

12. Jesus Chooses His Apostles

Luke 6:12-31

Luke: A Walk Through the Life of Jesus

Called of God

Jesus reached a point in His life where it was time to multiply the ministry. We don't know at what point Jesus began a specific call to train and mentor twelve individuals, but it is likely that it was shortly after His baptism by John. Early in Jesus' ministry, many were drawn to Him, but Jesus was seeking for select individuals that he could develop and train. The Lord understood the transforming power of being in a close relationship with a mentor. It's only in the last two or three decades that mentoring has dropped from being the chief learning method. When I was a boy, most people learned a trade as an apprentice to someone for several years. This is the way it's been for hundreds of years. Today, certainly in the West, most training and development is performed in a classroom setting, but it's in the day-to-day living together that values, vision, and skills are imparted. Values are not just taught; they are also "caught" from a leader. If a leader is fearful of close relationships due to insecurity about his leadership position, he will be seriously impaired in his leadership.

Sure, a person may be able to teach well, but for any organization to multiply, a leader must be able to draw people into close relationship. Even in a large organization, there will be a group of people at the core who hold the values, mission, and DNA of the organization. The most important thing that Jesus did, apart from His redemptive death on the cross, was to start a small group. His model was a group of thirteen, Himself and twelve others. In that small group, Jesus began to deposit His values, i.e. those things about which He really cared. In those early weeks before He called twelve individuals, He began to rub shoulders with the people following Him. He was looking for certain qualities that could only be observed by getting to know His disciples in close relationship.

For what qualities do you think He was looking in those that He would call to apostleship?

Were they teachable? Did they love God? Did they love people? All the rest can be taught by on-the-job training, but these are key ingredients in the life of a disciple. Jesus was not looking for "supermen." He was searching for people who would follow Him and be open to what He wanted to impart to them. When the Lord had built relationship over several weeks or months, then it was time to listen and pray that God would show Him who the twelve were. This part of His ministry was so crucial, and He spent all night in prayer to His Father:

¹²One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. ¹³When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: ¹⁴Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, ¹⁵Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor (Luke 6:12-16).

He went to a secluded place where He would not be disturbed. The Greek phrase, translated as “spent the night” (v. 12), was often used of a doctor in an all-night situation of tending to a patient. This was important stuff! He had to have the right individuals. As we have stated in earlier studies, Jesus had laid aside His omniscience, His ability as the Son of God to know all things, in order that He might model to the believer a true dependence on His Father in all things (Philippians 2:6-7). Jesus said, “**Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does**” (John 5:19). Jesus was and is fully God, yet He was fully man during His earthly ministry. In prayer, the Lord sought the Father’s heart and considered which of these men the Father had chosen. The Father led Him in His choosing of the twelve.

In a parallel passage, Mark shares some additional light here;

¹³Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. ¹⁴He appointed twelve--designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach ¹⁵and to have authority to drive out demons (Mark 3:13-15).

We see again that the call was first of all to an intimate relationship before Jesus could send them out. We can impress people from a distance, but to have a deep impact upon a person, we need to get close and personal. They saw the real Jesus as they ate, slept, and lived together for two and a half to three years. They were real with one another. It is still the most effective way to train people, i.e. to “do life together.” We can have the best courses, effective programs, and proven techniques, but nothing replaces the power of being together and modeling what we *are*, as well as what we want to impart and teach. Relationship and friendship gives us the right to speak into another person’s life. It gives us room and opportunity to share about things that they have not seen about themselves. We can only earn this level of trust through having relationship.

Why did Jesus choose these twelve? What stands out about them? Not a lot when you read through the Gospels. Robert Coleman in his book, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, says:

For the most part they were common laboring men, probably having no professional training beyond the rudiments of knowledge necessary for their vocation. Perhaps a few of them came from families of some considerable means, such as the sons of Zebedee, but none of them could have been considered wealthy. They had no academic degrees in the arts and philosophies of their day...By any standard of sophisticated culture then and now they would surely be considered as a rather ragged aggregation of souls. One might wonder how Jesus could ever use them. They were impulsive, temperamental, easily offended, and had all the prejudices of their environment...not the kind of group one would expect to win the world for Christ.

Yet, from the perspective of the One who sees the very heart of each of us, He saw their availability. He was able to look past the outer façade and see something of worth that the Father could use for His glory. The Father spoke to Him about each one. He knew what this journey with Jesus would be like, and what qualities they would need. The rest could be taught and received as they lived and walked with Jesus. Notice that Jesus did not go to the Yeshivas or

Bible schools of the day in order to find the twelve. He chose everyday common people so that none of them could boast of their exceptional intellect or qualities. One person has said, “God must like common people because all that He called to ministry were of common stuff.” Paul the apostle wrote about God’s way of calling the unprofessional, untaught, and least able to boast of their qualities to impress people when he said:

²⁶For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; ²⁷but **God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things** of the world to shame the things which are strong, ²⁸and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, ²⁹so that **no man may boast before God.** ³⁰But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, ³¹so that, just as it is written, “LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD” (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

Today, we know God calls people from all walks of life and social standings. It does not matter if you are rich or poor, from a college background, or if you have not had formal training. We need all types of people to reach out into every people group, every nation. The important thing is that we honor Christ in the ministry to which we are called. There is a song that says it well; “It’s all about you, Jesus.”

How do people know if they have been called to a specific ministry?

Many have wrestled with this. An easy answer is to see if you can drop it. If thoughts can be shaken off, then maybe it’s not God. However, if you find that your thoughts keep returning to a specific ministry, maybe God is placing this on your heart! Is there a way that you can practice this type of ministry, to whatever you feel that you are being called? Can you start it small? It is always wise to go to a trusted friend with such a question, but also keep in mind that people can be wrong. You need to know from God when you are being called into a ministry. This is something you must know in your heart. I believe that we all have a place in ministry in the Body of Christ. We can get the wrong idea about the word “ministry.” I wonder if the disciples knew for what they were signing up when they decided to follow Jesus? My guess would be that they did not. Ministry, in a word, is service.

I remember when I first realized that I wanted to teach. In my early days as a Christian, I would have never thought that would be possible as I was very shy. It was my job at that time in the church that I was attending to bring the microphone to whoever was speaking. I was nervous, even with this task. When I started to share the Scriptures in a group setting, one of my good friends told me that teaching and preaching was not the ministry for me. That caused me to seek God and study more. How did I know that this is what I was called to do in the Body of Christ? I loved studying the word of God! It energized me. To this day, it gives me such joy. When I was still young in the Lord, I just started sharing my story. I found that I just could not help but talk about Jesus. One of my friends even confessed later to me that he thought I had gone a bit crazy because I wanted to talk about the Lord all the time. My experience had been so life-changing, I wanted to share it with whomever would listen. That is where ministry started for me. I say this

because it started in such a natural way. That is often the way it begins. When the disciples started traveling with Jesus, the call was, first of all, just to follow Him. That is all. “Follow me” was the call to be in a close relationship with Him. Everything else was to spring from that relationship.

My advice to you is to start where you are. If you start out with a step in the direction you feel God is leading you, the way will often be made clear as you go.

The Sermon on the Plain

¹⁷He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coast of Tyre and Sidon, ¹⁸who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by evil spirits were cured, ¹⁹and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all (Luke 6:17-19).

Luke now focuses our attention on the distance that people were travelling to hear Jesus. Sidon was fifty miles away from Capernaum on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. Tyre was thirty-five miles on the same shore line, with Jerusalem being approximately ninety-miles away to the south, depending on the route. Remember that, at that time, most travel was by foot. This shows us the hunger for the Word of God and the need of the common people to be healed and set free from demonic spirits. Such was the power of God that was flowing from Christ, that people were pushing through the crowds just to touch Him and be healed. We should not think in the hundreds, but the thousands who were coming several days in their journey to see and hear Him. Luke tells us that it was “a large crowd” and a “great number” (v.17).

The expectation was high. There had to be a great amount of faith in people that would bring them so far to see Jesus. Try to imagine that on top of the people clamoring to touch him was the additional problem of demons manifesting in the midst and being cast out. Ministry can often be messy and draining. The word that is translated “power” in verse 19 is the Greek word “*Dunamis*,” from where we get our English word dynamite and dynamo. Jesus ministered in power, and He desires that we, too, do the same. After the resurrection, and before Jesus ascended to be with the Father, He said: “You will receive power [*Dunamis*] when the Holy Spirit comes on you” (Acts 1:8). We need the power of God to do the works of God, but the power of God flows out of relationship with Christ, “Without me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

There are similarities to the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew’s Gospel, Chapters 5-7, but there are also a number of differences. It is possible that they were two different talks at different times and locations. Luke’s account is not so long, just one chapter; whereas, Matthew’s is over three long chapters. Matthew speaks of nine beatitudes; Luke has four, and with them, four woes. This is similar to many teachers’ messages on the Word of God. God will give them a message at one time, but at a later time, a speaker may share the same talk, but for the sake of time, that speaker will refer to just the key things. Those coming from far distances were not disappointed—The Lord began teaching them:

²⁰Looking at his disciples, he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. ²¹Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. ²²Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. ²³Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets. ²⁴But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. ²⁵Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. ²⁶Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.

As He looked out on the common people, He gave so much hope to them, a people that were starved of hope and abused, not just by the Romans, but by their own leaders. We are told that the common people hung on to every word that He spoke (Luke 19:48).

The words He spoke took the accepted standards of the world and turned them upside down. The people whom Jesus called happy, the world would call wretched, and the people Jesus called wretched, the world would call happy. Just imagine anyone saying, "Happy are the poor, and Woe to the rich!" To talk like that is to put an end to the world's values altogether. Where then is the key to all of this? Jesus says, "Woe to you who are rich because you have all the comfort you are going to get" (v. 24). The word Jesus uses for *have* (v. 24) is the word used for receiving payment in full of an account. The essence of what Jesus is saying is this, "If you set your heart and bend all your energies to obtain the things, which this world values, then you will get them—but that is all you will ever get." However, on the other hand, if you set your heart and bend all your energies to be utterly loyal to God and true to Christ, you will run into all kinds of trouble. You may by the world's standards look unhappy, but much of your payment is still to come, and it will be joy eternal."¹

What do we want from life? If we choose to focus on pleasing self and what this world offers, we will grow up spiritually bankrupt and be found wanting when He returns. Life is not about pleasing self. Happiness and joy are found in pleasing God and focusing our energies on eternal values and cultivating our spiritual lives. If you take the world's way, you must abandon the values of Christ. If you take Christ's way, you must abandon the values of the world.

When Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor," is He advocating poverty? Should we become poor? If the hungry are blessed, should we go hungry in order to be satisfied? What is the essence of what He is teaching in verses 21-22?

This is one of those times, I believe, when Jesus is talking on two levels, of physical and spiritual things. There is coming a time when those who have oppressed the poor to the point of poverty, they themselves will experience poverty of soul. Those who are experiencing hunger in the physical realm should receive the One who left heavenly riches to give eternal life and His riches to those who respond to Him. Everything will be reversed when the Kingdom of God is fully expressed at the appearance of the King. Those in need, i.e. those hungry and in poverty, are more open to receive the things of God. In spiritual terms, hunger, as well as thirst, is expressive language of an inner longing of the soul for something that is missing in one's life. Perhaps, you

¹ William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible, The Gospel of Luke*. Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1975. Page 76

yourself are aware of an inner dissatisfaction that you try to fill with things. This inner void is acknowledged by some of the leading psychologists of the twentieth century. They have all recognized that there is in the heart of every one of us, a deep void, a missing piece, a deep hunger.

Freud said, "People are hungry for love."

Jung said, "People are hungry for security."

Adler said, "People are hungry for significance."

David expressed the longing of his inner being when he said, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God. ²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalm 42:1-2). God has created us and placed within our inner being this longing for God Himself. Nothing really satisfies this empty void in our lives but God Himself. "If there is anything in your life more demanding than your longing after God, then you will never be a Spirit-filled Christian" (A.W. Tozer). When we become aware of this spiritual poverty of soul, i.e. this inner hunger or thirst, then we are to cry out to Him, and He will reveal Himself and satisfy our inner longing. "A deep and sober daily concern to please God is the rarest of rarities" (Vance Havner). Jesus said, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). He was saying that, if you want your hunger satisfied, then come to Him. If you are walking in darkness, He said, "I am the light of the world." All the inner needs of our soul are met in Him. The more we try to satisfy this inner longing with things, the more we experience poverty and darkness of soul, and the chains of the enemy begin to close on us. Freedom, and all that all that comes with it, is found in Christ.

Confrontation with the World

The Lord goes on to talk about those who will walk in a different spirit to the way of this world system as it is set up against God. They will experience confrontation: ²²"Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. ²³Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven" (Luke 6:22-23). If you are a servant of God, you will endure persecution. The way of this world is contrary to the ways of our King. If you love this world, then you are an enemy of God: "Don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God" (James 4:4). The world will try to force you into its mold. You cannot compromise with the values of this world system.

Be aware that, when you go against the tide or current of this world system against God, there are those who will try to turn you around from God's way. There should be an inner joy rising up within when you realize a clash of kingdoms is taking place. Remember that we are in a spiritual battle and that people are never our enemies. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against unseen evil angelic rulers, against authorities set up in spiritual darkness, against powers of this dark evil world, and against spiritual forces of evil in the unseen realms beyond our eyes (Ephesians 6:12). Luke reminds us next of Jesus' words of instruction as to what to do when we come into a clash with the unseen evil forces using a human pawn for evil purposes:

²⁷But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. ³⁰Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. ³¹Do to others as you would have them do to you (Luke 6:27-31).

“Do to others as you would have them do to you.” It is a simple statement, but it is not as simple to do. Have you ever returned harsh words or actions with kindness? What was the result? If not, can you think of any other instance when you went “against the tide of this world” in your response to a situation? What was the outcome?

Paul the apostle wrote: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink. For in so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head. ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:20-21). We cannot win people to our side by returning whatever treatment we have received, paying back what comes our way. We must do to others as we would have them do to us. We are to oppose evil with good. It may not make sense in this world’s economy, but in doing so, we will have power with God to overcome the darkness. To respond to evil with kindness cannot be done in our own power. We must draw on grace from heaven to respond with love and kindness, just as our Lord Jesus bore all in the darkness that He endured for our sake.

We should not only think that we are to feed our enemy just on the physical plane but also with spiritual food. People and nations around us are under bondage to darkness, and we have pure spiritual food to give (1 Peter 2:2), i.e. the bread of the Word of God. We must do all in our power to get the Holy Scriptures to them in order to open their eyes to the truth found in Jesus Christ. As we have received, so we should give. Every life is precious to our King; every life counts! In our passage today, we have seen Jesus from three different angles. We saw him praying on the mountaintop, selecting his chosen Apostles, and teaching the vast crowds of people hungering for Him across long distances. Jesus has chosen you and me to take this message to hungry people wherever they will listen.

We can learn three things from these three viewpoints of Christ.

- 1) When making important decisions, look up, take time out to get alone with God, and ask Him what to do. Be still in this place of receptivity. He wants to direct and guide you.
- 2) When you are looking to build a team of people in whatever endeavor you are entering, look at their character. Don’t focus so much on talents and abilities and knowledge; focus on their inner qualities.
- 3) To make a difference in this cosmic war, we have to go against the tide of this world system’s values. We cannot shy away from it.

The story is told of a king who placed a heavy stone in the road and then hid and watched to see who would remove it. Men of various classes came and worked their way around it, some loudly blaming the king for not keeping the highways clear, but all dodging the duty of getting it out of the way. At last a poor peasant on his way to town with his burden of vegetables for sale came,

and, contemplating the stone, laid down his load, and rolled the stone into the gutter. Then, turning round, he spied a purse that had lain under the stone. He opened it and found it full of gold pieces with a note from the king saying it was for the one who should remove the stone. Under every obstacle our King has hidden a blessing. We can turn back from a cross or go around it, but we are eternal losers if we do. We cannot dodge the cross without dodging God's blessing, and we cannot refuse it without endangering our crown. He is watching.²

For the **eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth** to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him (2 Chronicles 16:9).

Do you ever think of God as seeking anything? After all, He knows everything! Why would He need to seek? He is looking for those who make themselves available. Trust Him. He will be able to give you what you need for whatever lies ahead in your journey. He will also provide you with whatever you will need along the way and guide you as you go. He does not promise that it will be easy, but the rewards are literally, out of this world!

Prayer: Father, help us to love our enemies and do good to those who persecute us. Grant us an eternal perspective in all that we do in this life, for the glory of our King. Amen!

A. Naismith, *1200 Notes Quotes and Anecdotes*. Published by Marshall Pickering, Basingstoke, UK. 1963. Page 143.

Keith Thomas

Email: keiththomas@groupbiblestudy.com

Website: www.groupbiblestudy.com
