

Focus text

“And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.” (Matthew 10:1–4, ESV)

1. Sent with Sovereign Authority

“And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.” **(Matthew 10:1, ESV)**

After prayer and compassion comes the calling to action. Jesus calls the 12 disciples to be the very first laborers in the harvest. Jesus is using this allegory to imitate the 12 tribes of Israel. He then gives them His authority to do the very same action that He (Jesus) has been doing. This follows the title of Lord, the master, who would pass on their authority to servants to carry out their will in times when they cannot be present. Also, this would be the next phase of training for the disciples. While Jesus can supervise, the disciples are sent out to begin preaching the good news of the Kingdom on their own. Matthew ignores some of the basic instructions that Mark gives in this gospel. Matthew focuses on the nature of the disciples being sent out to the people of Israel to proclaim the good news that the Kingdom is at hand. The disciples will now be called to walk in the ways of Jesus, bringing His message wherever they go!

Christians walk in the authority of Jesus and are expected to be His witnesses wherever we go. Take one moment and think about everywhere you were last week. How did you represent Christ and bring His authority? The Lord is gracious, and we know that we won't do everything to perfection, but these stories help us to be intentional and mindful of our Lord Jesus Christ when we interact with the world.

“And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts—”
(Mark 6:7–8, ESV)

“Jesus responds to Israel’s suffering by calling the twelve disciples to himself. The word δώδεκα (“twelve”) appears three times in short intervals (vv. 1*, 2*, 5*). Matthew knows that the twelve disciples correspond to the twelve tribes of Israel (19:28*).¹⁰ Thus the section 9:36–10:6* is entirely about Israel. Matthew presupposes that Jesus has twelve disciples, but unlike Mark 3:13–15* he says nothing about the institution of the circle of the twelve. His concern here is not with its historical constitution, but with the authorization by Jesus that determines the church’s entire activity. The disciples share in his own authority; that is made clear by the references back to 4:23*, 9:35*, and 8:16*. As 28:18–20* will underscore, their power is an expression of the power of the Lord who remains with his church. Matthew is thus not simply interested in giving a report about the beginnings of the church.”¹

2. Selected By Name

“The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;”
(Matthew 10:2, ESV)

Matthew begins the list with Peter, who was the first name Matthew mentions in the calling of the disciples. Then he brings up the sons of thunder, James and John. These three were the first group called by Jesus. The wording matches chapter 4 perfectly. Matthew reminds the audience of the very first challenge Jesus offered to the disciples: “to be fishers of men.” So far, Jesus has been the leading actor, and the disciples have been watching. This is a common practice across the centuries; when an apprentice follows a master, the first stage is typically observation. At some point, the apprentice must begin working under the supervision of the master. Jesus told them in the very beginning that they would be the ones calling people to hear the good news. Now, for the very first time, Peter, James, and John must go and fish for people! This provides us with a great model for how we should be and have cornerstones in our lives. When we are serving, studying, praying, or engaging in any other activity, we should be inviting and educating newer believers. Then, at some point, we need to let them lead in some way.

Try letting your kids or grandkids pray before the meal, have them read scripture, and ask the young people questions. Families set aside a day and time to serve at the city mission or to help hand out food boxes. Letting the

¹ Luz, Ulrich. 2001. *Matthew: A Commentary*. Edited by Helmut Koester. *Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg. received to make a difference in a world filled with challenges, as they serve as representatives of Jesus' healing and transformative power.

younger and more experienced participate is crucial because, at some point, they must become the leaders of people.

“And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.””
(Matthew 4:19, ESV)

“Taken with the repositioned ‘and Andrew his brother’, this gives a string of nine words which (except for nominatives in place of accusatives) exactly repeat 4:18.18 ‘His’ for ‘of James’ will produce another string of nine words repeated from v. 21.19 Matthew is concerned to recall the challenge to become ‘those who fish for people’”²

3. Sent From Diverse Surroundings

“Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.” **(Matthew 10:3–4, ESV)**

The final grouping here is less well-known in the scriptures, but was known and referred to by Jesus. We see in John Philip would be called to help lead a eunuch from Ethiopia, but he isn’t mentioned in Matthew, Mark, or Luke. Bartholomew is known in church history for helping to bring the gospel to India, but there is no further mention of him in the scriptures. We know very little about James, except through speculation. Simon is known as zealous, which means enthusiastic. There would be a political group later formed in the 60s A.D. known as the zealots, who were violent protesters in Jerusalem. However, at this time, we cannot link Simon to this group; more than likely, this is descriptive of Simon’s attitude. Finally, we see Judas Iscariot, the betrayer, who will sell Jesus to the high council and set into motion the events of the crucifixion. Matthew is using Judas as a foreshadowing of the cross. This final grouping serves as a reminder that Jesus called people from diverse backgrounds into a redeemed life to preach the good news of the gospel. This third group reminds us of two things. First, Jesus doesn’t care where you

² 18 Mk. 3:16 lacks ‘his brother’ and locates Andrew after James and John; Lk. 6:14 has the names as Matthew does (probably in his case to retain a piece of information otherwise lost in the failure to use Mk. 1:16).

¹⁹ The dropping of ‘to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder’ increases the impact of the coincidence of wording.

Nolland, John. 2005. *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

came from. Matthew is the tax collector, and Judas is the betrayer, yet Jesus wanted them to come along all the same. The second is that recognition isn't the name of the game. Bartholomew and James, the son of Alphaeus and Thaddaeus, are equally important to Christ as Peter, James, and John. We don't know much about them beyond their names, but they are regarded as apostles to Christ.

Try doing something extra for Jesus this week and don't tell anyone! In the digital world, people have become overly obsessed with the number of events and posting their activities on social media. What's important is that Christ knows who you are and what you have been called to.

“In the synoptics Philip⁴⁴ is nothing more than a name. In John he is a major character. See 1:43–51; 6:5; 12:20–2; 14:8. Whatever be the sources of the Johannine traditions, it is clear that in some Christian circles the apostle Philip was remembered as a significant figure (cf. Papias, in Eusebius, H.E. 3:31, 39).⁴⁵”³

“Bartholomew⁴⁶ is, like Philip, only a name in the synoptics. Unlike Philip, he is never mentioned by John. Some (e.g. Leidig (v)) have identified him with the Nathanael of the Fourth Gospel, but the reasons for this equation are not compelling.⁴⁷ According to Eusebius, H.E. 5:10, Pantaenus, upon arriving in India, found that the Gospel of Matthew (in Hebrew letters) had preceded him there, having been left by Bartholomew.”⁴

³ 44 For the Hebraized forms of this name in the Talmud see Jastrow, s.v., pēlîpā, and SB 1, p. 535.

45 Despite the Martyrdom of Andrew and Polycrates (cf. Eusebius, H.E. 3:31), modern scholars do not usually identify the Philip of Mt 10:3 par. with the deacon/evangelist who is so prominent in Acts; see 6:5; 8:4–13, 26–40; 21:8–9. Hengel, however, regards this as a possibility: Jesus and Paul, p. 14. Cf. Villegas (v).

Davies, W. D., and Dale C. Allison Jr. 2004. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew. Vol. 2. International Critical Commentary. London; New York: T&T Clark International.

⁴ 46 From Aramaic bar talmay=‘son of Talmay’. For ‘Talmay’ see Num 13:22; Josh 15:14; Judg 1:10; 2 Sam 3:3; 13:37; 1 Chr 3:2; b. Yoma 13a.

47 See U. Holzmeister, ‘Nathanael fuitne U. Holzmeister, ac S. Bartholomaeus apostolus?’, Bib 21 (1940), pp. 28–39.

Davies, W. D., and Dale C. Allison Jr. 2004. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew. Vol. 2. International Critical Commentary. London; New York: T&T Clark International.

"About James the son of Alphaeus we know next to nothing,"⁵

"Zealots, it is, notwithstanding Hengel, Zeloten, very doubtful whether 'zealot' came to refer distinctively to revolutionaries before the Jewish war in the sixties (cf. Gal 1:14);⁵⁵ and ζηλωτήν may simply be adjectival in Lk 6:15 and Acts 1:13: 'the zealous one' (cf. 4 Macc. 18:12)." ⁶

Application

Jesus knows your name, your strengths, your weaknesses, and everything in between. Yet, just like the original 12, He has called you to go take the Kingdom out into the world. Below, write your name, and also in prayer, what adjective would Jesus place behind it? Then, in conversation with your cornerman, name somewhere you will specifically serve Jesus in the next week!

_____, son/daughter of, _____
Name
the _____.
Description

⁵ Davies, W. D., and Dale C. Allison Jr. 2004. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew. Vol. 2. International Critical Commentary. London; New York: T&T Clark International.

⁶ ⁵⁵ See M. Smith, 'Zealots and Sicarii: Their Origins and Relation', HTR 64 (1971), pp. 1–19; R. A. Horsley, 'The Zealots', NovT 28 (1986), pp. 159–92.
Davies, W. D., and Dale C. Allison Jr. 2004. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew. Vol. 2. International Critical Commentary. London; New York: T&T Clark International.