

"That They All May Be One": A Portrait Of The Disciples

A. Introduction:

1. The Lord put together twelve men from widely divergent backgrounds and with vastly different personalities into an immovable unit. They became available for service to Him and not to themselves.
2. For over three years, these men traveled, ate, slept and listened to the Lord.
3. During the course of these years, they fought, argued, and vied for first place in the kingdom.
4. They made many mistakes, both individually and corporately.
5. Yet, they stuck together because of their common relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - A. At first they did not realize what kept them together.
 - B. The personal conflicts were eventually set aside to follow Him.
6. Jesus saw something in the band of misfits that was valuable for He would use them to form the foundation of the Universal Church. Eph 2:20
7. He had three sets of brothers, business partners, tax collectors, political activists, pragmatists, dreamers, analysts, doubters, a twin, impulsive people, the ambitious elitists, braggarts, daredevils, outcasts and second fiddles.
8. He prayed that they would all become "one" just as He and the Father were one. John 17:11
9. What did He see in these men?
 - A. They would be willing to be changed.
 - B. Their weaknesses could be turned into strengths.
 - C. They would learn from others' strengths and weaknesses.

B. Observations:

1. In the lists of the disciples, we find some similarities:
 - A. They are actually broken into three groups of four each.
 - B. Even though names may be rearranged within the group, they are always grouped together.
 - C. The leader of the group is always found in the same position. (Peter, Philip and James the Less)
2. The lists: Matt 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13
3. The Lord trained all of them to be leaders.

C. The Third Team: Judas Iscariot, From Virtue to Vanity.

1. Judas did not start off as a traitor. Luke 6:16
2. He was trusted by the other disciples.
 - A. He was keeper of the money box. John 13:29
 - B. He was the one who distributed money to the poor.

C. No one looked to him when the Lord said that one will betray Him.

3. The Lord knew all along that it would be Judas. John 6:71; 13:11,26
4. The Lord in fact sternly warned Judas against betraying Him. Luke 22:22
5. Judas had only an overt conformity to the standards of virtue. 2 Cor 11:15
6. It appears that Judas only followed the Lord for what he could get from Him, one way or another. John 12:6; Matt 26:25
7. Money was a motivating factor in Judas' decision. Matt 26:14-16; John 12:4-6 cf I Tm 6:10
8. Satan seized upon Judas' weakness and instigated the idea. John 13:2
9. Judas opened himself to Satanic possession. Luke 22:3
10. Judas, knowing where the Lord would be based on past history, led the Romans to Him and betrayed Him with a kiss. John 18:2; Matt 26:47-50
11. The guilt of betraying an innocent man led Judas to commit suicide. Matt 27:3-10
12. Judas' strength was being readily trusted by others which he could have used for good.
13. His major test was to trust the Lord.
14. His major weakness was money.
15. Any of the other disciples could have been the betrayer, but Judas was the one who made the decision.

D. The Third Team: James the Less, From Anonymity to Acknowledgement.

1. All we know of this man is found in the lists of the other disciples. Matt 10:4; Mark 3:19; Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13
2. He is called the son of Alphaeus, as is Matthew. Mark 2:14
3. He is identified by the Greek "MIKROS" which means small in stature, young, or small in station.
4. His strength is being a "low profile" type of individual.
5. His test was to realize this strength. Matt 23:11
6. His weakness was probably in not liking anonymity. Matt 16:15
7. Yet, he learned to "rejoice, because his name was written in heaven." Luke 10:20
8. At the age of 94, he was beaten and stoned by the Jews and had his brains knocked out with a club.

E. The Third Team: Simon the Zealot, From Activist to Ambassador.

1. This man too is mentioned only in the lists of apostles.
2. He is called "Simon the Canaanite" and "Simon the Zealot."
3. The Zealots were a political party who wanted freedom from Rome.
4. These men were known for their loyalty to Israel and were willing to give their lives to gain their independence.
5. Their last stand was at Masada.
6. They had daring and enthusiasm.
7. This man was a great risk to Jesus.
 - A. They could have used him as an excuse to get to Jesus.
 - B. They could have gotten Rome involved earlier.

- C. Satan did not want Rome to get Him.**
8. His strength was in his boldness and resolve.
 9. His test was one of perspective. John 8:31-32
 10. His weakness was his short-sightedness. 2 Pet 1:9
 11. He and Matthew would obviously not get along.
 12. But the Lord thought him worth the risk.
 13. This man took the gospel first into Africa and then into Britain where he was crucified in 74 A.D.
- F. The Third Team: Thaddeus, From Analyst to Apologist.**
1. Thaddeus was also known as Judas, son of James.
Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13
 2. Only one time outside of the lists of disciples do we get an insight into his character. John 14:22
 3. Jesus had just made a statement that Thaddeus was unable to analyze.
 4. His strength was that he analyzed statements.
 5. His test was to have patience enough to learn from experience the answers to certain questions.
 6. His weakness was therefore his lack of experience. 2 Pet 3:18
 7. To have a certain name was not a sign of certain failure.
 8. He too was crucified at Edessa in 72 A.D.
- G. The Second Team: Philip, From Realist to Reality.**
1. Philip was the practical apostle.
 2. He was the mathematician and was placed in charge of physical inventories. John 6:5,7
 3. He wanted to "see" the evidence. John 14:8
 4. Philip responded to a simple "Follow Me" from Jesus.
 5. He went and told Nathanael about Jesus, offering the evidence and inviting Nathanael to "come and see." John 1:43-46
 6. Philip was an approachable person who was enough of a realist to ask for advice when he didn't know what to do. John 12:21-22
 7. His strength was in his practicality.
 8. His test was to recognize that Jesus is the Reality. John 14:9
 9. His weakness was in not realizing the power of God. 2 Tim 3:5
 10. Philip labored in Upper Asia. He was scourged, thrown into prison and then crucified at Heliopolis in 54 A.D.
- H. The Second Team: Nathanael, From Bigot to Brother.**
1. His full name is Nathanael Bartholomew (son of Tolmei).
 2. Philip invited him to come and "check out" this man Jesus.
 3. Nathanael was a student of the Word and a visionary. He was more of a philosopher.
 4. Yet, he was prejudiced. John 1:46
 5. When Jesus spoke to him, his response was almost immediate.
John 1:49
 6. He was the type of person who needed very little evidence.
 7. He was also totally honest. John 1:47
 8. Nathanael's strengths were virtue and honesty.
John 1:47 cf Prv 29:18

9. His test was to take an honest look at himself. 2 Cor 13:5
 10. His weakness was prejudice. John 1:46 cf Col 3:11
 11. Nathanael preached in several countries and translated the Gospel of Matthew into the language of India. He then spread the gospel through India where he was eventually beaten nearly to death and then crucified at the hands of local idolaters.
- I. The Second Team: Thomas, From Doubts to Devotion.
1. Thomas was one of a set of twins. John 11:16; 20:24
 2. When the Lord told the disciples that He was going back into hostile territory, Thomas was ready to go and die with Him. John 11:16
 3. Thomas was a little slow to understand and realize the greatness of this carpenter's son. John 14:5
 4. Thomas was not the type to readily accept the words of a group. John 20:25
 5. But Thomas did readily "eat his words" when confronted with the facts. John 20:28
 6. Thomas' strength was in his physical loyalty to the Lord. Rom 12:1
 7. His test was to trust the Lord in spite of his doubts. 2 Cor 1:9
 8. His weakness was his doubting nature. Matt 18:2; John 20:28
 9. Thomas preached the gospel in Parthia and India where he incurred the rage of the pagan priests and was killed with a spear.
- J. The Second Team: Matthew, From Means to Maturity.
1. Matthew is also known as Levi. Mark 2:14
 2. He was a tax collector who responded to Jesus' invitation to "Follow Him." Matt 9:9; 10:3
 3. Tradition holds that he was from Nazareth.
 4. He was hated by the Jews and considered a traitor to Israel. He was regarded in the same light as a prostitute and thus an outcast.
 5. The only friends he had were other tax collectors.
 6. Matthew had a "going away party" with other tax collectors and invited Jesus to be the guest. Mark 2:15-17
 7. He was viewed as a Roman collaborator.
 8. Matthew's strength was in details. 1 Cor 14:40
 9. His test was to seek the Real Treasure. Matt 6:33-34
 10. His weakness was money and was willing to endure the insults and ostracism to get it.
 11. He probably felt and was made to feel like he was the biggest sinner in the group.
 12. Matthew traveled to Parthia and Ethiopia where he was killed in 60 A.D. in the city of Nadabah with a halberd, combination spear and battle-axe.
- K. The First Team: Andrew, From Shadows to Showpiece.
1. He was the brother of Simon Peter and was a fisherman.
 2. He responded to Jesus' invitation to become a "fisher of men." Matt 4:19
 3. Andrew was part of the inner circle of four disciples. Mark 13:3
 4. Andrew is frequently seen bringing someone to the Lord.
 - A. His brother Peter. John 1:41

B. The lad with the loaves and fishes. John 6:8

C. The Greeks who wanted to see Jesus. John 12:22

5. He constantly lived in the shadow of his brother, Peter.
6. He was a hospitable person and very comfortable about talking to people. Mark 1:29; John 1:40
7. His strength was in his friendliness. John 1:40; 1 Pet 4:9
8. His test was to function in the shadow of his brother.
9. His weakness was probably envy of his brother.
10. He preached the gospel to many Asiatic nations. When he arrived in Edessa he was taken and crucified on a cross with the two ends fixed transversely in the ground.

L. The First Team: James, From Ambition to Altruism.

1. He was the son of Zebedee and the brother of John. Matt 10:2
2. He and his brother were partners with Peter and Andrew. Luke 5:10
3. He and John left their boat and their father to follow the Lord. Matt 4:22
4. He was part of Jesus' inner circle:
 - A. A witness to the Transfiguration. Matt 17:1
 - B. A witness to the raising of the synagogue official's daughter. Mark 5:35-43
 - C. One of four who heard the Olivet Discourse. Mark 13:3
 - D. Accompanied Jesus to Gethsemane. Mark 14:33
 - E. A witness to two miraculous catches of fish. Luke 5:10; John 21
5. He and his brother John were called the "sons of thunder." Mark 3:17
6. He and his brother asked Jesus for a privileged position. Mark 10:35-40
7. They were so ambitious that they were willing to endure the wrath of the other ten. Mark 10:41
8. They once asked Jesus if He wanted them to "call down fire out of heaven" to destroy a Samaritan village who did not receive them. Luke 9:54
9. James' strength was in his aspiration to great heights.
10. His test was to let God promote. 1 Pet 5:6
11. His weakness was in his selfishness. Mark 10:35-40
12. The writer Clemens Alexandrinus recorded his martyrdom: "that, as James was led to the place of martyrdom, his accuser was brought to repent of his conduct by the apostle's extraordinary courage and undauntedness, and fell down at his feet to request his pardon, professing himself a Christian, and resolving that James should not receive the crown of martyrdom alone." Hence they were both beheaded at the same time. Acts 12:2

M. The First Team: John, From Elitist to Evangelist.

1. John and his brother James were very close and most of the times that we see them in scripture, they are together, doing the same thing and thinking the same way.

2. There are two instances where his brother is not a part of John's action and thus we get some additional insight into John's character.
 3. Once, John confronted some who were casting out demons in the name of Jesus and he tried to stop them because they were not part of THE GROUP. Mark 9:38; Luke 9:49
 4. John added elitism to ambition.
 5. John and Peter were responsible for the preparation of the Last Supper. Luke 22:8
 6. Thus, John got the position of honor next to the Lord.
 7. And John with Peter were responsible for not providing a servant.
 8. John strength was in his boldness. John 18:15-16
 9. John's test was acceptance of other members of the Lord's family. Rom 15:7
 10. His weakness was his elitism without service. Matt 23:11
 11. When he calls himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved," he is referring to the grace he received in spite of his attitude. John 13:1,23; 20:2
 12. John and Peter alone witnessed Jesus' trial before Caiaphas. John 18:15-16
 13. Only John witnessed the cross. John 19:25-26
 14. John was thrown into prison, faced numerous dangers, and was exiled on the Isle of Patmos. He died a natural death.
- N. The First Team: Peter, From Sand to Stone.
1. Peter is mentioned more than any other apostle. (156X by name)
 2. Peter was the recognized leader of the group, and many times was the chief spokesman. Matt 15:15; Luke 12:41; Matt 17:24
 3. Peter was an "open book."
 - A. When he disagreed with even the Lord, he spoke his mind. Luke 5:1-10; Matt 26:35; Mark 14:31
 - B. He sought to give answers to questions that he did not have the answers to. Luke 8:45
 - C. He rebuked the Lord when the Lord explained to him the Plan. Matt 16:22; Mark 8:32
 4. He did not fall away when the Lord rebuked him. Matt 16:23 & Mark 8:33; John 18:11
 5. Peter was impulsive:
 - A. He asked to walk on the water with Jesus. Matt 14:28
 - B. He got out of the boat. Matt 14:29
 - C. He offered to build three tabernacles after witnessing The Transfiguration Matt 17:4 & Mark 9:5 & Luke 9:33
 - D. He cut off Malchus' right ear. John 18:10
 - E. He refused to have his feet washed by the Lord and then wanted a bath. John 13:6-9
 - F. He witnessed Jesus' trial before Annas. John 18:16
 - G. He went for an impulsive swim. John 21:4-11
 6. Peter was inquisitive:
 - A. Asked "how often do we have to forgive?" Matt 18:21
 - B. Asked "what do we get for our sacrifice?" Matt 19:27
 - C. He wanted who the betrayer was. John 13:24

7. Peter was emotional.
 8. Peter professed Jesus as the Messiah. Matt 16:16 & Mark 8:29 & Luke 9:20; John 6:68-69
 9. The Lord gave Simon the name "Peter." Matt 16:18
 10. Peter was a braggart. Matt 26:33 & Mark 14:29 & Luke 22:23 & John 13:37
 11. Peter was observant. Mark 11:21
 12. Peter "fell asleep" spiritually for a time. Matt 26:40 & Mark 14:37
 13. Peter failed miserably in the area he bragged the most vehemently. Matt 26:69-73 & Mark 14:66-72 & Luke 22:55-62
 14. Peter failed to provide a servant for the Last Supper. Luke 22:8
 15. Peter was so guilt-laden that he decided to start fishing again. John 21:3
 16. But Peter did love the Lord and the Lord loved him. John 21:15-17
 17. Peter's strength was in his leadership. Heb 5:12
 18. His test was of humility. Matt 26:69-73; 1 Pet 5:5
 19. His weakness was brash arrogance. 1 Pet 5:6
 20. Peter was crucified in Rome around 64 A.D. being placed upside-down on his cross after watching his wife crucified.
- O. Paul: The One Grafted In, From Religion to Relationship.
1. Paul is the replacement the Lord selected for Judas. Gal 1:1
 2. We first see him outside Jerusalem at the time of the stoning of Stephen. Acts 7:58
 3. Saul was in hearty agreement with the Jewish action Acts 8:1
 4. Saul in fact was a leader of the persecution of Christians. Acts 8:3
 5. He hated Christians. Acts 9:1
 6. Saul had confidence in the flesh. Php 3:4-6
 7. His strength was his intelligence and zeal. 2 Pet 3:18
 8. Paul's test was the way he directed it. Eph 6:12
 9. His weakness was his intellectual arrogance. 2 Cor 12:7
 10. Paul was beheaded under the persecution of Nero.
- P. Conclusions:
1. We are to unite in spite of our differences.
 2. Our differences are actually to our advantage.
 3. We must individually work on our weaknesses.
 4. We should nurture and refine our strengths.
 5. The Lord can use us, no matter our past or our failures or our personalities, because He looks for the good and builds on that.
 6. We simply must be willing to start from where we are.
 7. Our future belongs to Him.
 8. History has seen what He did with these men.
- Q. Strengths The Church Needs:
1. Behind the scenes people. Php 2:25ff (James the Less)
 2. Zealots. Tts 2:14 (Simon)
 3. Analysts. 2 Tim 2:15 (Thaddeus)
 4. Pragmatists. Rom 8:28 (Philip)
 5. Visionaries. Prv 29:18 (Nathanael)
 6. Loyalists. Rom 12:1 (Thomas)

7. Detail people. 1 Cor 14:40 (Matthew)
8. Friendly people. 1 Pet 4:9 (Andrew)
9. Aspiration. Php 3:14 (James)
10. Boldness. Eph 6:19; Php 1:20 (John)
11. Leaders. Heb 5:12 (Peter)
12. Intelligence. 2 Pet 3:18 (Paul)

R. Tests The Church Will Face:

1. Not seek first place. Matt 23:11 (James the Less)
2. Perspective. 1 Cor 10:31; Gal 5:1; Col 3:17 (Simon)
3. Patience. 1 Cor 13:4 (Thaddeus)
4. Focus on The Reality. 2 Cor 12:9 (Philip)
5. Look at flaws in self. 2 Cor 13:5; Jas 1:23-25 (Nathanael)
6. Trust the Lord. 2 Cor 1:9 (Thomas)
7. Seek the Real Treasure. Matt 6:33-34 (Matthew)
8. Get eyes off men. Heb 12:2 (Andrew)
9. Let God promote. 1 Pet 5:6 (James)
10. Accept one another. Rom 15:7 (John)
11. Humility. Eph 4:2; Php 2:3; 1 Pet 5:5 (Peter)
12. Direction of zeal. 1 Cor 9:24-27; Eph 6:12 (Paul)

S. Weaknesses In The Church:

1. Not accepting anonymity. 1 Cor 12:24; Matt 16:25 (James/Less)
2. Short-sightedness. 2 Pet 1:9 (Simon)
3. Lack of experience. 2 Pet 3:18 (Thaddeus)
4. Not realizing the power of God. 2 Tim 3:5 (Philip)
5. Prejudice. Col 3:11 (Nathanael)
6. Doubts. Jas 1:5-7 (Thomas)
7. Love of money. 1 Tim 6:10 (Matthew)
8. Envy. Gal 5:26; Tts 3:3 (Andrew)
9. Selfishness. 2 Cor 9:5; Gal 6:2 (James)
10. Elitism. Rom 12:16 (John)
11. Arrogance. 1 Pet 5:6 (Peter)
12. Intellectual arrogance. John 9:34; 1 Cor 13:2 (Paul)

T. To Achieve Unity

1. Grace.
2. Truth.
3. Love.
4. Belief.
5. Acceptance.