

## THE TWELVE (6)

### Learn to Suffer for Jesus

#### A. Introduction

1. Who were the Twelve?

The Twelve were men who were called to believe in Jesus and to follow Him.

The Twelve were men who were chosen from a larger group of disciples to be apostles and were given what they needed to do this role.

2. What do we learn from The Twelve about what it means to be disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Andrew taught us that disciples of Jesus introduce people to Jesus.

Simon Peter taught us that disciples of Jesus are changed by Jesus to be like Jesus.

John taught us that disciples of Jesus love the truth about Jesus.

#### B. Meet James

1. James was the elder brother of John, the son of Zebedee and Salome.

"Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him." (Matthew 4:21-22)

"Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs." (Mark 15:40-41)

"Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons." (Matthew 27:56)

James, along with his brother, worked with Andrew and Simon as fishermen.

"For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners." (Luke 5:9-10)

2. James was one of Jesus' disciples.

He was called by Jesus to follow Him.

"When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him." (Mark 1:19-20)

He was one of the Twelve chosen by Jesus to be His apostles.

"These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John." (Matthew 10:2)

3. James was one of three disciples to be present at some key moments in Jesus' ministry.

He witnessed Jesus raise Jairus' daughter from the dead.

"He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child's

father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished." (Mark 5:37-42)

He witnessed Jesus' glory in the transfiguration.

"After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.) Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" (Mark 9:2-7)

He witnessed Jesus pray in the Garden of Gethsemane.

"They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch." (Mark 14:32-34)

He also was one of the four to hear Jesus' teaching on the Mount of Olives.

"As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?" (Mark 13:3-4)

#### 4. Of the three disciples in Jesus' inner circle, James is the least familiar to us.

Compared to Peter and John, we know very little about James.

One thing we do know is that James wanted to be first – James was ambitious.

"Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?" "Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first." (Matthew 19:27-30)

The mention of thrones caught the attention of James and his brother John, that they enlisted their mother's help, to ask for the most prominent of the thrones.

"Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favour of him. "What is it you want?" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom." (Matthew 20:20-21)

James maybe thought he deserved this honour, after all, he was one of the first disciples to follow Jesus, and was in the inner circle of three. He was also the elder brother of a prominent family.

James and John's request didn't go down well with the rest of the disciples.

"When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers." (Matthew 20:24)

"Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? But I am among you as one who serves. You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Luke 22:24-30)

This wasn't the first time James and John had made a rash request to Jesus.

"As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" But Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they went to another village." (Luke 9:51-56)

James, however, would be first in another way.

#### 6. What do we learn from James about what it means to be disciples of the Lord Jesus?

Disciples of Jesus must learn to suffer for Jesus.

### **C. James needed to learn to suffer for Jesus**

#### 1. James needed to learn that Jesus would suffer before He entered His glory.

Before James (along with John) made his request, Jesus had said to them, that he was going to Jerusalem to die.

"Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!" (Matthew 20:17-19)

But James had not yet understood this.

"You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "We can," they answered." (Matthew 20:22)

James expresses a willingness to share Jesus' fate.

He had not understood the uniqueness of the cup that Jesus was about to drink – only Jesus could drink the cup of God's judgment to save people from their sins.

James needed to be saved himself, so how could he save others?

#### 2. James needed to learn that he would suffer before he entered Jesus' glory.

"Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father." (Matthew 20:20-23)

Jesus makes it clear to James that he will suffer before he entered Jesus' glory.

As for who is going to sit on his right and his left, that had already been decided by His Father.

#### 3. James needed to learn that his ambition in life should be costly service that involves suffering.

"Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:24-28)

Serving others was what Jesus' whole life was about and His greatest act of service was His death as a ransom for many.

Whilst the form of service for James would be different, the attitude of "not to be served, but to serve" needed to be the same, however costly it would be.

#### 4. James learned these lessons.

The only time James is mentioned by himself is the account of his death.

"It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword." (Acts 12:1-2)

He was the first of the twelve to be killed for his faith, and the only apostle (other than Judas) whose death is actually recorded in Scripture.

James willingly died serving others and took his place in glory.

"I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no-one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields – and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life." (Mark 10:29-30)

*"And concerning this James, Clement, in the seventh book of his Hypotyposes, relates a story which is worthy of mention; telling it as he received it from those who had lived before him. He says that the one who led James to the judgment-seat, when he saw him bearing his testimony, was moved, and confessed that he was himself also a Christian. They were both therefore, he says, led away together; and on the way he begged James to forgive him. And he, after considering a little, said, Peace be with you, and kissed him. And thus they were both beheaded at the same time." (Eusebius)*

#### **D. Disciples must learn to suffer for Jesus**

##### 1. If we want to share in Christ's glory, we must be prepared to share in Christ's suffering.

"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed." (1 Peter 4:12-13)

##### 2. Have we learned that costly service involving suffering is a normal part of the Christian life?