idea that when it comes to religion "all paths are leading to heaven"?

John 20:19-25. Is seeing always believing? What does it mean to walk by faith and not by sight?

Read John 20:27-31. What "evidence" supports your faith? How has this evidence been helpful (or not) in your moments of doubt?

Close in prayer

JESUS CHANGES ORDINARY PEOPLE

Week **7**

Matthew and Simon (the zealot)

Memory verse:

As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me", he told him, and Matthew got up and followed Him.

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

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Matthew 9:9 (NIV)





Day 1: A Tax Collector

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Begin today's study with prayer.

Read Matthew 9:9, Mark 2: 14 and Luke 5:27-29

Why is Matthew also called Levi, son of Alpheus?

It was a common custom in the Middle East at the time of Christ for men to have two names. Matthew's names mean "a gift of God." The name could have been given to him by Jesus. Although we know little about Matthew personally, the outstanding fact about him is that he was a tax collector.

Matthew was a Jew and grew up with Biblical training and education like all Jewish people. However, as a result of his job, he was an outcast. He was a tax collector. This is the last person that we expect to see amongst the disciples of Jesus. *"Tax collectors were known to be men who had bought tax franchises from the Roman emperor and then extorted money from the people of Israel to feed*

the Roman coffers and to pad their own pockets. (John MacArthur, Twelve Ordinary Men, p 152)

Read Matthew 21:32

What was the general feeling about tax collectors amongst the Jews? How did they classify them?

Of all the nations in the world, the Jews were the most vigorous haters of tax gatherers. To the devout Jew, God was the only one to whom it was right to pay tribute in taxes. To pay it to anyone else was to infringe on the rights of God. Matthew's job caused him to be in direct opposition of his faith.

All of us spend a lot of time at work. In what way can your job hinder you in living a life that reflects Jesus? Do you sometimes feel that you are doing things because your job demands it, but you are not sure that it is what the Lord wants? How do you handle such a situation?

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 2: Sharing with colleagues and friends

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Begin today's study with prayer.

Read Matthew 9:9-13

What was Matthew's immediate reaction after Jesus invited him to follow?

Without any hesitation, Matthew did the unthinkable! He got up and followed Jesus. He left his money booth with everything in it and walked away from his cursed profession. For him there was no way of going back. Are you willing to follow Jesus in this same manner, or do you have things in your life that are holding you back?

Read Luke 5:29-32

Matthew then arranged for a celebration dinner. Who were invited to this feast and who were the "party-crashers"?

Why do you think Matthew invited tax-collectors and other disreputable people?

Matthew's first impulse was to bring his closest friends and introduce them to the Saviour. He wanted to share his salvation with them. Because of his job, he only worked with and associated with tax collectors and disreputable people. Those were his friends.

Do you feel the same desire to bring your friends and colleagues to meet your Saviour? How can you do this without putting them in an uncomfortable position?

What did Jesus tell the Pharisees, why did He associate with such people?

Read Matthew 21:31-32

Why do you think Jesus had a special place in His heart for tax collectors?

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 3: Spreading the Gospel

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Begin today's study with prayer.

Matthew responded immediately when Jesus called and left everything behind. He became one of the apostles, tasked with spreading the Word of God.

Read Acts 1:12-14

What did the disciples do after the ascension of Jesus?

Matthew was part of this group of 11, who were constantly united in prayer. They were following the instructions of Jesus and waited for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

We know very little about Matthew after this happened. He kept himself almost completely in the background and therefore we can conclude that his meeting with Jesus brought on a complete change of heart.

Matthew wrote the Gospel of Matthew, which is the fullest and most systematic account of Jesus' life. His gospel was aimed at Jewish readers and therefore his sensitivity

to Jewish concerns and interests can be seen throughout. Therefore, Matthew wrote his gospel with new converts in mind.

Read the following verses and reflect on the similarities between the Old and New Testament:

Matthew 1:22-23	Isaiah 7:14
Matthew 12:17-21	Isaiah 42:1-4
Matthew 27:9-10	Zechariah 11:12-13

Matthew knew the Old Testament very well and he quoted it over 99 times (directly and indirectly) in his Gospel. He used the word of God to teach the people about the truth of Salvation in Jesus Christ.

Do you know the Word of God well enough to use it to reach other people? Do you spend enough time in the Word to make it part of who you are and how you act, even when you are alone?

John Macarthur wrote: *“Matthew was once the vilest of sinners – a despicable outcast. But he was transformed by Christ.”* The Lord uses him, to this day, to change people’s lives through his Gospel.

End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 4: Simon – the Zealot

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Begin today's study with prayer.

Read Matthew 10:2-4, Mark 3:18 and Luke 6:15

Simon was called "*the Zealot*" or "*the Cananite*". The word Cananite does not refer to the land of Canaan or the village of Cana. It comes from the Hebrew word *qanna* which means "*to be zealous*".

What is the meaning of the word zealous?

When we speak about someone that is zealous, we mean they are passionate, enthusiastic or devoted to a cause.

The zealots that are referred to in the Bible, was a widely feared group of political outlaws that hated the Romans. Their goal was to overthrow the Roman occupation. They believed that God Himself had the right to rule over the Jews and no one else. They were extremists in every

sense of the word and advanced their agenda through terrorism and acts of violence, because they thought they were doing God's work. They were willing to die for their cause. They were also hoping for a Messiah who would lead them in overthrowing the Romans and restoring the kingdom to Israel.

Simon was a member of this group. He was passionate, enthusiastic and devoted to the overthrowing end the Roman reign over the Jews.

What do you think was the impact of Jesus' calling on Simon's beliefs?

Simon was known by his nickname, Simon the Zealot, all his life. Therefore, we can assume that he remained passionate and zealous in following Jesus.

How passionate and enthusiastic and devoted are you to being a disciple of Jesus?

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 5: Devotion to Christ

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Begin today's study with prayer.

Read Acts 1:13

Although the New Testament tells us almost nothing about Simon, except to call him the Zealot, we read that he was present with the rest of the disciples after the ascension of Jesus.

What does that show us about his change of heart?

Simon the zealot abandoned all his hatred, for the faith that he showed toward his Master and the love that he was willing to share with the rest of the disciples and especially Matthew, the Roman tax collector.

When people look at you and the way you interact with other people, can they see that your relationship with Jesus caused a change of heart?

Simon, the Zealot, the man who once would have killed in loyalty to Israel, became the man who saw that God wants us to act in love.

Read Matthew 28:19-20

Simon left everything in his previous life to follow Jesus. He stayed true to the Great Commission after Jesus' ascension.

Church tradition says that he spread the gospel in Egypt as a missionary and was killed in Persia.

Are you willing to leave your previous life, and everything in it, to follow Jesus, even if it means you will be killed?

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



GROUP DISCUSSION

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Prayer

Memory verse:

As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me", he told him, and Matthew got up and followed Him.

Matthew 9:9 (NIV)

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

Matthew 9:9-13, 10:4 and Luke 18:9-14

Discussion questions

Read Matthew 9:9-13 and Matthew 10:4. Matthew (a tax collector for the Romans) and Simon (a Zealot who hated the Romans) were both selected by Jesus to be His disciples. How did this promote the kind of tolerance and cooperation God desires in His church?

Read Luke 18:9-14. Where did the tax collector stand as he prayed? Why?

What was it about the tax collector's prayer that made it so acceptable in God's sight?

What do you think it would be like to have a job that exposes you to the instant suspicion and hatred of others? Discuss how it could influence your life and your beliefs.

Close in prayer

JESUS CHANGES ORDINARY PEOPLE

Week 8

James (the Lesser), Jude and Judas Iscariot

Memory verse:

Then Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!"

John 6:70 (NIV)



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EVERYTHING



Day 1: James the Lesser

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Begin today's study with prayer.

Read Luke 6:14-16 and Mark 15:40

The ninth name in Luke's list of apostles is "James the son of Alpheus". There were a lot of men with the name James in the New Testament. But this James was the son of Alpheus and Mary and should not be confused with James the Elder, who we studied in Week 3.

Read Mark 15:40

What was his nickname?

In the King James Version of the Bible, we read that he was called James, the Less. The Greek word for less is *mikros*. This means little, which could refer to his physical features or to his age.

John MacArthur wrote that "*the only distinguishing mark of this disciple was his obscurity.*" He sought no

recognition and demonstrated no special abilities or insights. Only his name remains to be known. However, Jesus thought him important enough to call him for a specific reason. Jesus trained and empowered him like all the disciples and send him out to witness. James the Lesser reminds us of those unnamed people mentioned in Hebrews 11:33-38.

Read 1 Peter 5:6

In what way does being unimposing promote the biblical virtue of humility?

Do you think you have the biblical virtue of humility? Explain your answer.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

Day 2: Judas – the man with three names



JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Begin today's study with prayer.

Read Matthew 10:3 and Luke 6:16

The last of the faithful disciples is Judas, the son of James. The name Judas means “*Jehovah leads*”. This Judas actually had three names. In Matthew he is called Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus. Judas was probably the name given to him at birth, but the other two were nicknames. Both nicknames suggest that he had a tender, childlike heart.

Do you think a gentle, tender-hearted compassionate soul like Judas could be a worthy instrument in God's hands?

We often think that it is only the well-known or passionate people that are useful in the kingdom. Here we have another example of the least likely person becoming an instrument of change.

Read John 14:21-23

In John 14:21-23 we find the only recorded conversation of Judas Lebbaeus Thaddaeus. What is the logic behind his question and the logic behind Jesus' answer?

What about his question is consistent with his nickname?

Even though James the Lesser, Judas Lebbaeus Thaddaeus and Simon the Zealot are scarcely mentioned in the Bible, Jesus affirmed and included them in His mission. How does God feel about people in the congregation who work behind the scenes without much public recognition?

Thank God for people in your life you can count on although they are not always the most visible or vocal.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 3: Judas Iscariot

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Begin today's study with prayer.

Read Matthew 10:4 and Luke 6:16

How do the authors of the two gospels differentiate between the two disciples named Judas?

Every time Judas Iscariot is mentioned in the Bible, we find a note about him being a traitor. The irony is that the name “*Judas*” means Jehovah leads. His parents must have had hopes that he would turn into a God-fearing man, but as we get to know him, we clearly see that he was led by Satan.

Read Joshua 15:25

His surname *Iscariot* refers to the region that he came from, a small town in the south of Judea. He was the only disciple that did not come from Galilee.

We do not read about the calling of Judas in the Bible, but he came from afar to follow Jesus willingly. The other disciples trusted him.

Read Matthew 26:21-23

In what way are these verses a confirmation that the disciples trusted Judas?

Read John 12:6

What position did Judas have amongst the disciples?

For the rest of the disciples Judas was an ordinary man, just like them. He was able to work his way into a position of trust, without any one knowing that he had ulterior motives.

Read John 6:64

What does this verse teach us about Jesus knowing our hearts?

Jesus knew Judas's heart, and He also knows yours.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 4: His time with Jesus

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Begin today's study with prayer.

Church tradition says that Judas was a Jewish Nationalist, who had followed Jesus in the hope that, through Him, his nationalistic flame and dreams might be realized. He lived in the time of the high Messianic hope and when he heard about Jesus, he must have been convinced that this will be the time to overthrow the Roman oppressors.

Judas, with the rest of the disciples, heard all the lessons that Jesus gave.

Read the following verses and give a short summary of the lessons that Judas could learn from these lessons:

Matthew 6:19-24	
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Matthew 23:1-12	
Luke 13:13-21	
Luke 16:1-13	

Judas had all the opportunity needed to turn away from his sin. He chose to ignore the lessons that Jesus taught his followers, because he had his own agenda. John MacArthur wrote: *“He began exactly like the other had begun. But he never laid hold of the truth by faith, so he was never transformed like the rest.”*

How much time do you spend with the Lord? Do you allow Him to change you through the lessons you learn?

Judas had the same opportunities as the rest of the disciples and so have we. Be careful how you use them.

End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



Day 5: The Betrayal

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Begin today's study with prayer.

Judas' betrayal of Jesus has been predicted centuries before.

Read the following verses and describe how it relates to Jesus and Judas:

Psalm 41:9	
Zechariah 11:12-13	

John MacArthur writes: *"Judas did not act in a moment of insanity. This dark deed was deliberately planned and premeditated."*

Read John 12:1-11

Why do you think the “wasted” ointment and Jesus’ response to Judas were the turning point that began Judas’ process of betrayal?

Read Luke 22:1-6

What was the decision that Judas made? What was the consequences of this decision?

Judas cashed in the priceless honour of being a disciple for thirty pieces of silver. What privileges does the Lord guarantee those who enter into a personal relationship with Him? Why do we so often waste these privileges without thought of their worth?

Judas is proof that hypocrisy is lethal. If not confessed and turned from, it separates you from the truth. What steps can you take to root out hypocrisy in your life?

End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.



GROUP DISCUSSION

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Prayer

Memory verse:

*Then Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve?
Yet one of you is a devil!"*

John 6:70 (NIV)

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

Matthew 6:19-34 and Ephesians 1:1-11

Discussion questions

Read Matthew 6:19-34. What are the risks taken by those who store up treasures on earth? What alternative to earthly riches does Jesus pose?

How did Judas' love of money result in destruction?

Read Ephesians 1:1-11. How do these verses support the view that God is never surprised by what happens in our lives?

God is committed to planning everything to suit His purposes. How does this affect the way we live? Does it mean we can be careless? Why or why not?

Close in prayer

JESUS CHANGES ORDINARY PEOPLE

Addendums

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Addendum 1:



JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

FOUR BASIC DIVISIONS OF JEWS DURING THE FIRST CENTURY

In his book, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, John MacArthur refers to the historian Josephus, when he describes the four basic divisions that existed within the Jewish community during the first century:

1. *The Pharisees*: They were fastidious about the Law. They were the religious fundamentalists of their time.
2. *The Sadducees*: They were religious liberals. They denied the supernatural. They were also rich, aristocratic and powerful. They oversaw the temple.
3. *The Essenes*: They are not mentioned in scripture, but both Josephus and Philo describe them as ascetics and celibates who lived in the desert and devoted their lives to the study of the Law.
4. *The Zealots*: They were more politically minded than any group besides the Herodians of the time. The

Zealots hated the Romans and their goal was to overthrow the Roman occupation. They were extremists in every sense and like the Pharisees, they interpreted the law literally. However, unlike the Pharisees who were willing to compromise for political reasons, the Zealots were militant, violent outlaws. They believed only God Himself had the right to rule over the Jews. Therefore, they believed they were doing God's work by assassinating Roman soldiers, political leaders and anyone else who opposed them.

(MacArthur John, Twelve Ordinary Men, p 175)



Addendum 2:

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

FOUR LISTS OF THE TWELVE DISCIPLES

We find the list of the disciples/apostles in four different places in the Bible. The twelve men are divided into the same three groups each time, with a leader for each group.

In his book, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, John MacArthur suggests that the order in which they are named, are the order in which they were called. It might also be an indication of the level of leadership they had and the level of intimacy they had in their relationship with Christ. He further writes that: *the three names at the head of each group seem to have been the group leaders. The three groups always appear in the same order: first Peter's group, then the group led by Phillip and then the group headed by James the Lesser.*

Matthew 10:2-4	Mark 3:16-19	Luke 6:14-16	Acts 1:13
Peter Andrew James John	Peter James John Andrew	Peter Andrew James John	Peter James John Andrew

Philip Bartholomew Thomas Matthew	Philip Bartholomew Matthew Thomas	Philip Bartholomew Matthew Thomas	Philip Thomas Bartholomew Matthew
James (son of Alpheus) Lebbaeus (Thaddeus) Simon (the Zealot) Judas Iscaiot	James (son of Alpheus) Thaddeus Simon (the Zealot) Judas Iscaiot	James (son of Alpheus) Simon (the Zealot) Judas (son of James) Judas Iscaiot	James (son of Alpheus) Simon (the Zealot) Judas (son of James)

Christ chose them sovereignly and appointed them. They were His delegates and He commissioned them. They spoke with *His* authority and delivered *His* message of Salvation.



Addendum 3:

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

A PROGRESSIVE CALLING

Jesus had personally selected and appointed twelve perfectly ordinary men to represent Him. He chose them before they chose Him. The strategy Jesus chose is that of the Kingdom: *“Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, ‘The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is in your midst (Luke 17:20-21). The Kingdom of God advances: Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the Lord Almighty (Zechariah 4:6).*

The process of choosing and calling of the disciples happened in different stages and it can be explained as follows:

1. Phase One is the Calling to Conversion:

This stage explains how every disciple is first called to salvation. This calling did not involve full-time discipleship and although they followed Jesus and

listened to His teaching as their Teacher, they remained in their full-time jobs. That is why, at this stage, we often read about them fishing or mending their nets.

2. Phase two is the call to ministry:

Luke 5 describes this event in detail. After the miracle of the catch of fish overwhelming their nets and nearly sinking two of their fishing boats, Jesus called them to follow Him and He would make them “*fishers of men*”. The disciples left everything behind and followed immediately. From that moment on, they were inseparable from the Lord.

3. Phase three is the call to Apostleship:

Matthew 10:1-4 and Luke 6:12-16 describes their calling to Apostleship. It was at this point that Jesus selected and appointed the twelve men and made them His apostles. They began a kind of internship. Christ sends them out to teach, then they come back and report back on how things were going. Throughout this phase Jesus were close to them – He was teaching them and training them to be His representatives. They would go out, come back and rest, have fellowship with Christ and each other and go out again.

4. Phase four is the call to Martyrdom:

This phase occurred after Jesus' resurrection. Jesus send the remaining 11 out into the world, to make disciples of the nations. This was a call to martyrdom, as each one of them ultimately gave their life for the sake of the gospel. Only John is said to have lived to old age, but he was severely persecuted for Christ's sake and then exiled to the tiny island of Patmos.

John MacArthur wrote: *"A dozen men under the power of the Holy Spirit are a more potent force than the teeming masses... Despite the obstacles they faced, the apostles triumphed. They fulfilled their task and the continuing witness of the gospel – spanning two thousand years and reaching into virtually every corner of the world - is a testimony to the wisdom of this divine strategy."* (John MacArthur, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, p 5).

Addendum 4:

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE APOSTLES?

Many people wonder what happened to the apostles, where they spend their time in ministry and how they died. The New Testament only tells us of the fate of two of the apostles: Judas, who betrayed Jesus and then went out and hanged himself, and James the son of Zebedee, who was executed by Herod about 44 AD (Acts 12:2).

However, early Christian tradition gives us an indication of what happened to the rest of the Apostles:

APOSTLE	MINISTRY	DEATH
Peter	Ministered to the Jews, going as far as Babylon	Was Crucified upside down at his request.
Andrew	Went to Asia Minor (Modern day Turkey) and Greece	Was crucified on an X-shaped cross in Greece

Philip	Went North Africa and Asia Minor.	Died by hanging. He requested that his body be wrapped in papyrus as he was not worthy that his body should be wrapped in linen like Jesus.
Thomas	Went to Syria and travelled as far as India.	Died when pierced with spears
Matthew	Ministered in Persia and Ethiopia	Stabbed to death in Ethiopia
Nathanael	Travelled to India, Armenia, Ethiopia and Southern Arabia	Flayed alive with knives
Simon the Zealot	Ministered in Persia	Crucified after refusing to sacrifice to the sun god
James the Lesser	Ministered in Syria	Stoned and then clubbed to death
Jude	Ministered in Assyria and Persia	Killed with arrows at Ararat
John	Ministered in Ephesus area.	Was cast into boiling oil but escaped. Then exiled to the Island of Patmos.

Jesus formed the apostles into the foundation of the church and gave them the most extraordinary task imaginable: calling the entire world, including the mightiest empire ever known, to repentance and faith in the risen Christ. They went far and wide as heralds of the message of the risen Christ, so all could hear about Jesus. They suffered greatly for their faith and the faith continued to spread like wildfire.



Memory Verses

JESUS CHANGES
EVERYTHING

Week 1

I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Matthew 16:18-19 (NIV)

Week 2

... and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

Mark 1:20(NIV)

Week 3

The disciple Jesus loved was sitting next to Jesus at the table.

John 13:23 (NLT)

Week 4

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him.

Matthew 4:19-20(NIV)

Week 5

Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

John 1:45(NIV)

Week 6

Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

John 20:27-28(NIV)

Week 7

As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me", he told him, and Matthew got up and followed Him.

Matthew 9:9 (NIV)

Week 8

Then Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!"

John 6:70 (NIV)



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JESUS CHANGES
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