

7th Grade New Testament (Gospels)

Lesson Plan: Calling of the Disciples

Learning Goal: Students should be able to identify the basic characteristics of a disciple and evaluate the characteristics of the twelve men Jesus called as disciples/apostles.

Question: What are the qualifications for being a disciple of Jesus?

Prayer.

Discuss question on board. (5 minutes)

Read Matthew 4:18-22; Luke 5:1-11

What is a disciple?

A follower or student of a teacher, leader, or philosopher.

Rabbi = "teacher"

Rabbinic method/model of teaching:

- **Beth Sefer** (elementary school) - start at age 4-5 - focus on memorization; memorizing the Torah/Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy); study here until first Passover
- **Beth Midrash** (secondary school) - about 13 - best students (along with adults in the town) studied the writings and the prophets; began learning the oral traditions; learning to make applications for themselves
- **Talmid** (disciples) - best students studied with a rabbi directly; different from student; the rabbi-talmid relationship was a very intense and personal system of education. As the rabbi lived and taught his understanding of the Scripture his students (talmidim) listened and watched and imitated so as to become like him. Eventually they would become teachers passing on a lifestyle to their talmidim.
 - All students longed to hear a rabbi say to them, "Come, follow me"
 - student wants to learn what teachers knows to make grade or get degree
 - talmid wants to be like the rabbi; to become what the teacher is

How Many Disciples Were There?

- 12 disciples; parallel of the 12 tribes of Israel
- Jesus is extending what we saw at his baptism; He is beginning the messianic kingdom/community; He is reconstituting the 12 tribes (even the 10 that were lost)

Who were these guys?

- Peter, Andrew, James, and John - fishermen
- Matthew - tax collector
- Simon - Zealot (super patriot)
 - These were a nationalistic group of Jews who wanted to overthrow Roman rule, often by violent means.
- Judas Iscariot (Sicarii?)
 - "Ninja Assassins" - assassinated Romans or those colluding with Rome using distinct, curved knife

Why did Jesus choose these guys?

- Their number was a visual representation of the Kingdom (12 - reconstituting the 12 tribes)

- He chose them to be with him - to accompany him on his ministry; to see who Jesus was and to master the teachings he would entrust to them
- They were to become Jesus' apostles, sent out to preach the message; the disciples were also the foundation on which Jesus would build the church.
 - Apostle = "sent one"
 - **Apart from Jesus' death and resurrection, probably no other event in Jesus' life possessed greater significance and had more lasting consequences than his choosing of the twelve.* (Robert Stein, 121)

Split the students into groups of 3-4. Give them a handout with the following instructions:

In your groups discuss what kind of people you would be looking for if you were starting a worldwide ministry. List these characteristics in the left hand column on the chart below.

Then, using the description of the 12 disciples as a guide, list the characteristics of the disciples in the right hand column. You may include any additional information you know from the gospel accounts concerning them.

Within your group, answer the following questions:

1. Why do you think Jesus might have picked these unlikely people to pour his ministry and teaching into and to become the foundation of the early church?
2. How does Jesus selection of these 12 men provide hope and encouragement to us today?

Lesson Summary /Review:

Students should review and highlight the following vocabulary terms and concepts from this lesson in their notes:

- Disciple
- Rabbi
- Apostle
- Be able to name the disciples.
- How do you become a disciple?

A Brief Sketch of Jesus' Twelve Disciples

Simon (*Simōn*) from Heb. for "hearing." Called **Peter** (*Petros*) or **Cephas** (*Kephas*), meaning "rock" in Greek and Aramaic, respectively. Leader and frequent spokesman for the Twelve. Married and resided in Capernaum. Denied Jesus three times but was restored to fellowship (John 21). First leader of Jerusalem church following Pentecost in fulfillment of promises of Matt. 16:16–19. Both 1 and 2 Peter are attributed to him. Tradition claims that he was martyred under Nero in the 60s and crucified upside down.

Andrew (*Andreas*) from Gk. for "manliness." Brother of Peter; both were originally fishermen from Bethsaida and previously disciples of John the Baptist. He appears incidentally in Mark 13:3, John 6:8, and 12:22.

James (*Iakōbos*) from Heb. name "Jacob" (see Gen. 25:26 for its meaning). Another Galilean fisherman. Son of Zebedee, a relatively prosperous fisherman. One of the "Sons of Thunder" (Mark 3:17), possibly explaining his apparent vindictiveness in Luke 9:52–54 and selfishness in Mark 10:35–40. Mother was Salome; he was thus possibly Jesus' cousin. Executed by Herod Agrippa I not later than A.D. 44 (Acts 12:2). Probably therefore not the James who wrote the letter of James nor the leader of the Apostolic Council (Acts 15).

John (*Iōannēs*) from Heb. "the Lord is gracious." Brother of James. With James and Peter, part of the inner circle of three. Special relationship to Mary indicated in John 19:25–27. Peter's "right-hand man" throughout Acts. To him are attributed the Fourth Gospel, three epistles, and Revelation, the last of these while in exile on Patmos. Traditionally viewed as the "beloved disciple" of John 13:23–26; 19:25–27; 20:2–10; and 21:2, 20–23. Tradition also says he ministered in his old age to the church in Ephesus and was the only one of the Twelve not to die a martyr's death for his faith (though a minority tradition disputes this).

Philip (*Philippos*) from Gk. "horse lover." With Simon and Andrew, one of Jesus' first disciples (cf. John 1). From Bethsaida. Appears briefly in John 6:5–7; 12:21–22; and 14:8–9. Not to be confused with Philip the deacon in Acts 6 and 8.

Bartholomew (*Bartholomais*) from Heb. "son of Talmai." Traditionally viewed as same person as Nathanael (*Nathanaēl*), from Heb. "God has given"—Philip's companion in John 1—since always paired with Philip in Synoptic lists, and since Bartholomew not a given name but a patronymic.

Matthew (*Maththaios*) from same Heb. phrase as Nathanael. Called **Levi** in parallel passages, after the son of Jacob by that name. A converted tax collector. Traditionally identified as author of Gospel that bears his name. Jesus risked scandal in reaching out to him and his friends. Son of Alphaeus. Later legends describe his travel to Ethiopia and martyrdom there.

Thomas (*Thōmas*) from Heb. "twin." Became famous for doubting the resurrection of Jesus until he personally saw and touched him (John 20:24–29). But also revealed a fierce loyalty to Jesus, irrespective of the cost (John 11:16). Possibly reliable tradition associates him with the later evangelization of India.

James the less (*Iakōbos ho mikros*). Alternately translated "James the younger." Son of (another?) Alphaeus or Cleopas. His mother, another Mary, was among the women at Jesus' tomb. Little else known.

Judas (*Ioudas*) from Heb. "Judah" ("praise"). Son of a Jacob (James). Also called Thaddaeus and, in some textual variants, Lebbaeus. Only recorded words appear in John 14:22. Little else known.

Simon the Zealot (or Caananite, from the Heb. for "Zealot"). Converted from the sect of Jewish revolutionaries that later rebelled against Rome and was defeated in A.D. 70.

Judas Iscariot (*Iskariōth*). Infamous for betraying Jesus. Treasurer for the Twelve and a thief. Iscariot is usually interpreted as from Heb. for "man of Kerioth." Other options include a derivation from the word *sicarii* ("assassins")—a radical wing of the Zealot movement—or from "false one." Ended his life by hanging himself and falling from the rope so as to "burst his bowels asunder" (cf. Matt. 27 with Acts 1).