

The background image is a warm, golden-toned photograph. In the center, a dark-colored mug sits on a wooden surface. In the foreground, an open Bible is laid flat, its pages showing text. The lighting is soft and directional, coming from the upper left, creating a peaceful and contemplative atmosphere.

Guided Bible Study

# The Twelve Disciples

(Week 8)

John 1 v. 43 – 51

An adapted version of Life Builder Study | Douglas Connelly

# Welcome

For the purposes of our Bible Studies, we will be using Life Builder Study Series (Inter-Varsity Press). Our theme for these studies is: The Twelve Disciples. The studies were originally written by Douglas Connelly, but we will be modifying them in order that they become more usable for home study as we seek to transition between the church building and our homes during the next several weeks.

These studies give us the opportunity to study the Bible in a greater depth and to reflect on what it is saying to us. If you will be doing the studies at home, it is suggested that you do the study on Wednesday morning, for an hour, starting at 10.30 am. Get yourself a tea or coffee, a Bible pen and paper (for any notes you want to make) and begin studying.

Hope that you enjoy it!

**Pastor Ian**

# Context

Jesus had about three years to mould a dozen fearful and faithless men into the pillars of a worldwide movement. Despite this brief window, time spent with Jesus had a transforming effect on each of them; most would be inspired and emboldened to proclaim him as the saviour against great opposition. Through these ten studies, we too can experience the deep change that only time in Jesus' presence can bring.

# Some Thoughts To Help You While You Study

**The purpose of the study is to reaffirm our allegiance to Jesus as king and Lord, and to work on overcoming prejudice as we tell others about him.**

Nathanael realized that Jesus demonstrated supernatural knowledge about where he had been. Jesus 'saw' Nathanael under the fig tree. Some interpreters have taken this to mean simply that as Jesus had come through the town, he had noticed Nathanael sitting outside his home under the fig tree. Nathanael took Jesus' statement as meaning something very different. He took it that Jesus saw him from a distance, saw him with supernatural sight. Jesus' statement along with Philip's earlier declarations seem to have convinced Nathanael instantly of who Jesus was. Nathanael now respectfully addresses Jesus as 'Rabbi' (John 1 v. 49), but then he goes far beyond what any student would say to a Rabbi: 'You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel'. Clearly, Nathanael was acknowledging Jesus as the promised Messiah and much more. In John's Gospel Nathanael is the first person who is said to believe.

Space for you to make some notes . . . . .



# Study 8 - Nathanael

## (Developing Spiritual Insight)

The well – loved author Madeleine L'Engle had what she called her 'special place' near her home. A brisk ten – minute walk beyond her own garden, past a willow tree and through a pasture brought her to a small brook and a natural stone bridge. She would sit in the grass or dangle her feet in the water as the tensions of life gradually eased away.

Nathanael had a quiet spot too. Jesus said that he saw Nathanael '**under the fig tree**' (**John 1 v. 48**). For many people in Galilee the fig tree, traditionally planted near the front door of a house, was a place of quiet for rest or study or prayer. Since most homes had only one or two rooms, the spreading branches of a fig tree were where a person retreated for privacy and solitude.

PERSONAL REFLECTION: In what place do you feel closest to God? Why? Do you have a quiet place where you go regularly to pray or read? What can you do to create such a space or to make the one you have more conducive to quiet meditation?

The name Bartholomew is listed among the Twelve in every New Testament list. The fourth Gospel, however, doesn't mention Bartholomew but tells us about Nathanael. It seems that they are the same person. Bartholomew could be Nathanael's second name since it means '**son of Tolmai**'. Nathanael (**gift of God**) was probably his personal name or a name Jesus gave him. The Bible tells us very little about this man, but it gives us more details about Nathanael's first encounter with Jesus and his call to follow Jesus than that of any other disciple. **Read John 1 v. 43 – 51**



## QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT:

Skim through the passage again and write down all the names and titles used to describe Jesus. Which of these titles is most meaningful to you right now and why?

What insight about Jesus was most exciting to Philip (**John 1 v. 45**), and why?

Why did Nathanael find it hard to believe Philip's statement?

What prejudices or stereotypes prevent people today from trusting Jesus?

What does Jesus' assessment of Nathanael tell you about the character of this man (**John 1 v. 47**)? Imagine what Jesus would say about you if he made an honest assessment of your life and character. How would it make you feel?

Nathanael responds to Jesus' words with scepticism until Jesus reveals that he had seen Nathanael in the private place of prayer and **study 'under the fig tree'**. Why was that such a convincing remark to Nathanael?

What convinced you to be a follower of Jesus?

Once Nathanael commits himself to Jesus, what does Jesus promise him (**John 1 v. 50 – 51**)?

Have you gained deeper insight into who Jesus is since you first made a commitment to him? How has that insight come to you? How do you demonstrate that Jesus is the Lord and King of your life?

# Now or Later

An early church father Epiphanius says that Nathanael was one of the men on the road to Emmaus who had an encounter with the resurrected Jesus (**Luke 24 v. 13 – 35**). In that scene two disciples meet up with Jesus. One of the men is called Cleopas; the other man is not named.

The late William Barclay (who believed that Nathanael and Bartholomew were the same person) summarised this apostle's character: **'a man who was a seeking student, a man who was earnest in prayer, a man who made the complete surrender, and a man who became a man of action and one of the most adventurous missionaries in the history of the Church'**.

***Seek to make a firm commitment to Jesus as Lord, as King and as Son of God.***

