

**M** | MURRIETA  
**MEN**



# **MEN LIKE US**

**MEN'S SERIES 2022**

# **MEN LIKE US**

*A Study of the Twelve Apostles for Men*

**Copyright © 2022 – Calvary Murrieta**

All rights to this book are reserved. No permission is given for any part of this book to be reproduced, transmitted in any form or means; electronic or mechanical, stored in a retrieval system, photocopied, recorded, scanned, or otherwise. Any of these actions require the proper written permission of the author.



Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



Images are by Gustave Doré and are public domain.



Design Template: Free download by <https://usedtotech.com>

## *Table of Contents*

<b>Series Schedule.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>One: Bold and Passionate.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Two: Cautious and Contemplative.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Three: Practical and Productive.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Four: Inconspicuous and Indispensable.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Group Contact Info.....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Group Prayer Requests.....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Notes.....</b>	<b>46</b>



# SERIES SCHEDULE

## Bold and Passionate

*Session One, October 4<sup>th</sup>: Sanctuary*

*Session Two, October 11<sup>th</sup>: Home Groups*



## Cautious and Contemplative

*Session Three, October 18<sup>th</sup>: Sanctuary*

*Session Four, October 25<sup>th</sup>: Home Groups*



## Practical and Productive

*Session Five, November 1<sup>st</sup>: Sanctuary*

*Session Six, November 8<sup>th</sup>: Home Groups*



## Inconspicuous and Indispensable

*Session Seven, November 15<sup>th</sup>: Sanctuary*

*Session Eight, November 22<sup>nd</sup>: Home Groups*



*But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.*

II Corinthians 4:7

## INTRODUCTION

---

**T**he Bible is thousands of years old. It was written in times and places that we would find entirely foreign to our daily lives and ways of thinking. Its world is one of strange customs, of subtlety mixed with hyperbole, of mystery and awe. But as we stay awhile in the world of the Bible, meeting its people and drinking from its ancient wells, we begin to see how familiar it really is. The people of the Bible with their fears and failures, their ambitions and treachery, their silliness and suffering, become what they are – real people. We are more shocked by our familiarity with their way of thinking than we are with its oddness. We come to find that these are people like us.

But this is not the most surprising thing about the Bible. The longer we stay in this ancient world we come to have the uncomfortable sense that we are not only getting to know this book, but that this book already knows us.

We find ourselves at the edge of a crowd, watching a plain Jewish handyman rebuke holy men and we rejoice and wince all at once. We watch Him do things we thought impossible and we hear Him say things we cannot quite

## *Introduction*

make sense of. We peer in as He molds His closest students until, when we have been here long enough, He turns and locks eyes with us. The things He said that made us cringe, He says to us. The things that gave others their first taste of peace, He repeats to us.

## **Men Like Us**

Jesus began His ministry alone but then began to gather men around Him. While many were among His followers, a dozen devoted their lives to going everywhere with Jesus. They learned and observed and gradually began to participate in the things Jesus did. They were rebuked and refined until, once Jesus departed for Heaven and sent them the Holy Spirit, they were able to carry on His ministry. As we look at the apostles, we see men like us – men with strength and weakness who are being molded by Jesus. They are surprisingly relatable because they were real, historical people. While they lived in a particular context in first century Israel, they are human just like us.

Over the last two thousand years the Church has come to see the apostles as superhuman, depicting them in shimmering mosaics and gilded iconography. You will need to ignore that for this study. Picture instead young men, most perhaps around the age of twenty, ignorant, over-eager, bad listeners. While perhaps not in every particularity, these are men like us.

## **Wait Your Turn**

Because the apostles are real people, they all have different personalities. This study will group apostles into personality categories and examine how Jesus interacts with each. You will find that one of the categories is most strongly like you while the others will be less so. In one sense, then, you will need to “wait your turn” until the content seems highly relevant to you. In another sense, you will find that you fit into each of these categories in some way. Reflect on yourself throughout the study rather than waiting for only the section that sounds most like you. Also look beyond yourself to the other men in the study with you. This is designed to be done together as brothers in Christ. You will get to know Jesus and yourself better throughout this study, but you should also get to know the other men and what Jesus is doing in their lives. When the week’s category sounds less like you and more like others in your group, take the opportunity to be quick to listen to their lives.

## **Learning from Biblical People**

Because the apostles are indeed men like us, we may be tempted to look to them as simply examples to follow. After all, these are men handpicked by Jesus to take part in His ministry and carry it on once He was gone. They were leaders in the very early church and died as martyrs. There are indeed things that we can learn from the apostles, but we will see much more when we see Jesus

## Introduction

through their lives. Jesus is our source of transformed lives, not the apostles or any other biblical people.

Here are some principles for studying biblical people:

- We look at biblical people to identify with them, but we look to Jesus to identify with us.
- We look at biblical people to learn from them, but we look to Jesus to change us.
- We look at biblical people as they look to Jesus.

Bible scholar James A. Sanders writes, “Most biblical texts must be read, not by looking in them for models for morality, but by looking in them for mirrors for identity.”<sup>1</sup> Find how you are like these men, but then find the Jesus into whose image God is conforming you (Rom. 8:29).

One risk in this study is that we would take the apostles away from the biblical text and twist them to fit our world. We will group them into categories of personality but are forced to read into the text to some extent. Whether or not we can do this with perfect accuracy, when we make sure to turn our attention to Jesus as He shapes these men, we are in a safe frame of mind.

---

<sup>1</sup> James A. Sanders, *From Sacred Story to Sacred Text: Canon as Paradigm*, Augsburg Fortress Press. 1987, 71.

## **Who Were the Apostles?**

We are going to look at twelve men called “apostles” in the gospels and Acts. While the Bible clearly says there were twelve, this makes choosing a list complicated. We have slightly different lists in different books but the number is always the same. The most likely explanation is that some of these men went by more than one name. We know this was a common practice at a time when there was not much variety in first names and last names were not as set as they are today. The simplest example is Matthew whose story is exactly like that of someone elsewhere called Levi. The details are a little tedious, but it is likely that the other Judas was also called Thaddeus and it is possible that Nathanael was also called Bartholomew.

There are other people that would come to be called apostles in the book of Acts. Matthias was chosen to replace Judas. Paul strongly asserted that he was an apostle. Even Paul’s traveling partner, Barnabas, was called an apostle. Ultimately, “apostle” means one who is sent. In that sense, there is more openness to a list of apostles, but in a strict sense, we are going to look at twelve men handpicked by Jesus to be part of His ministry in a fuller way than others who we would call “disciples” of Jesus.

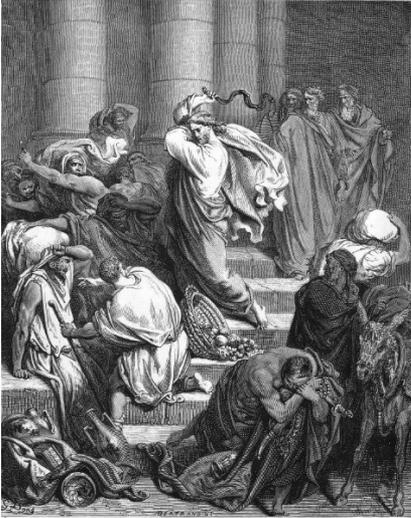
## **Study Format**

Each week we will gather everyone together in the sanctuary for worship and teaching on the week's topic. Then read through that week's lesson on your own and write answers to the discussion questions. Be sure to actually write down answers since this will best engage you in what we are learning. Also, your group may not have time to go through every question each week. Answering all of them on your own will ensure that you get the most out of the study, no matter what is covered in your small group. However, if you are unable to get to the homework one week, come to the group anyway.

Some weeks have more apostles than others. Do the questions for every apostle in the week's chapter.

There is a space at the end of this book for notes as well as prayer requests and contact info from your group. May you be a blessing to them.

# ONE: BOLD AND PASSIONATE



---

## PETER, JAMES AND JOHN, SIMON THE ZEALOT

**A**s men, we tend to respect boldness. We look up to history's leaders and risk-takers. Even those of us who are not particularly bold desire in some way to be respected and even feared.

Some men will find kindred spirits in men like Peter, James, John, and Simon. You love to have the best idea in a meeting, the best recommendations, the best jobs or roles at church. You like to be in charge and to be correct. Life is a contest and you do not want to lose. You care deeply about what is right and what is best as well as

## *Bold and Passionate*

what God and others think of you. In some ways, what stresses and concerns others is light to you – like a game. But you also find yourself weighed down with concern about things that, deep down, you know may not really matter. You often care more than others and work hard when you are committed to a cause. You take pride in your convictions and others know where you stand. You are not easily swayed away from what is right and your beliefs seem to just be common sense to you. At times you do not understand why others do not agree with them.

Perhaps your natural approach to difficult situations is to compete, take charge, conquer. You demand much of yourself, your family, and your work. You reflect God's glory in your pursuit of excellence. You are not easily hurt yet disrespect is like poison to you – you will get what you deserve.

It is no wonder that these apostles were leaders in the early church. As you look at these particular apostles, try to see their strengths and weaknesses and how Jesus molds both for His purposes.

## **Peter**



### **READ :**

*Matthew 4:18-20; John 6:66-69; Matthew 14:28-31; 16:13-19; Mark 8:31-33; John 18:10-11; Matthew 26:69-75; John 21:15-19; Acts 2:14-21; Galatians 2:11-14*

**P**eter's personality needs no explaining as you read about him in the Bible. It is clear that he was impulsive, impetuous, eager, and passionate. Peter was often putting his foot in his mouth, or worse. He was at times more foolish than the others and at times more insightful, at times more brave and at times more cowardly. There was nothing moderate about Peter.

Peter was ready to fight but also showed a great deal of fear – especially about the opinions of others. He denied knowing Jesus and pretended to agree with heretics in the early church so as to avoid their bad opinion of him. It is sometimes the most outspoken men who are hiding the greatest insecurities.

Those who are always ready to fight or flee need a Jesus who is always ready to forgive. Jesus restored Peter to purpose in the church community, using him as one of its earliest pillars. It takes God to aim a loose cannon.

***2 Corinthians 10:17***

*Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.*



## Bold and Passionate



*What strengths do you see in Peter? How are these the other side of the coin to his weaknesses?*

The selected passages on Peter above show the transformation he goes through. As with anyone, Peter is the same person before and after he follows Jesus, but, in another way, he is a totally different person.



*What difference do you see in Peter earlier in his life when he is learning from Jesus and later in his life when he is leading in the church?*



*Look at Matt. 26:69-75 and Gal. 2:11-14. How does Peter continue to struggle with the same weakness even after maturing and being filled with the Holy Spirit?*

## James and John



**READ :**

*Mark 1:19-20; Matthew 20:20-28; Luke 9:51-56*

**O**ur parents have an extremely strong influence on us. Even moreso, parents in the apostles' day were treated with much more deference and honor than in our culture. James and John were the sons of Zebedee and Jesus called them the "Sons of Thunder." Whether this is a reference to their father or their own personalities is somewhat unclear, but they were known for boldness. We do not actually get a picture of what their father Zebedee was like, but their mother could be described as a "tiger mom". In Matthew, she asks Jesus to honor her sons with the greatest positions in His Kingdom. In Mark's account, James and John ask for themselves. That's how it is with

### *Bold and Passionate*

driven parents – their children do not always know where their personalities and preferences end and those of their parents begin. It seems that James and John were raised to be bold and “go big or go home”. This parenting method worked: it was these two apostles who asked Jesus if they should call down heavenly fire on people who had disrespected them.

But we should pay attention to the fact that James and John, along with Peter, were often the only three apostles allowed to accompany Jesus on particularly meaningful occasions, including the Transfiguration. Jesus saw fit to pour extra time into these men, either because they needed extra molding or would have extra leadership responsibilities in the church, or – most likely- both.

### ***Ephesians 4:26***

*Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,*



*Whether or not your parents pushed you toward certain accomplishments, our culture definitely does. What does it mean for you to be driven for godly goals? See Heb. 10:24 and I Tim. 1:5; II Tim. 2:4; Phil. 3:8.*

## **Simon the Zealot**



**READ :**

*Matthew 8:5-13; John 4:1-10; John 8:1-11; John 2:13-17; Ephesians 4:26*

There is almost nothing written about Simon the Zealot in the Gospels. He is mentioned among the apostles in Matt. 10:4; Mk. 3:18; Lk. 6:15; and Acts 1:13. While we do not have a description of Simon interacting with Jesus and the other apostles, it is safe to include him in this chapter. Simon's nickname was "the zealot" which likely means one of two things. Either Simon was part of a Jewish political group that rebelled against Roman rule about thirty years after the life of Jesus, or that he was notably passionate about the Jewish law. This question can be a little technical but does not need to be addressed here. What is important for us is that Simon was passionate about his convictions to the point that his zeal became his reputation. Simon must have been the kind of person you were careful in conversations with -it was safer to talk about the weather. Things probably led quickly to controversy for him and he likely struggled with being judgmental. Simon probably had great difficulty understanding how Matthew, the tax collector and traitor working for Rome, could be part of the apostles. He likely had a hard time watching Jesus love Samaritans who were half-bred Jews with a false version of the Jewish religion.

*Bold and Passionate*

He probably did not easily accept that Jesus would forgive an adulterer or heal a Roman centurion's servant.

However, Simon was a man of great conviction. Whatever the full meaning of "zealot" was in Simon's life, he was clearly one who was not easily swayed. He stood up for what he believed in.

***Romans 10:2***

*For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.*



*When should we stand on our convictions and when should we expect Jesus to challenge them? Will you, like Simon, allow Him to do that?*



*Look at John 2:13-17 where Jesus shows godly zeal. How does Jesus' zeal compare to the kind of human zeal that Simon was known for?*



*Peter was bold and passionate because of his personality, James and John because of their parents, and Simon because of his principles. How is Jesus' Kingdom a greater motive for passion and boldness?*

## **Jesus Sends the Bold**

Boldness and passion are neither good nor bad qualities – what matters is whether we are bold for Jesus' Kingdom priorities or for our own. Jesus is bold and often offensive, but only to the prideful. To the humble He is the meek servant. If you can identify with men like Peter, James, John, and Simon, allow the Lord to mold you. He

*Bold and Passionate*

will humble you and make you compassionate. He will make you strong in His gentleness. He will use your passion and power for His purpose.

If you would like to look further at what the Bible says to this kind of person, see the following verses:

*I Sam. 17:32-37 / Prov. 19:2 / Jn. 2:15-17 / I Cor. 9:24-26 / I Cor. 15:54-57 / II Cor. 8:7 / Eph. 4:25 / Phil. 3:12-14 / II Tim. 1:12*

# TWO: CAUTIOUS AND CONTEMPLATIVE



---

## NATHANAEL, PHILIP, AND THOMAS

**I**t makes sense to us that Jesus would use men who are passionate and bold to spread His Kingdom. All they need is a little refining and they are ready to lead the Church into the sunset, come what may. But these are not the only sort of men Jesus chose as apostles. Perhaps less well known simply because they seem to have spoken up less often, are the more cautious cohort: Nathanael, Thomas, and Phillip.

Men often need to be cautious and contemplative. You might check the tire tread before your kids travel too

### *Cautious and Contemplative*

far, monitor budgets, or navigate office politics with strategy and prayer. While bold and passionate men tend to try to conquer a situation, this kind of man seeks to figure things out, ask questions, and form strategies. They are quick to listen and slower to speak.

But while cautious and contemplative people are less likely than the bold and passionate to blunder into things, they can also be stuck in pessimism, analysis, and doubt.

## **Nathanael**



**READ:**

*John 1:43-51*

When Philip introduced Nathanael to Jesus, Nathanael was skeptical. Jesus was from Nazareth, a microscopic village on a hill considered a backwater even by country Galileans.<sup>2</sup> Nathanael's mix of prejudice and hesitancy cause him to resist even interest in the person his brother called the Messiah. When Nathanael met Jesus, Jesus showed him how deeply and miraculously He knew him.

---

<sup>2</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 160.

### *Cautious and Contemplative*

Many years before this meeting, God met Jacob in a dream and introduced Himself by name. The dream involved Jacob seeing angels going up and down from heaven on a ladder and God standing at the top. God promised Jacob blessings beyond what he could count. Later, God wrestled with Jacob (Gen. 33:22-32) and changed Jacob's name to Israel, thus changing his identity. Jacob meant, "deceiver; grasper." "Israel" either means something like "who prevails over God" or "God prevails". Either way, Jacob was always trying to trick people into giving him what was not rightfully his. But when God overcame him and changed Jacob's name, He also began to bless him in ways Jacob's never imagined.

When Nathanael met Jesus, the story of Jacob loomed in the background. Jesus said that Nathanael was "an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit." What He was saying was that Nathanael was truly one of God's people who receives God's blessings under His authority rather than a "Jacob" – a deceiver and grasper. The cautious and contemplative person usually puts a high value on genuineness. They like things – and people – that make sense and are predictable. They want to be known for who they really are and want others to be honest and reliable. Sometimes this is behind their caution.

Cautious people often expect the worst, as we will see again with Thomas. Nathanael was highly skeptical of Jesus. Jesus promised more than this pessimist was ready for. The true Israelite had met the True Messiah.

Cautious and Contemplative

***Ephesians 3:20-21***

*Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*



*While God had to reign in Peter, James, and John, He needed to give Nathaniel a push toward a greater vision of what God would do through him. Which of these is He doing in you?*



*In what ways might you expect too little of Jesus?*

## **Philip**



**READ :**

*John 6:1-15; 14:8-14; Acts 8:4-40*

Philip was very excited about Jesus at first, but as time went on not everything made enough sense for him. When Jesus knew He was about to miraculously feed five thousand people, He tested Philip. When Jesus asked where they should buy bread for everyone, Philip had no solution – only further analysis of the problem. Andrew at least pointed out the meager assets available, but Phillip was stuck. Jesus knew the kind of person Philip was and knew that out of all the disciples, Philip needed to be challenged on his confidence in Jesus’ ability and generosity. Like Nathanael, Philip needed to be introduced to a bigger God who does more than what makes sense.

Later, when Jesus is preparing the apostles for His death, Philip spoke up with a request in the form of a suggestion: that Jesus would show them God the Father. Jesus’ reply was that Phillip did not know Him (Jn. 14:8-9). Philip seems to have liked things that make sense – and what Jesus was telling him did not. Jesus told him to believe He was one with God the Father based either on what Jesus said or what He did. Contemplative people sometimes do not believe their own eyes because what they see fails to line up with their theories. Philip needed to

### *Cautious and Contemplative*

know that the truth was not a proposition but a Person – one who invited Philip to know Him more completely.

After Jesus ascended to heaven, He left final instructions to His followers to invite all peoples to be His disciples. He told them to go to the Samaritans, Israel's ethno-religious rivals, and to the ends of the earth. This would have made no human sense, but it is Philip the logical apostle who first took Jesus at His word. Philip took the Gospel message to the Samaritans and to an Ethiopian (Acts 8:4-40). Philip was moved by the Holy Spirit to do what he did and, even more inexplicably, miraculously transported by the Spirit afterward. The very apostle who needed Jesus' plans to make sense experienced ministry in a way that only a spiritual person could accept.

### ***1 Corinthians 1:25***

*For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*



*Why do people want God to fit their theories and thinking?*

## Cautious and Contemplative



*How much do you require that Jesus makes logical sense?*



*Is your relationship with Jesus more personal or more academic?*

## Thomas



**READ :**

*John 11:7-16; 14:1-8; 20:24-29*

When Jesus informed the apostles that He would go south to the Jerusalem area where His enemies were rampant, Thomas said, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him.” Perhaps we could see Thomas as a

*Cautious and Contemplative*

straightforward pessimist, but he is at least a realist. The other apostles could not accept that Jesus was going to die, but Thomas took Jesus at His word. Going to Jerusalem was indeed very dangerous so that there is a brave fatalism to Thomas' statement.

However, Thomas later told Jesus that the apostles did not know where Jesus was going and did not know the way to get there. It seems Thomas understood Jesus' death only in part. Jesus replied that He is the way and, beyond that, He is the truth and life as well. Thomas, like Nathanael and Philip, was looking to understand the facts and the plan but needed to better know the person of Jesus.

In his most famous episode, the other disciples told Thomas about their encounter with the risen Lord. Thomas refused to believe until he had a first-hand experience of Jesus. Thomas got what he needed shortly after. Jesus told him that those who believe in His resurrection without the same kind of encounter are more blessed than Thomas. Yet Jesus knew what Thomas needed: not merely proof but encounter. Cautious and contemplative people want proof and are skeptical until they get it. There is a place for proof and evidence when we ask why we would put all our eggs in Jesus' basket. But there is a difference between knowing about Jesus and knowing Him personally.



***Jude 22***

*And have mercy on those who doubt;*

## Cautious and Contemplative



*Do you follow Jesus fatalistically, hopefully, or doubtfully?*



*How ready are you to follow a Jesus you do not see and who leads you into hazardous situations?*

## **Jesus Sends the Thinkers**

While bold men are more prominent, the contemplators have a special role in building His Kingdom. They ask the questions that are on everyone's mind – and some that no one else thought to bring up. They find deeper significance in things and treasure the truth and reliability. Men like this often want to be experts. The three most difficult words for them are “I don't know.” But God

### *Cautious and Contemplative*

will move them from being know-it-alls to being men who know Him – personally and experientially.

If the men of the first chapter are the “ready, fire, aim” sort, these men can say “ready, aim, aim, aim...” They are deliberate, sometimes to the point of being stuck in their own heads. Jesus gives them a push into their purpose. Thinking well is not enough; being an expert is not enough. God is going to do more than they understand or expect.

Doubt and deliberation are not a problem. God uses men with strategic minds who look at a matter from different vantage points. But sometimes questioning reveals a lack of trust in God. If this sounds like you, ask the Lord to reveal Himself more personally to you so that you can move from thinking well to living for His purpose.

If you would like to look further at what the Bible says to this kind of person, see the following verses:

*1Kings 3:9-12 / Psalms 24:4-5; 27:14 / Proverbs 19:2 /  
Matthew 22:37 / Mark 9:24 / John 11:17-37 / Acts 17:11 /  
Ephesians 5:15-16 / Jude 22*

# THREE: PRACTICAL AND PRODUCTIVE



---

MATTHEW, ANDREW, JUDAS

**A**re you reading this chapter at a time you pre-scheduled? Do you have both a pen and a highlighter with you? If so, you may resonate with the apostles in this chapter. Some of them were the type to have everything organized, planned, and packaged.

We joke – or maybe really believe – that women are organized and men are not. But that is not reality. Many

### *Practical and Productive*

men are highly disciplined, organized men who thrive on achieving their goals. Crossing something off a to-do list gives them great satisfaction. Their garages are immaculate, they know when their tires will need to be rotated, and nothing makes them more frustrated than when their wife forgot to put something on the shared calendar.

There is a great giftedness in this, even a certain pride in being the most squared away. Many men who are highly practical and productive did not start life this way but found the beauty in it later in life. The world they have crafted for themselves reflects on them – if things are in order, it is a sign that the man is in order. His well-ordered kingdom provides honor.

Living this way is also seems to provide safety. A man who can control his world – and perhaps control himself and others – feels that all is well. There is good in this – God is a God not of confusion but of peace (I Cor. 14:33). We reflect Him when we bring order to our lives, our households, and our jobs. Being practical serves others who may not be natural problem-solvers.

But there is a limit to how much we can control. Jesus led the apostles into unknown territory, He changed plans on them, He seemed to squander valuable time and did not always stay somewhere long enough to meet people's expectations.

## **Matthew**



**READ :**

*Matthew 9:9-13*

Matthew does not feature prominently in the biblical accounts of the disciples. We know that he was a Jewish tax collector, collecting taxes for the Roman occupiers. Matthew would have been seen as a traitor to his people and was likely stealing extra taxes for himself. This explains the animosity the Pharisees show toward him.

The account of Jesus calling Matthew to follow Him is very straightforward and simple. Jesus told Matthew to follow Him, and Matthew left everything to do so.

“Everything” for Matthew was a lot. He had a lucrative job and the protection of the Romans. His pragmatism and organization had made him very comfortable. But clearly something about Jesus beckoned Matthew in a way that riches and worldly common sense never had. Matthew had Jesus over to his house and invited his fellow tax collectors to meet Jesus.

Jesus responded to the Pharisees that He had come to call the sick, not the well. Those who are very practical and productive can sometimes use these attributes as a distraction from their true brokenness. Matthew navigated his way into power and wealth, but Jesus called him to more than he could ever get for himself.

***Jeremiah 9:23–24***

*Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.”*



*What are some pros and cons of being successful as the world defines success?*



*Do you manage your spiritual life separately from how you manage your life in this world?*

## Andrew



### READ :

*John 1:35-41; 6:1-14; 12:20-22*

Andrew was a go-getter. He was a student of John the Baptist and made the transition to following Jesus very early on. Once he found Jesus, he believed Him to be the long-awaited Messiah and quickly told his brother Peter. When Philip had no answer on how to feed the five thousand people with Jesus, it was Andrew who looked to what assets were available. He found a boy with a few fish and some bread and brought him to Jesus. When some Gentiles wanted to see Jesus, Philip wasn't sure what to do, but Andrew brought them to see Jesus. Andrew was always going to get people. He was probably the most productive apostle early on.

Andrew is one of the apostles who we never see Jesus correct or rebuke. While we can assume that Jesus worked to mold Andrew, we have a good example of someone who is productive in spiritual matters. Andrew was no busy-body, he was absorbed with people who needed Jesus.

### ***Matthew 4:19***

*And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."*



## Practical and Productive



*Take an inventory of your time. What are your top three time categories? What does that say about your priorities?*



*What would being spiritually productive mean in your life now?*

## Judas



**READ :**

*John 12:1-8; 13:21-30; Matthew 26:14-16*

It may seem strange to include Judas anywhere in this study, but it is essential that we do. Remember from the introduction that we do not necessarily look at biblical

### *Practical and Productive*

people in the hopes that we will become more like them. Rather, we see how we may already be like them, and we look to Jesus to change us.

Judas is the only apostle with a defined job: he was the group treasurer. Judas was probably good with details. He was at least very trusted in his role – the other apostles thought nothing of it when Judas left the Passover meal immediately after Jesus identified him as Jesus' betrayer. They just assumed he was tending to some important business because he took the group's money bag with him. That money bag probably never left Judas' sight. We see that while Judas had a reputation of responsibility, the money he managed began to possess him. In every scene in which Judas appears, money pulled his heart away until the devil took him.

Judas is the strongest biblical example of someone who seemed all put together and fooled everyone but Jesus. Many men in church appear to be what they are not – and have deceived even themselves. The other apostles viewed Judas through human eyes and saw only a practical and productive member of the group. But as a practical – and not spiritual - person, Judas saw Jesus through only human eyes and saw a means to an end.

We saw that Jesus never rebuked Andrew. He also never really rebuked Judas. Rather, Jesus allows him to go about the business of betraying Him. There is a lot of theological discussion to be had about Judas' relationship with Jesus but that is not the purpose of this study. Rather,

*Practical and Productive*

we should look at Judas here and take solemn warning that we can get so close to Jesus and yet be so far away.

***James 4:4***

*You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*



*What is the difference between loving the things of the world and loving the people of the world?*



*To what extent does your reputation and role take you away from loving Jesus?*

*Practical and Productive*

If you would like to look further at what the Bible says to this kind of person, see the following verses:

*Psalms 8:6 / Proverbs 18:9 / Ecclesiastes 3:22 / John 13:17 / I Corinthians 14:40 / II Corinthians 8:7 / I Thessalonians 5:12-13 / II Thessalonians 3:11 / James 2:14-17*

# FOUR: INCONSPICUOUS AND INDISPENSABLE



---

## JAMES, THADDEUS

**T**he Bible is very focused in the way it tells stories. It gives the highlights without covering every detail or every person involved. There is a set of apostles that we only know about because they are included in the lists of apostles in the gospels and Acts. There are many people with significant stories who remain anonymous. On the other hand, we have these apostles' names but not

### *Inconspicuous and Indispensable*

their stories. What does this mean about them? Nothing in particular – their part in Jesus’ ministry simply did not serve the focus of the biblical writers. It certainly does not mean that they were insignificant. This second James is traditionally referred to as “James the Less” in comparison to James the “Son of Thunder”. But there is nothing lesser about any of the apostles. They equally helped give birth the Church and gave their lives for it. Their names will be equally written on the foundations of the New Jerusalem.

You may be a background player in this life – most are. Some men genuinely thrive in this sort of role and actively avoid prominence. Others languish, wondering why they are not being allowed to fulfill their “true potential”.

While some are inconspicuous because God has assigned them a less-prominent role for a time, we need to be careful about hiding from roles that require responsibility and transparency. Some men prefer to toil in the background because it is safer. There is less criticism and failure is less visible. Likewise, we may resist emerging from the shadows because then we would have to really connect with those who need us and let them know who we really are. Please ask the Holy Spirit to show you why you remain behind the scenes. Is it His doing or yours?

All men have been designed for purpose, honor, and glory. The first man was made to share purpose with God by naming animals and extending the garden God had started. He was made higher than animals and God honored him with His presence and purpose. One day in

### *Inconspicuous and Indispensable*

our future, God will give Christ's honor to all (see Rom. 8:16-18). Men live in between these two times of glory. We may not mind doing small things, but we know we are meant for greatness.

If this seems like you, and it will be at some time or another, you might be inconspicuous, but you are also indispensable. There is nothing insignificant about loving your wife as Christ loves the Church, even if it appears to be nothing more than folding laundry. There is nothing insignificant about raising your children to know God's love, even if it appears to be nothing more than getting to know them over ice cream. There is nothing insignificant about building Christ's Kingdom, even if it appears to be nothing more than praying, writing a check, or picking up trash someone left in your favorite seat in church. Like the apostles, you share the very purpose of Christ Himself. You are sent to bring some of all nations into His Kingdom. You will be glorified with Him. You will be like Him (I Jn. 3:2). There is nothing insignificant about that. Do what is in front of you as unto the Lord, not as a means to promotion. Submit to His will and He will send you to people and places you never expected.

**Matthew 25:21**

*His master said to him, “Well done, good and faithful servant.  
You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much.  
Enter into the joy of your master.”*



**READ :**

*Matthew 29:16-20; Mark 9:35; Luke 1:52; John 20:21; I Thessalonians 4:11; Revelation 21:14*



*Who is someone quietly faithful to the Lord’s business? What can you learn from them?*

## Inconspicuous and Indispensable



*What appears insignificant in your life but is actually part of God's purpose?*



*What if nobody ever gives you the honor you would like for your work?*

## *Inconspicuous and Indispensable*



*What in general do you know God has for all of us to do? What in specific do you think He has for you?*

## **A Closing Note**

Hopefully at the end of this study you have seen that God uses men of various personalities, experiences, strengths, and perspectives. There is no singular model of the kind of man Jesus uses for His purpose. Simply put, if you have placed all your trust in Christ, He is already sending you where you need to be. Will you go?

Every strength you have hides a weakness underneath. Likewise, the weakness you cannot seem to manage is the thing God will mold and use. While this process continues throughout your life, God has purpose for you now. As Christ was sent by the Father, He sent the apostles and now sends you. Will you follow His purpose when it does not make sense, advance your priorities, or gain you glory? Will you, like the apostles, take up His Great Commandment to love others as you love yourself? What about His Great Commission, to take the gospel to those who did not get the same chance you did to meet Jesus?

## **Small Group Names and Contact Info**

---

---

---

---

---







