

### Jesus Calls the Twelve Disciples

#### Mark 3:13-21

Mark 3:13-21 – *“And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. <sup>14</sup> Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, <sup>15</sup> and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons: <sup>16</sup> Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter; <sup>17</sup> James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, “Sons of Thunder”; <sup>18</sup> Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Canaanite; <sup>19</sup> and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. And they went into a house. <sup>20</sup> Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. <sup>21</sup> But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, “He is out of His mind.””*

#### Background Notes

The mountain where the call of the twelve disciples took place (v13) was one of the hills in the Galilee area, probably not too far from the Sea of Galilee. There are many hills and mountains in the Galilee area. On this mountain the Lord selected twelve disciples, or apostles, out of the many people who were following him. Verse 20 and Mark 2:15 indicate that Jesus had many followers. So, while there were many followers, twelve of these followers were hand-picked by our Lord to be his apostles.

They were all men, and they were all young. They were not a bunch of old men, as is sometimes pictured in paintings of the Lord and His apostles - most of them were probably in their 20s. In many ways Christianity emerged out of Judaism as a youth movement. The early Church was not composed primarily of gray-haired people (as in many churches today).

The listing of the twelve disciples (v16-19) begins with Peter and ends with Judas Iscariot. This is also true of the parallel accounts where we have a listing of the disciples - Matthew 10 and Luke 6. In Hebrew *Iscariot* means *of Kerioth*. *Kerioth Hezron* was a town in southern Judah. When we compare the lists of the twelve disciples in Matthew 10, Luke 6 and here in Mark 3, we see that Bartholomew was also called Nathaniel. Thaddaeus was also called Libias or Judas (the other Judas—not Judas Iscariot).

To James and John the Lord gave the nickname Boanerges – that’s a Hebrew idiom for *Sons of Thunder*. Possibly that this nickname described their temperament, because in John 9:54 we read that James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven upon the Samaritans who would not receive them! John later became known as the “disciple of love” - it’s amazing to see the change that can take place in a person’s temperament when he meets and walks with the Lord!

Two Simons are listed: Simon Peter, and Simon the Canaanite or Zealot. The Lord changed Simon Peter's name from Simon to Peter – Peter or *petros*, meaning a *stone*. It possibly had to do with his role as leader in the early church. Simon the Canaanite or Zealot was definitely called a Zealot in Luke 6:15. Some commentators feel that the term “zealot” indicates that Simon had an intense zeal for God's honor. However the Zealots were a political group composed of fanatical nationalists, and Simon was probably a member of that extreme nationalistic group when the Lord called him. If he was a fanatical nationalist, it shows what the Lord is able to do in bringing together a team of men from extremely diverse backgrounds.

Think of the differences, for example, between Matthew and Simon. The Lord teamed up Matthew, who was collecting taxes for the Roman Empire from his own people – with Simon, who was zealously contending for Jewish nationalism. These guys would have been at each other's throats if it hadn't been for the Lord's intervention in their lives! Apart from Christ, that's like teaming up the most liberal Democrat with the most conservative Republican. Jesus Christ is able to bring very diverse people together -then and now!

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. God's call to discipleship is based on character, not on credentials.

The twelve disciples that Jesus called were twelve common and ordinary young men. They were not trained in the “Hebrew Higher Schools of Learning” or “Jerusalem University” of that day. They didn't have the credentials of formal training in oratory or unusually high IQs. They were just average people when it came to credentials - but they had the character that God was looking for. They were *teachable*, they were *trustworthy*, and they were *willing to follow*.

The disciples were not chosen for their earthly accomplishments and credentials. They included fishermen, a tax collector, a Zealot, and some unknowns. They were chosen for what they could become through association with the Lord Jesus.

And the same is true today. God is not looking for impressive credentials. God is looking for common, ordinary, run-of-the-mill people who are teachable, trustworthy and willing to follow Him fully. Do you qualify to be a disciple?

### 2. There are three basic qualifications for effective Christian service.

Look at verses 14-15 again and we will see the three-fold purpose of the Lord in calling the twelve disciples:

- a. That they might be with Him
- b. That He might send them out to preach
- c. That they might have power to heal sicknesses and cast out demons

Represented here are three basic requirements for effective Christian service:

**To be with Him.** If we're going to be effective in Christian service, we need to spend *time with the Lord*. We need to spend more time communicating with Him through studying the Word of God and prayer.

**To preach.** We need to be willing to verbalize the message of Christ. Christian service is not very effective if it only helps people with their physical problems, but it doesn't take care of the spiritual need by communicating the message of the gospel. We don't have to be great preachers or gifted in public ministry, but we do need to be willing to verbalize the Gospel. That's certainly a basic requirement for effective Christian service.

**To be empowered.** The power of God is available to us for effective Christian service. The twelve disciples were given power to heal sicknesses and cast out demons. That same power of God is available to us to effectively use whatever spiritual gift the Lord has given us. And we all do have at least one spiritual gift. 1 Peter 4:10 says that each one of us has received a special gift. We will be empowered to use these gifts for God's glory as we walk with the Lord.

## Practical Applications

### 1. Don't be surprised if a "Judas" turns up in your ministry.

Judas did not start out as a betrayer--he *turned* traitor. At the beginning he was just as teachable and trustworthy and willing to follow as the others. But then he changed. He began to steal from the moneybox that contained the common funds for the ministry of the Lord and His disciples (John 12:6). And eventually he betrayed the Lord. Judas should be a warning to us to make sure of our salvation – to make sure that we're truly believers, not just temporarily professing faith.

Judas should also be a warning to us of the possibility of a "traitor" popping up in a ministry in which we're involved. It can happen when and where you would *least* expect. Who would have thought Judas, of all people, would have turned out to be a traitor? He was hand-picked by the Lord Himself. He had apparently won the trust of the other disciples, because he was given the responsibility of taking care of the funds for the group.

The same problem can happen today. Someone you least expect may turn out not to be an unbeliever, and cause a lot of trouble for your fellowship group or your ministry. Unbelievers can actually tear down your church or ministry—even bring legal suit against you and the church you're involved in! Years ago a young man worked with us and supported us in the ministry, but then he joined a cult. He ended up trying to tear down the very ministry with which he had previously been involved! Although he appeared to be a believer, he had never been a Christian at all. Don't be surprised if a "Judas" turns up in your ministry.

**2. Don't be surprised if people label you a "religious fanatic."**

Verses 20-21: *"Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, 'He is out of His mind.'" Here we see that the Lord's own family thought He was losing His mind because He was so involved in His ministry. They wanted to take Him home and calm Him down, thinking that He was too much of a religious fanatic!*

The same thing can happen to us today. If you're really involved in following the model of our Lord Jesus in ministry, it's possible that people will label you a religious fanatic. Oh, it's OK to be a fanatic when it comes to sports or to hobbies - but it's not OK if you appear to be over-involved with Jesus. As far as the world is concerned, if you're an avid fan for Christ, you have somehow lost your marbles and need to be de-programmed, or you need psychiatric help!

Well, don't be turned off by this attitude. You can expect it, because it happened to our Lord Jesus. His own family thought He was out of His mind because He was so involved. They thought He needed some R&R and some counsel. This can happen to us as well, if we're involved and following the model of our Lord Jesus in ministry.

Don't be surprised if people label you as a "religious fanatic."