

THE TWELVE (7)

Never Stop Learning about 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.

James taught us that disciples of Jesus learn to suffer for Jesus.

B. Meet Philip

1. Which Philip are we talking about?

There are two different Philip's in the Bible who were followers of the Lord Jesus.

Both are mentioned in the book of Acts.

One is Philip the apostle.

"Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers." (Acts 1:12-14)

The other is Philip the deacon and evangelist.

"Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism." (Acts 6:3-5)

"On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria... Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there." (Acts 8:1, 4-5)

The Philip we are interested in is Philip the apostle.

Virtually everything we know about this Philip is found in John's Gospel.

2. Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter.

"Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida." (John 1:44)

He was possibly from a family of Hellenistic Jews on account of his Greek name.

Most likely he was a fisherman.

"Afterwards Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathaniel from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." (John 21:1-3)

3. Philip was one of Jesus' disciples.

He was called by Jesus to follow Him.

"The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." (John 1:43)

He was one of the Twelve chosen by Jesus to be His apostles – and is placed fifth in the list of 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; Philip and Bartholomew." (Matthew 10:2-3)

4. What do we learn from Philip about what it means to be disciples of the Lord Jesus?

Disciples of Jesus never stop learning about Jesus.

C. Philip never stopped learning about Jesus

1. When Jesus called Philip to follow Him, Philip recognised that Jesus was the Messiah he had been waiting for.

Jesus is the Saviour and King, God had promised in the Old Testament (Law and Prophets).

"Philip found Nathaniel and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathaniel asked. "Come and see," said Philip." (John 1:45-46)

Philip knew that Jesus was the Messiah but it soon became clear that there was much that he did not know about Jesus.

On four occasions Philip appears in the middle of the action, and each time he learns something new about his Saviour.

2. Philip needed to learn that Jesus was all-knowing (omniscient).

As soon as Jesus found Philip, Philip found Nathaniel and brought him to meet Jesus.

This encounter between Nathaniel and Jesus revealed to Philip that Jesus was all-knowing.

"When Jesus saw Nathaniel approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." "How did you know me?" Nathaniel asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." Then Nathaniel declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." (John 1:47-49)

Philip must have wondered how Jesus could have known that about Nathaniel.

He learned that Jesus was omniscient.

3. Philip needed to learn that Jesus was all-powerful (omnipotent).

Philip probably had the job of arranging meals for Jesus and His disciples.

Yet there was an occasion when Philip wished that he didn't have this responsibility.

"When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming towards him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" (John 6:5-7)

Philip could not see how this could be done – feeding the crowd was an impossible task.

From a human perspective, he was right.

But Philip should have known better – he would have been present in Cana to see Jesus turn water into wine.

He had not yet learned that Jesus was omnipotent – that nothing was too hard for Him.

"Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten." (John 6:10-13)

Philip learned that Jesus was all-powerful.

4. Philip needed to learn that Jesus was for everyone.

Philip may have been quick to introduce Nathaniel to Jesus, but he was slow to introduce a group of Greeks to Jesus.

These Greeks came first to Philip probably because of his Greek name.

"Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." (John 12:20-21)

Philip was unsure what to do.

"Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus." (John 12:22)

Why?

Philip was not yet convinced that the gospel was for everyone.

He had only heard Jesus talk about being for the Jews.

"These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel." (Matthew 10:5-6)

"Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon possession." Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." (Matthew 15:21-24)

So Jesus taught Philip and the disciples that He would save people by dying.

"Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground, and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." (John 12:23)

He also taught them that He would save people from the whole world.

"But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die." (John 12:32-33)

Philip learned that Jesus is for everyone.

5. Philip needed to learn that Jesus was divine.

After everything Philip had seen and heard, He still hadn't learned that Jesus was God.

"Jesus answered, "I am the way the truth and life. No-one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered: "Don't you know me Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"?" (John 14:6-9)

Philip had not yet grasped that Jesus is God and because He is, He perfectly reflects His Father.

6. From the moment Jesus called him, Philip never stopped learning about Jesus.

Each incident that exposed Philip's lack of understanding was an opportunity for him to learn.

And he continued to do so until as tradition suggests, he died by crucifixion upside-down in Hierapolis.

D. Disciples never stop learning about Jesus

1. As we continue to read God's Word and hear it preached we will discover new things about the Lord Jesus or deepen our understanding of who He is and what He has done.

However some truths about the Lord Jesus found in the Bible we won't fully learn until we experience them to be true.

There will be occasions when it will be clear that we have yet to understand and these times are opportunities for us to learn.

2. Are we committed to and continuing to grow in our understanding of Jesus?