

Guided Bible Study

The Twelve Disciples

(Week 5)

John 6 v. 1 – 13

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 cultivate a deeper confidence in Jesus' power to work in life's impossible situations.

The feeding of the five thousand is the only miracle of Jesus recorded in all four Gospels. It marked a significant turning point in Jesus' ministry – from the height of popularity to the point where many of his disciples were turning away from him (**John 6 v. 66**). The difficult aspects of this situation centres around three issues: **(1) the size of the crowd** – Matthew says that the count of five thousand did not include women and children (**Matthew 14 v. 21**). **(2) the remoteness of the area** – there were no villages or market towns nearby for the people to buy food. **(3) limited resources** – the disciples did not have enough money to buy even a small amount of food for everyone, and the only food they could find was a boy's lunch.

The crowds followed Jesus not to obey him but because of the miracles he had performed on those who were sick. After the miraculous meal, the crowd wanted to make Jesus king and follow him to Jerusalem to overthrow the Roman occupiers.

Philip was the obvious person to ask first about how to solve this problem, since he came from the town of Bethsaida, the nearest town

to them (**John 1 v. 44**). Jesus already had a plan in mind, but he used the problem to test Philip's faith. Jesus wants Philip to say: *'I don't know how to solve this problem, Lord, but you do! What can I do to help?'*

Philip's response demonstrated that he is only thinking on the natural level, at the level of the marketplace. One denarius was a day's pay for a labourer; two hundred denarii (**John 6 v. 7**) represented eight month's wages. But the crowd was so large, even if they had that much money, it would only provide each person with a small piece of bread.

Those of us who are like Philip try to figure out how God can solve our problems or how we can solve them with our abilities, our money and our efforts. We turn to God for help only when we've exhausted every other way.

Philip must have been stunned by this miracle. Not only did everyone eat their fill (including the apostles), but large baskets of food were left over. **(How many baskets? – 12. How many disciples? – 12. An interesting thought!)**. Philip got a glimpse of God's abundant provision, just like we see the generosity of God's grace when he works in the difficult situations we face.

Philip learned that day to trust Jesus. He also learned about God's goodness and what it means to be grateful to God. Philip learned too the futility of trying to solve problems that are beyond our control.

Study 5 - Philip

(Learning to trust)

If we want to understand the disciple named Philip, we need to start with his name. Though Philip grew up in a Jewish home, he had a distinctly non – Jewish name. Philip is a Greek name and means ‘lover of horses’. This disciple never rides a horse that we know of, but the Greek roots of his name are significant. Some scholars have suggested that he was named after the best of Herod the Great’s sons, Herod Philip II, who ruled an area northeast of the Sea of Galilee. Perhaps our man Philip’s father was involved in the governmental bureaucracy and wanted to honour the man who was a fair and righteous ruler. It could be that Philip grew up in a home that was more open to non – Jewish friends than the typical Jewish home.

His name may have been why some Greeks who wanted to meet Jesus came to him Philip (**John 12 v. 20 – 22**). They must have thought that Philip would be more open to their request. Philip was not in Jesus’ inner circle, but in every New Testament list of the Twelve Philip is listed fifth. He was not a leader in the company of the disciples, but he was an important player on the second string.

PERSONAL REFLECTION: Do you feel more comfortable in a leadership role or in a supporting role? How do you feel when you work hard on a project and someone else gets the credit? How do you express those feelings?

In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, Philip is only a name on the list of the twelve. But John’s Gospel rescues Philip from obscurity. Philip was probably a fisherman by trade, like Peter and Andrew, but he would have functioned best in an accounting office. Philip had a

calculator for a mind, and Jesus wanted to temper that analytical bent with a strong dose of trust in God. **Read John 6 v. 1 – 13**

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT:

How would you describe to a friend the setting of this account and each character or group involved? What about the scene makes it seem like an impossible situation?

Why were the crowds following Jesus? What are some of the reasons people follow Jesus today? Why do you follow him?

Jesus specifically asked Philip: 'Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat'? But John makes it clear that Jesus was testing Philip (John 6 v. 6). What was Jesus looking for from Philip?

What does Philip's answer tell you about how he approached tough life situations?

Philip tried to figure out exactly how this situation could be resolved, but he calculated without faith in Jesus' power or ability to provide. Describe a time when you have tried to help the Lord out and how it ended?

Rewrite Philip's response in a way that includes an expression of confident trust in Jesus' ability to meet this need.

What do you think was the significance to Philip that there was more food left after everyone had eaten (twelve baskets) than they had before they began (five small loaves and two dried fish)? What does that say to you about how to face difficult situations in your life?

Consider the qualities that increased in Philip's character and the flaws that decreased after this incident. Complete the following

sentences:

- After this incident, Philip was more
- and he was less

What situation in your life do you need to trust God to work out?

Now or Later

Church tradition says that Philip was a powerful preacher in the early church. The apostle Philip should not be confused with the deacon Philip, who is prominent in the early chapters of Acts. Philip the deacon witnessed to the Ethiopian government official (Acts 8 v. 26 – 40) and is the only person called an 'evangelist' in the New Testament (Acts 21 v. 8). Within ten years of Jesus' resurrection, the apostle Philip was preaching in the Roman province of Phrygia in Asia Minor. He was stoned to death or perhaps crucified for his faith at the city of Hierapolis.

Jesus was able to take a man who had a very practical bent and add the dimension of faith to his gifts to create one of the foundational personalities of the church.

Think about your gifts and abilities and inclinations.

How can you offer these gifts in a new way to Jesus?

Where can your abilities be used to strengthen or expand the church?

Take one step to put your abilities to use in Christ's work.