

The Twelve Disciples
Matthew 10:1-4, Mark 6:7; Luke 9:1

Introduction

What kind of person does it take to follow Jesus? What characteristics do you need to have in order to accomplish something significant for the cause of Christ? Do you need to be like one of the Apostles - Peter, James, John or Matthew - in order to do something important for God? The answer is yes! But as we shall see in our study this morning, the apostles were ordinary men, so anyone here that desires to follow Jesus is qualified as a vessel through whom God can do something significant for His kingdom.

Turn with me to Matthew 10:1. As you turn there, let me briefly review the context in which this chapter is set. Jesus is now in the final phase of His first Galilean ministry. He had established Capernaum as a home base for His ministry throughout the region in teaching in the synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people. He has taught them the meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures and pointed out the fulfillment of its prophecies concerning Messiah in Himself. He has proclaimed the good news that the kingdom of heaven was at hand so they needed to repent and prepare for it. Jesus has healed all manner of disease and sickness, demonstrated His authority over both the natural and the supernatural worlds through miracles and casting out of demons. Jesus has shown He has the authority of God in forgiving sins. He has even raised the dead.

However, the reaction of the people to Jesus teaching and His miracles has been mixed. Most were amazed by the wisdom of His teaching and the power of His miracles, but that did not result in any significant change in their lives. For the most part, they went back to their routine of life and remained indifferent to Him. Others reject Jesus and are antagonistic to His message and miracles. The Pharisees are specifically cited as accusing Him of being empowered by the ruler of demons. There were also those that responded positively and did believe Jesus' message.

Jesus' own response to the people has also been mixed. He has condemned the religious leaders for their blasphemy and given strong warnings to the people in general about their unbelief. At the same time, though Jesus has now left Capernaum and despite the rejection, He is still ministering in the region of Galilee teaching in the synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every kind of disease and sickness. Why? Because Jesus is full of compassion and He looks upon the multitudes who were "*distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd.*" Jesus also calls on his disciples to see the multitudes in the same way as He does for the "*harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.*" Jesus specifically tells them to respond to the need by "*besech[ing] the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into the harvest.*" Jesus wanted their first response to be prayer. As I pointed out last week, this forces them, as it does us, to see the bigger picture and even be involved in ministry that is much beyond their personal abilities and physical limitations.

This morning we come to the second response Jesus wanted them to have, for it is inevitable that when you pray you will also become personally involved.

The Calling of the Twelve - Matthew 10:1-4

"And having summoned His twelve disciples, He gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax-gatherer; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him."

The calling of these particular men by Jesus was not done haphazardly. We saw this a year or two ago in our study of Luke 6:12-16 when Jesus first set them aside as a select group of disciples. Luke records, *“And it was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. And when day came, He called His disciples to Him; and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles.”*

The harvest is plentiful and Jesus needs more workers. In our passage this morning, Jesus commissions these twelve men and empowers them in a special way as His co-workers in the harvest. They were already disciples of Jesus, that is, they were already students of Jesus’s teachings who followed Him so they could learn to be like Him. Jesus now gives them special abilities to minister among the people as His apostles. In fact, the word “apostle” specifically refers to someone sent with the authority of the sender. You might get the idea when you think of an ambassador that represents one nation to another. The ambassador himself has no authority, but as the representative of his nation, he carries the authority of the nation that sent him. The apostles carried the authority of Jesus. They would have the right and power to act upon Jesus’ behalf. Jesus gives them authority over unclean spirits, that is, demons, that they might cast them out. He also gives them authority to heal every kind of disease and sickness just as Jesus had been doing.

Who were these men that Jesus would entrust to represent Him with such authority? We would think they must have been extra-ordinary men - men of high standing, integrity, will and courage. When we remember that Jesus had spent all night praying about them back when He chose them as disciples, we would certainly think that now He is only picking the best to be His apostles. Yet an examination of these men shows that they were quite ordinary. In fact, it does not take long to find out they have defects and could be inept lacking in faith, courage, commitment, power, and even spiritual understanding and humility. They were weak, yet proud. Most churches would have passed over most of these men as potential leaders. Most of these men would not have passed the psychological profile used by missions organizations to determine who will be able to make it on the mission field and who will not.

That is exactly the point I want us to note as we examine each of these men in more detail. These are the ordinary men that God used to turn the world upside down (Acts 17:6). They fit well Paul’s description in 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 of those God chooses, *“not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast in His presence.”* It is not the ability of the man or the woman, but the ability of God that makes the difference. MacArthur said it well, *“The greatness of God’s grace is seen in His choosing the undeserving to be His people and the unqualified to do His work. It should be a marvelous encouragement to every believer to know that, just as Elijah (James 5:17), the apostles had a nature like ours.”*

The Twelve

Simon Peter: The first apostle mentioned is Simon, also called Peter. He is the foremost of the apostles and is mentioned more often throughout the New Testament than any other Apostle. He is brash and bold in asking and answering questions while the others shied away. This characteristic led to both blessing and admonishment such as occurred in Matthew 16 where he is praised for confessing that *“Jesus is the Christ, the son of God,”* and yet only a few verses later Jesus rebukes him saying, *“Get thee behind me, Satan.”*

Simon Peter is also a man of action. He is found in the middle of things and is bold and brave in what he says and does. It was Simon Peter that rose to the Lord’s defense in the garden when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus. He took out his short sword and began swinging managing to cut off Mathias’s ear before Jesus told him to stop. He also had a tendency to boastfully speak before thinking such as when

he brashly proclaimed that he would stay with Jesus and was ready to be put in jail or die. Yet, by the next morning he had denied Jesus three times.

He also had a bit of an impatient spirit in him. After His resurrection, the Lord told Simon Peter and the other Apostles to wait in Jerusalem, but he did not wait long before deciding to return to fishing (John 21:3). Jesus chose a bold, brash, boastful and impatient fisherman named Simon, and He turned him into Peter the Apostle, a fisher of men.

It is interesting note that whenever he is acting out of his flesh, he is called Simon or Simon Peter, but when he is acting in faith for the Lord, he is called Peter. In the Gospel accounts he is called Simon more than Peter, but throughout the book of Acts he is consistently called Peter.

What changed Simon into Peter. The man that could not stand before a servant girl without denying Jesus became the leading preacher at the beginning of the church who stood boldly before the Sanhedrin on several occasions and boldly proclaimed that they were guilty of the blood of Christ. Peter was the major spokesman who spread the gospel of Jesus throughout Jerusalem, then into Samaria, and then to the Gentiles (Cornelius - Acts 10).

The difference was a life turned over to the Holy Spirit. That same difference is available to you. Are you like Peter - acting before thinking, boastful, proud, impetuous? God can use you if you will put Him as your first priority and yield yourself to the Holy Spirit. God can change you also from a Simon into a Peter, a man who learned submission, restraint, humility, sacrifice, love and courage. All of these qualities become evident in the book of Acts and in the two epistles he wrote.

Tradition tells that Peter died as a martyr after being forced to witness the crucifixion of his wife. He was then also crucified, but upside-down at his request because he felt unworthy to die as Jesus died.

Andrew: The next Apostle is Simon Peter's brother, Andrew. Peter and Andrew were both originally fisherman from Bethsaida on the northeast shore of the Sea of Galilee. Andrew had been a follower of John the Baptizer and was prepared for the coming of Messiah, so when John pointed out Jesus, Andrew became one of His very first disciples. The first thing Andrew did after meeting Jesus was to go get his brother Simon. Maybe that was a fitting beginning for we consistently find that Andrew lives in the shadow of Simon Peter, in fact, he is often referred to in some way as Simon Peter's brother.

Andrew was more reserved, though like Peter, he was inquisitive which is why he found Jesus first. However, Andrew would wait and ask his questions in private (Mark 13:3,4). Andrew also demonstrated a simple faith. In John 5 when Jesus told the disciples to feed the multiple thousands of people who had been following Jesus, it was Andrew who simply found what he could, which was a lad with five barley loaves and two fish, and brought them to Jesus. He did not know what Jesus would do, but he had seen Jesus turn the water into wine, so he simply trusted Jesus to do something to meet the need.

Andrew was characterized by humility, openness and lack of prejudice. He not only saw the need to bring the gospel to his fellow Jews, "*the lost sheep of the house of Israel,*" but he apparently also understood the lesson given when Jesus revealed His messiahship to the Samaritan woman. The gospel was to go to all mankind. In John 12 He is the one that found some Gentiles who were inquiring about the Lord and He brought them to Jesus

Maybe you are like Andrew? You have questions and are a diligent seeker of truth, but you do not like to be the center of attention. Andrew is the example of what the Lord can do through you. He is the model for all Christians who labor quietly in humble places and positions.

James: The next apostle is James the son of Zebedee. We will talk about his brother John next and most of what we say about James also applies to John for throughout the gospels where James is mentioned so is John. Whatever one did the other was also involved. They were the sons of a prominent fisherman in Capernaum on the northwest shore of the sea of Galilee. They were friends with Simon and Andrew. Both sets of brothers are called by the Lord to be disciples on the same day (Matthew 4:18; Mark 1:16). James and John became part of Jesus' inner circle. They are with Jesus when He was transfigured (Matthew 17) and in the garden of Gethsemane when Jesus was praying (Matthew 26).

James and John were characterized early on as being passionate, zealous, aggressive and somewhat vengeful. In Mark 3:17 Jesus called them, “*boanerges*,” which means “*sons of thunder*,” to describe them. Luke 9:52-54 is an example of this aspect of their characters. As Jesus and His disciples were traveling through Samaria on their way to Jerusalem for Passover, they became victims of some of the religious and racial animosity that existed between Jews and Samaritans for they were refused lodging. James and John responded saying, “*Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?*” Their passion for Jesus is commendable, for we too should be incensed when someone dishonors the Lord, but their quick sentence of judgment and quest for vengeance is not.

These brothers were also self seeking and not above asking their mother to help them gain what they wanted as they did in Matthew 20:21-22 where their mother requests of Jesus the right and left hand seats of power for her sons when Jesus would come into His kingdom. If you have that sort of passion and ambition, then take heart for Jesus chose not one, but two brothers with those characteristics. God can use you, but beware. Those characteristics must be tempered and trained. Their zeal and ambition gained them positions of intimacy with Jesus and prominence among the disciples. However, it was also probably that same sort of zealous response that eventually led to James being the very first martyr among the apostles (Acts 12:). His boldness surpassed even Peter, because James was the first target in Herod’s effort to suppress the early church. God needs men who will fearlessly lead and are willing to be martyrs for the kingdom, but undirected passion and selfish ambition are brash, loveless, insensitive and lacking in wisdom and cause damage to the cause of Christ.

John: James’ brother John was also a “*son of thunder*” who was brash, zealous, ambitious, vengeful. However, he was either more attentive to learning and applying the lessons Jesus taught or his longer life just allowed them to sink in deeper. Either way, his epistles written near the end of his life, show John became a man who was gentle, loving, and selfless. So much so that he is called both the Apostle of love and the beloved Apostle. Certainly part of the reason for this change was how overwhelmed John was over the fact that Jesus loved him. A point John makes several times his gospel account (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7,20).

The closeness of John’s relationship with Jesus is also seen at Jesus’ crucifixion when He charged John to take care of His mother, Mary. Tradition holds that John did not leave Jerusalem until after Mary had died. Eventually he ended up in Ephesus and was then banished to the small, barren Isle of Patmos in the Aegean Sea where he received and recorded the book we know as “*Revelation*.” He was the only who did not die as a martyr. He died about 98 A.D. during the reign of Emperor Trajan.

John is the example of what Jesus can do with a person who is willing to follow Him. John’s zeal and ambition kept him uncompromising in God’s truth and a staunch defender of it, but God trained him and tempered him to be loving and compassionate. The Holy Spirit can do the same in your life and will do so if you yield your temperament to Him.

Philip is the next apostle mentioned. He was also from Bethsadia and was a friend of Simon Peter and Andrew. He is first mentioned in John 1:43 when Jesus finds him and calls him to follow Him. It was not long before Philip found His friend Nathanael and tells him, “*We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.*” Philip was a diligent student of the Hebrew Scriptures for he quickly discerned that Jesus was the Messiah according to the Old Testament prophecies.

Philip also had a practical, analytical mind, which is generally a virtue, but something that hindered him from spiritual discernment at times. In John 6 where Jesus feeds the 5,000, it is to Philip, who was probably the one in charge of getting food for Jesus and the disciples, Jesus asks, “*Where are we to buy bread that these may eat.*” The text tells us that Jesus said this to test Philip, and Philip failed. He immediately calculated it out and stated, “*200 denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them . . .*” (Verse 7). An accurate answer, but one that was not helpful and failed to see it would have to be the Lord that would provide. Almost three years later there is still a lack of spiritual insight. At the last

supper, Philip asks Jesus, *“Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.”* Jesus then rebuked Him saying in essence, *“you’ve been with me three years and you still do not understand that if you have seen me, you have seen the Father?”*

Philip was also somewhat intimidated. When certain Greeks came to Jerusalem and wanted to see Jesus, they went to Philip first, but Philip did not take them straight to Jesus, he went and got Andrew first, and then they went to Jesus. Even so, God used Philip and these Greek men were brought to Jesus.

Maybe you see yourself somewhat like Philip. Your tendency is to be thinking, practical and yet lacking in spiritual insight. Maybe you are like him in that you are somewhat intimidated though you want to help bring others to Christ. God can use you even as He used Philip if you will let Him. Tradition tells us that Philip’s faith increased and he also became a martyr. It is said he was stripped, hung upside down by his feet, had his legs pierced with sharp stakes and he slowly bled to death. It is said he asked them to not cover him with a linen shroud when he died, for he felt unworthy to be buried as was the Lord.

Nathanael: Philip’s friend Nathanael is also known as Bartholomew. He was also a student of the Old Testament and earnestly sought after God’s truth and the coming of Messiah as did Philip. However, Nathanael was affected by prejudice, and instead of judging Jesus from Philip’s report, he judged Jesus according to where Jesus was raised objecting, *“Can anything good come from Nazareth?”* However, Nathanael was more controlled by truth and so ended up following Jesus. Jesus said of him, *“Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!”* (John 1:47). He responded to Jesus with a question challenging Jesus to prove His words were true and not flattery. Nathanael was skeptical, but Jesus answered Him the way only the Messiah could, *“I knew you beforehand.”* Jesus claimed omniscience. God can use a skeptic who is not deceitful, hypocritical or phony, but a seeker after the truth.

Thomas: The next apostle is also skeptical. He is often referred to as *“doubting Thomas”* because he said he would not believe the Lord was raised from the dead until he saw Him and touched Him. He was also pessimistic. When Jesus took the disciples with Him when He went to raise Lazarus from the dead, it was Thomas, being aware of the danger of going that close to Jerusalem, said, *“Let us also go, that we may die with Him.”* Thomas fully expected the religious leaders would come from Jerusalem to seize and kill Jesus and His disciples, yet within that pessimism was a commitment that was unequalled. Thomas totally believed in Jesus and wanted to be with Him, so he was ready to die with Jesus if that was what was needed. This commitment is also seen in John 14, for when Jesus says that He would be going away, Thomas immediately wanted to know where He was going and how to get there too.

Skepticism is no hindrance when doubts are overcome by a commitment to seeking and finding the truth and loyalty to Jesus Christ. “Doubting” Thomas responded to Jesus, *“My Lord and My God.”* Tradition holds that he took the gospel to India where the Mar Thoma church in southwest India traces its origin to him. He died a martyr from a spear.

Matthew, also called Levi, is next. He was a Publican, a tax collector for the Romans, and therefore considered to be a traitor to his nation and worse than thieves and prostitutes. Whatever his character was, it was radically changed when Jesus told him, *“Follow me,”* and Matthew got up from his tax table and followed never to look back (Matthew 9:9). Matthew is the example that your past is no hindrance to God. He can radically change you and use you if you will let him.

The next three apostles, **James, Thaddaeus and Simon,** I am going to take them as a group because there is just not much known about them. First is James the son of Alphaeus who is also called James the lesser. Both names are to distinguish him from James the son of Zebedee. He was called, “the lesser,” either as a reference to being younger in age, or possibly smaller in size. Nothing he said or did is recorded. It is claimed he preached the gospel in Persia and was crucified there as a martyr.

Thaddaeus, a name usually used as a reference to the youngest child in a family, is also called Judas, the son of James. The only words of his recorded in Scripture are in John 14:22 when he asks Jesus, *“Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us, and not to the world.”* He

was looking, like the rest of them, for Jesus to establish an earthly kingdom and he did not understand how Jesus could do that and keep it hidden from the world. Jesus then further explained the nature of the kingdom and to whom it would be manifested. Nothing else is recorded about Thaddaeus. Tradition holds that he ministered the gospel in Syria and was martyred by being beaten to death with a club.

Simon the Zealot is next. (He is called “Canaanite” in the KJV which is an unfortunate transliteration. The Greek word does not mean a Canaanite, but a zealous person). Only this title gives us some insight into him as probably a member of radical political party of the Zealots. They wanted Rome overthrown and used guerilla tactics such as assassinations, ambushes and such in an effort to achieve their ends. But whatever originally motivated Simon to join Jesus, those were replaced as his devotion to the Savior increased.

James, Thaddaeus and Simon join the many other Old Testament saints of whom little is known except they were faithful to the Lord and endured many things on His behalf (see Hebrews 11:36-39). You may feel you are obscure and unimportant, but God can and will use you if you will let Him. God will use those who seek Him regardless of personal characteristics or prominence.

The last apostle is **Judas Iscariot**, meaning, “Judas, man of Kerioth,” a small town in Judea. Here is a man controlled by self desire. A covetous man of whom Scripture records that he stole from the group’s purse for he was their treasurer. His greatest act of covetousness was his betrayal of the Lord for 30 pieces of silver. His greatest hypocrisy was using a kiss as the sign of betrayal to the Lord. There is much that could be said about this man, and all of it negative. But that does not fit my purpose this morning. My point this morning is that regardless of who you are and what you are like, God can use you, and as we have seen, He can and will.

But what about the person that feigns love for God, walks alongside God’s people, but in truth is not concerned about God’s will, but only his or her own. God will use that person too. Judas was evil, but needed, for there had to be someone to betray Jesus in order to fulfill the Scriptures. God needed a man with a wicked heart, Jesus found him and choose him. Judas fulfilled the reason he was chosen.

Judas is the greatest tragedy of humanity ever for he lived with Jesus for three years, yet he still turned his back on Him. But there are others that are really no different. They have heard the gospel. They have read the Bible. They even come to church activities, but they still do not follow the Savior. Their end will be like that of Judas. God will still use them, for He does use people who are wicked in heart to both chastise his church and to call them to greater vigilance, but what a tragedy that person is, for their judgement will be great. We may even have a few people like Judas in our midst, but they are very difficult to distinguish. Remember, even at the last supper, the other apostles did not believe that Judas would be the betrayer even after Jesus pointed him out. But happily there was only one Judas, and in the church, such people are only a very small minority.

Conclusions

The church is made of all sorts of people called by God to serve Him. There are the bold and brash like Simon whom God can turn into Peters. There are sons of thunder like James and John who become the unwavering preachers and teachers the church needs as well as those with great capacities to love. There are those like Andrew and Philip whom God uses in the background to bring others to Himself. There are those who are pessimistic like Nathanael and those who struggle with doubt like Thomas, yet overcome those things by their devotion to the Savior. There are those who have terrible pasts like Matthew, but they can be made righteous by faith in Christ. There are also the many who faithfully serve the Lord like James, Thaddaeus and Simon, but are known only to Him and those they serve.

The ability to serve God is not based on your abilities, but on God’s ability. He can change you, equip you and empower to serve Him. But you have to be willing to follow and yield yourself to the Holy Spirit - just like the Apostles did. They were ordinary men who accomplished extraordinary things because they served the living God. What can God do through you? What will you let Him do?

Sermon Notes: *The Twelve Apostles*
Matthew 10:1-4, Mark 6:7; Luke 9:1

Introduction

Anyone that desires to _____ Jesus is qualified as a vessel through whom God can glorify Himself

The reaction to Jesus' ministry of preaching and healing has been _____

Jesus is still _____ and sees the multitudes as distressed and downcast - sheep without a shepherd

We are to pray for the Lord of the harvest to send workers - but prayer also _____ personal involvement

The Calling of the Twelve - Matthew 10:1-4

Jesus had prayed all night when He first chose the twelve to be His _____ - Luke 6:12-16

Jesus now commissions them as His _____ - those He is sending out with His authority

These twelve men are quite _____ - with areas of weakness

It is God's choice to use _____ people to serve Him in extraordinary ways (1 Cor. 1:26-29)

Simon Peter - is a brash, bold, sometimes boastful man of _____ - and sometimes impatient

He is usually called Simon when acting in the flesh and _____ when acting in faith

Simon became Peter because he yielded his life to the _____ of the Holy Spirit

Peter died as a martyr being crucified _____ at his request - he felt unworthy to die as Jesus did

Andrew - Simon Peter's brother, was a follower of John the Baptist, and became one of Jesus' _____ disciples

Andrew's first _____ after meeting Jesus was to get his brother, Simon

Andrew was inquisitive, but reserved - humble, open, with simple _____ and a desire to bring people to Jesus

James, he and his brother, John were the sons of Zebedee - and became part of Jesus' _____ circle

They were _____, zealous, aggressive and somewhat vengeful - "Sons of Thunder"

They were _____ - even getting their mother to request the right & left hand seats to Jesus' throne

Zeal and ambition can be used by God, but it must be _____ - James became the first martyred Apostle

John was like his brother, James, but he became gentle, _____ and self-less - the Apostle of love

When Jesus was crucified, He entrusted the care of His mother, Mary, to _____

John is the _____ apostle that was not a martyr

Philip was looking for the coming of Messiah, and he quickly _____ after Jesus found him and called him

He had a practical, analytical mind, but often _____ spiritual discernment

Philip could be somewhat _____, but still found ways to bring people to Christ

Nathanael - also known as Bartholomew, was Philip's friend and a _____ of the Old Testament

He was at first skeptical about Jesus, but he was controlled by _____ and quickly believed

Thomas was both skeptical and _____ - but he was totally committed to Jesus

_____ is no hindrance when doubts are overcome by a commitment to seeking and finding the truth

Matthew, also known as Levi, had been a _____ and therefore considered a traitor - worse than thieves

He is the example that your _____ is no hindrance to God in radically changing you and using you

James the Lesser - there is little in Scripture about him - tradition holds he preached in _____ and died there

Thaddaeus, also called Judas, was looking for the Messianic kingdom - He preached in _____ & died there

Simon the Zealot - had been a member of a radical political party that wanted Rome _____

You may feel you are obscure and unimportant, but God can and will use those who _____ Him

Judas Iscariot - a _____ man whom God used to fulfill the prophecies of betrayal

He is the greatest human _____ - after spending three years with Jesus, he betrayed Him

God can and will use even _____ people for His purposes, but their end is not good

Conclusions

The church is made of _____ of people called by God to serve Him.

The ability to serve God is based in _____ calling and ability, not your own - you must just yield and follow

KIDS KORNER

Parents, you are responsible to apply God's Word to your children's lives. Here is some help.

Young Children - draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. **Older Children** - Do one or more of the following: 1) Count how many times the words "disciple" and "apostle" are mentioned. 2) Pick one of the apostles and discuss with your parents the characteristics and qualities he had and how God was able to use him

THINK ABOUT IT!

Questions to consider in discussing the sermon with others. What is the context for Jesus commissioning the twelve disciples into the twelve apostles? What is the difference between a disciple and an apostle? What kind of people does God use according to 1 Corinthians 1:26-29? List at least one positive and one negative characteristic for each of the twelve apostles. Are there any extraordinary characteristics about any of the apostles? How was God able to use each of them despite their areas of weakness? What are your own areas of weakness? How can God use you despite those weaknesses? What is required of you for that to happen?