**“Twelve Ordinary Men”**

How the master shaped his disciples for greatness

and what he wants to do with you.

*When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. –Acts 4:13*

**Bible Storying Guide**

**By**

**Rev. Brandon K. Dirks**

**Christ Church UMC, Louisville, Kentucky**

**Based on the book, “Twelve Ordinary Men” by John MacArthur**

**First Created for Summer Ironman 2019**

**What you need to know about Bible-Storying**

Bible-Storying is for small groups. Bible Study is for classes.

Bible-Storying is about formation. Bible study is about information.

Bible-Storying is about discovering what the Holy Spirit is stirring inside, and finding ways to respond.

Bible-storing is *not* a curriculum. It is a guide. It is a method. The goal of curriculum is to *teach information*. The goal of a small group is to *become* more like Jesus. This ‘bible-storying’ guide is a simple method that gives every participant an opportunity to engage the scripture in a deeply personal way, allowing God’s Word to be a means of grace in their lives. By following the storytelling method below, you will quickly discover that you don’t have to be an expert to tell a story. By simply telling the story, asking questions, and committing to this process–everyone will know the Bible *and* each other better!

Once you get comfortable with this method, you can apply it to any source – scripture, books, poetry, music, etc. Because the key to this method is not by presenting information to be learned, but in the kind of questions asked.

**Here’s how it works…**

1. Each week, assign someone to learn next week’s story. (Learn so the story is told without reading it, but not word for word.)
2. While the storyteller tells the story, the group reads along in their Bibles to see if the storyteller has missed anything.
3. When finished, the group rebuilds the story, pointing out anything that was missed.
4. Then the storyteller randomly asks someone to retell the story back to everyone without reading. (No one knows who will be asked, so everyone pays attention.) Statistics tell us that the majority of us actually learn better by retelling a story. As the story is told and retold, your group will be better able to understand and apply the heart of the story.
5. Once the story has been told, rebuilt, and told again, this week’s facilitator asks questions to help participants intersect scripture with her or his life. These questions are designed to be answered with a story from one’s own life through the lens of the scripture story.
6. Then, each person identifies application points for their *own* life, and the group helps each person live it out.

**“Twelve Ordinary Men”**

Based on the book by John MacArthur

The original disciples were twelve ordinary men. And look what Jesus did with them! This guide will help participants explore these ordinary men and reflect on what God could be doing in each of us. Snippets of scripture are included with each session, and it may be beneficial to include reading more of the context. In addition, many sessions only include a few stories about the apostle and your group may be interested in searching and finding the other stories as well. Participants do NOT need to read the book, “Twelve Ordinary Men,” in order to participate in this small group. But, if your group is looking to learn more about who the disciples were according to the author, it may be more beneficial to shape it as a study instead of a small group because it is rich with information. Consider also purchasing the workbook to help. However, if your focus is to help your small group grasp how these disciples could inspire them to allow the Master to shape them and be used by them, then this small group approach might be a great start. **Small Group Ground Rules**

This is the “operating system” of a small group. This is the most important piece to building an authentic community. These rules provide the boundaries of a space that is safe to be real, authentic and vulnerable so that Holy Spirit can do its work. We live, act, and talk differently in a small group! Developing this kind of environment takes time, team-work, and a lot of trust.

At your first gathering, go over these *in detail* and why they are important. Make sure they understand and agree to them. Remind them *each week* of the rules and how to maintain them. Finally, it is *critical* that you ensure the group follows these rules. Interrupt any conversation in order to remind them to adjust their talk.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *1.* ***Safe Environment*** *– This is a judgment free zone! Feel safe to be your authentic self.* | *6.* ***Pause****—Allow a pause after someone finishes to provide room to consider what was said before responding.* |
|  |  |
| *2.* ***Accountability****—Everyone’s help is expected to make this safe.* | *7.* ***Silence****—Expect and welcome silence. Consider it sacred space for God to speak.* |
|  |  |
| *3.* ***Confidentiality****—What is said in the group stays in the group, unless permission is given.* | *8.* ***Respect****—Don’t try to solve or fix each other. Just receive what they share (even if you disagree) as a gift. Offer encouragement, speak truth, point to Jesus.* |
|  |  |
| *4.* ***“I” statements****—Speak for yourself-your beliefs, feelings, responses. It’s easy to talk about the issues of others, but we want you to put* ***yourself*** *on the table.  Use “I” statements rather than “them,” “the church,” “us,” “we,” “you.”* | *9.* ***Honor****-- Honor the different ways God works in individuals. Resist the temptation to console or offer condolences, as it may lead some to stop sharing, or try to fix.* |
|  |  |
| *5.* ***Listen****—Try to avoid thinking about what you are going to say next. Avoid “cross-talk” and interrupting.* | *10.* ***Sharing****—Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Recognize that all group members are invited to share aloud only what and when they are ready to share.* |

Twelve Ordinary Men

**Week #1: Common Men, Uncommon Calling**

**Welcome** **Facilitator**

**PRAYER Facilitator**

**Five Minute Get-to Know Each Other** **Facilitator**

* Warm-Up question: (5 mins!!): Introduce yourself and one thing about yourself that most people might be surprised to hear.

**Small Groups Guidelines -- Reminder** **Facilitator**

*For our time together, we are using scripture as our foundation, and each other as our method. As we digest the scripture together, we expect that God will reveal through his Spirit the truth each of us need right now in our life. This can be quite difficult, so we have set some guidelines that provide a safe place for our time together.*

**Set the vision of the theme:** Twelve Ordinary Men

*What is most amazing about the disciples is that Jesus selected them AT ALL. If you look closely, one stunning fact emerges: they were all ordinary. But under Jesus’ touch and teaching, they become a force that forever changed the world. Imagine, if Christ can accomplish His purpose through the lives of common men like these, imagine what he has in store for you. One key characteristic that stands out: these men were available and obedient. You being here today remind me of these same characteristics. Each week, we will take a look at different disciples.*

**Set the scene of today’s Scripture(s)**: Common Men, Uncommon Calling

*Look at who Jesus did NOT select: No rabbi, no scribe, no Pharisee, no priest, no one from the religious establishment, no recognized religious leader. Was this a judgment against institutional Judaism? God chose the humble, the lowly, the meek, the weak, because then there will never be any question about the source of power when their lives change the world! It’s so God, and God alone, receives the glory!*

**Today’s Story**

*As we read both scriptures, try to envision what Jesus may have seen in these 12 men that he wanted them to be his disciples.*

* Read Mark 3:13-19
* Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-29

**Quiet Reflection** *(2 minutes of silence…listen to the Holy Spirit is telling you, by reflecting on…*

**…1 Cor 1:26…reflect on what you were when you were called…**

**Small Group Talk**

* What qualified the twelve to be selected by Jesus?
* How does the twelve’s “remarkable ordinariness” impact the way you think of *yourself* in God’s eyes?
* In what ways have you used your ‘unworthiness’ or ‘ordinariness’ as an excuse in following Jesus?
* What motivates you to seek Jesus?
* Why do you suppose Jesus chose *these* twelve men? Why do you suppose Jesus chooses you?
* What was Jesus’ strategy to shape his ordinary disciples for greatness? What does Jesus want to do with you?

**Mark 3:13-19**

**13**Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. **14**He appointed twelve[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+3%3A13-19&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24303a)] that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach **15**and to have authority to drive out demons. **16**These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter), **17**James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means “sons of thunder”), **18**Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot **19**and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

**1 Corinthians 1:26-29 New International Version (NIV)**

**26**Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. **27**But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. **28**God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, **29**so that no one may boast before him.

Twelve Ordinary Men

***Week 2: “Peter—The Apostle with the Foot-Shaped Mouth***

**Welcome** **Facilitator**

**PRAYER Facilitator**

**Five Minute Get-to Know Each Other** **Facilitator**

Warm-Up question: (5 mins!!): Introduce yourself and one thing that you are really hard on yourself about.

**Small Groups Guidelines -- Reminder** **Facilitator**

**Set the vision of the theme:** Twelve Ordinary Men

**Set the scene of today’s Scripture(s)**: Peter

*Peter’s name is mentioned in the Gospels more than another name beside Jesus. Peter is aggressive, bold, and outspoken. He has a habit of revving his mouth while his brain is in neutral. He is the apostle with the foot shaped mouth. His nature is brash, vacillating, and undependable. He is impetuous and impulsive. Peter makes great promises and can’t follow through. He lunges whole heartedly into something, and bails out without finishing. But look what Jesus does with him. 1) He renames him Peter (the rock) as a constant reminder of what he should be. Calls him Simon when we acts like his old self. Calls him the Rock when commending him for acting the way he ought to act. So, if Jesus can take a guy like this with these raw materials and turns him into the leader of the disciples, imagine what Jesus can do if you place yourself in his hands….*

**Today’s Story**

*As we read these scriptures, try to envision what Jesus may have seen in Peter that he could develop into one of the most effective leaders.*

* Read Matthew 16:16-23
* Read John 13:36-38
* Read John 21:15-17

**Quiet Reflection** *(2 minutes of silence…listen to the Holy Spirit is telling you, by reflecting on…* ***Peter’s character.***

**Small Group Table Talk**

* What strikes you as a significant about Peter?
* Did you have any nicknames? What, if any, does your name or nickname say about who you are?

* Most Christians are probably like Peter because they are both spiritual and carnal. Which of your behaviors and attitudes fit in each category?
* In what setting would you be viewed as a leader? When are you most like Peter?
* Leaders like Peter are not just born, they are shaped by circumstances and experiences of life. What circumstances or experiences have YOU had that God is using to shape you?
* Matthew 16:23 must have been a tough word for Peter to hear. Could Jesus have said something similar in your life? Explain.
* If Jesus chose Peter to be the leader of his disciples, what might Jesus have in store for you?

**Closing Facilitator**

**Matthew 16:16-23 (NIV)**

16 Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

17 Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” 20 Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

21 From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

22 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”

23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

**John 13:36-38 (NIV)**

36 Simon Peter asked him, “Lord, where are you going?”

Jesus replied, “Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.”

37 Peter asked, “Lord, why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.”

38 Then Jesus answered, “Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!

**John 21:15-17 (NIV)**

15 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

Twelve Ordinary Men

***Week 3: “Andrew – The Brother in the Background”***

**Welcome** **Facilitator**

**PRAYER Facilitator**

**Five Minute Get-to Know Each Other** **Facilitator**

Warm-Up question: (5 mins!!): Introduce yourself and share something that few people know about you.

**Small Groups Guidelines -- Reminder** Silence **Facilitator**

**Set the vision of the theme:** Twelve Ordinary Men

**Set the scene of today’s Scripture(s)**: Andrew

*Andrew was the first disciple. He was clearly spiritual as he was already a disciple of John the Baptist. He was a part of the inner circle, but clearly operated in the background. Never looked to be the center of attention, not seeking the limelight or spotlight, seemed content to do what he could do with the gifts and calling God put on him. He spent his whole life in the shadow of Peter, but never a hint of resentment or sibling rivalry. It was as if Andrew accepted that role, but when he does come to the forefront, he has an uncanny ability to see immense value in small and modest things. In individual people—he brought individuals, not crowds to Jesus (Peter, the boy with the lunch). He was comfortable introducing people to Jesus, in fact the first person he wanted to tell that he found Christ was his brother. He found value in insignificant gifts—loaves of fishes, that no gift is insignificant in the hands of Jesus. And inconspicuous service because he labored quietly, willing to take 2nd place, never preached to the multitudes, nor wrote an epistle, nor mentioned in Acts. Some might say that he may be a better model for church leaders than Peter (labor in obscurity, not renowned or prominence).*

**Today’s Story**

*As we read these scriptures, try to envision what Jesus may have seen in Andrew that would become an effective model for church leadership.*

* Read John 1:35-42
* John 6:8-13

**Quiet Reflection** *(2 minutes of silence…listen to the Holy Spirit is telling you, by reflecting on…* ***what it might feel like to serve faithfully but inconspicuously…***

**Small Group Table Talk**

* What strikes you as a significant about Andrew?
* What does Andrew’s relationship with Simon suggest about reaching your family members for Christ?
* Andrew is often called “Andrew the Bringer” because he is most identified with bringing friends, neighbors, children and family members to Jesus. Most people today do not come to Christ as an immediate response to a sermon. They come because of the influence of an individual. Who do you think credits *your* influence? How comfortable are you with introducing people to Jesus?
* Andrew had the right heart to be used effectively in the background. Is learning to labor for Christ “faithfully but inconspicuously” a goal for you? Why is it hard for you? What help do you require?
* Some would say that Andrew is a better model for most church leaders than Peter. Which are you more like? Why?
* Andrew’s decision to follow John the Baptist before he followed Jesus indicates a willingness to commit to a cause beyond his fishing business. What cause(s) would people who know you say you are captivated by?
* Andrew noticed the boy with the fish and bread in the crowd. He also knew that it would not be enough. Why did he still bring it to Jesus? What do you “have” that may not be “enough?” What would it look like to put it in Jesus’ hands?

* If Jesus chose Andrew to be one of his disciples, what might Jesus have in store for you?

John 1:35-42 New International Version (NIV)

**35**The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. **36**When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!”

**37**When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.**38**Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?”

They said, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?”

**39**“Come,” he replied, “and you will see.”

So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

**40**Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. **41**The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). **42**And he brought him to Jesus.

John 6:8-13 New International Version (NIV)

**8**Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up,**9**“Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”

Twelve Ordinary Men

***Week 4: “James – The Apostle of Passion”***

**Welcome** **Facilitator**

**PRAYER Facilitator**

**Five Minute Get-to Know Each Other** **Facilitator**

Warm-Up question: (5 mins!!): Introduce yourself and share something that you are passionate about.

**Small Groups Guidelines -- Reminder** Honor **Facilitator**

**Set the vision of the theme:** Twelve Ordinary Men

**Set the scene of today’s Scripture(s)**: James

*James was in the inner circle, but we know the least about him. But it is clear that James was the eldest brother and that he came from a family of some importance (his father, Zebedee had a fishing business, and the high priest in Jerusalem knew him). James was a strong leader, listed after Peter in the scriptures, and it seemed he presided over the first Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. Jesus named him (and his brother) Boanerges, “Sons of Thunder,” for his zealous, thunderous, passionate, and fervent disposition. Sometimes, James would let his zealousness get out of hand. But when his passion came under the control of the Holy Spirit, he had become so effective that it aroused the wrath of Herod. And, James became the first (and only in scripture) disciple to be martyred.*

**Today’s Story**

*As we read these scriptures, try to envision what Jesus may have seen in James that could be channeled for his purposes.*

Read

* Luke 9:51-56
* Matthew 20:20-24
* Acts 12:1-3

**Quiet Reflection** *(2 minutes of silence…listen to the Holy Spirit is telling you, by reflecting on…****what you expect of God …***

**Small Group Table Talk**

* What strikes you as a significant about James?
* James had grown up in a well-to-do home (perhaps with feelings of “entitlement.”) What kind of home did you grow up in? How do you think it might have shaped your thoughts and expectations of God?
* James is pictured in the scriptures with a thunderous personality. There is nothing wrong with zeal and passion, but uncontrolled passion can be dangerous. Can you think of a time when your passion for the Lord might have gotten in the way of God’s purposes? What did you learn?
* James (and John) were rebuked for their spiritual arrogance when they suggested to call down fire from heaven on the inhospitable Samaritans, as Elijah did in 2Kings1:3-17. How do you invite correction and accountability in your discipleship? When is spiritual arrogance a temptation for you?
* Besides being fervent, passionate, zealous, and insensitive, James was also ambitious and overconfident. He wanted to gain status. Is ‘status-seeking’ a challenge for you? How do you deal with it?
* James was the first disciple to lose his life (other than Judas) when Herod sought to kill him. When James finally surrendered his passion to the Holy Spirit’s control, his zeal became an incredibly effective instrument in the hands of God. What do you need to surrender to the Lord?
* If Jesus chose James to be one of his disciples, what might Jesus have in store for you?

**Luke 9:51-56 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)**

**51**When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. **52**And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; **53**but they did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. **54**When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, “Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” **55**But he turned and rebuked them. **56**Thenthey went on to another village.

# **Matthew 20:20-24 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)**

**20**Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, and kneeling before him, she asked a favor of him. **21**And he said to her, “What do you want?” She said to him, “Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.” **22**But Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?”[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+20%3A20-24&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-23813a)] They said to him, “We are able.” **23**He said to them, “You will indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left, this is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.”

**24**When the ten heard it, they were angry with the two brothers.

**Acts 12:1-3 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)**

**12**About that time King Herod laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. **2**He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword. **3**After he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. (This was during the festival of Unleavened Bread.)

Next week: John—The Apostle of Love

Twelve Ordinary Men

***Week 5: “John – The Apostle of Love”***

**Welcome** **Facilitator**

**PRAYER Facilitator**

**Five Minute Get-to Know Each Other** **Facilitator**

Warm-Up question: (5 mins!!): Introduce yourself and share about someone other than a family member whom you deeply love.

**Small Groups Guidelines -- Reminder** **Facilitator**

**Set the vision of the theme:** Twelve Ordinary Men

*Jesus chose 12 ordinary men to be his disciples. Under Jesus’ touch and teaching, they become a force that forever changed the world. Imagine, if Christ can accomplish His purpose through the lives of common men like these, imagine what he has in store for you. Today we take a look at John.*

**Set the scene of today’s Scripture(s)**: John

*How do you envision John—the writer of the gospel of John and many letters in the NT are attributed to him. If you imagine John as portrayed in medieval art—meek, mild-mannered, pale-skinned, effeminate person lying around on Jesus shoulder looking up at Him with a dove-eyed stare—you are wrong. Remember, he started out as a fisherman with his older brother James. He was rugged, hard-edged. Jesus nick-named him a Son of Thunder, like his brother. In his younger years as a disciple, he was intolerant, ambitious, zealous and aggressive. The only time he speaks for himself in the other gospels occurs when he confesses to Jesus that he condemned a man who was ministering in Jesus’ name just because the man was NOT a part of the disciples! He also convinced his mom to ask Jesus to give him a prime seat in heaven. This does not sound like a passive personality, but one who is competitive, aggressive, and intolerant. But one thing stands out about John, he matured. Under the control of the Holy Spirit, his areas of greatest weakness all developed into his greatest strengths. He’s an example of what should happen to us as we grow in Christ. He may have started out with an imbalanced zealousness for black-and-white truth, but three years with Christ cultivated in him a supernatural balance of love. As you read through his Gospel and his other writings, we get a clear sense that he was able to attain that amazing balance of a zeal for truth balance by love for people. A goal for all of us…and one that is desperately needed among Christians today. Ultimately, John is the clearest example of how committed discipleship can transform us into the men God created us to be. Three years with Jesus moved John from a Son of Thunder toward becoming the Apostle of love.*

**Today’s Story**

*As we read these scriptures, try to envision what Jesus may have seen in John….*

Read

* Mark 9:38-41
* John 19:25-27
* Revelation 1:9

**Quiet Reflection** *(2 minutes of silence…listen to the Holy Spirit is telling you, by reflecting on…****how you have grown and changed in Christ …***

**Small Group Table Talk**

* What strikes you as a significant about John?
* Mark 9:38-41 is the only time John speaks on his own. What issues are you most inclined to be protective of your group, church, ministry, etc. way of doing things?
* John started out with a passion for the truth, but neglected love. Many are just as imbalanced as John was, on one side or the other. Truth without love has no decency; it’s just *brutality*. Love without truth has no character it’s just *hypocrisy*. How have you experienced an imbalance of truth and love in your life?
* John’s writings reflect a deep maturity as he matured from a Son of Thunder. He is a great example of the transformational power of intentional discipleship. How is your character changing as a result of your discipleship? What qualities of spiritual maturity are you intentionally working on? How can your brothers in Christ assist you?
* Why do you think men have trouble with the concept of love? Is loving and being loved by men a difficult concept for you?
* John’s growth in humility from being one who wants to sit by Jesus’ side to never mentioning his own name in his Gospel is striking. How would you describe your own struggle with humility?
* What strengths do you possess do you sometimes overuse and push to the extreme? What do you do to help maintain balance? Examples might include dedication on the job, financial generosity at church, sensitivity to the feelings of others, etc.
* Jesus obviously thought a lot of John’s growth in love when he asked John to care for his mother. What task of love has the Lord asked of you that may be beyond the ordinary?
* John describes himself as “your brother” in Revelation 1:9. Other than family members, who else do you consider ‘your brother?’ How did he become ‘your brother?’
* If Jesus chose John to be one of his disciples, what might Jesus have in store for you?

Today’s Thoughts and Prayers ….

**Mark 9:38-41 New International Version (NIV)**

**38**“Teacher,” said John, “we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.”

**39**“Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, **40**for whoever is not against us is for us. **41**Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.

**John 19:25-27 New International Version (NIV)**

**25**Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. **26**When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, “Woman,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+19%3A25-27&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-26852a" \o "See footnote a)] here is your son,” **27**and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

**Revelation 1:9 New International Version (NIV)**

**9**I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Next week: Philip—The Dense Apostle Whom Jesus Loved

Twelve Ordinary Men

***Week 6: “Philip – The Bean Counter”***

**Welcome** **Facilitator**

**PRAYER Facilitator**

**Five Minute Get-to Know Each Other** **Facilitator**

Warm-Up question: (5 mins!!): Introduce yourself and tell of a subject or topic you know very little about that might make you nervous every time it comes up in a conversation.

**Small Groups Guidelines -- Reminder** **Facilitator**

**Set the vision of the theme:** Twelve Ordinary Men

*Jesus chose 12 ordinary men to be his disciples. Under Jesus’ touch and teaching, they become a force that forever changed the world. Imagine, if Christ can accomplish His purpose through the lives of common men like these, imagine what he has in store for you. Today we take a look at John.*

**Set the scene of today’s Scripture(s)**: Philip

*All we really know about Philip is pieced together in the Gospel of John. Philip comes across as a classic “process-person:” a facts and figures, by the book, practical minded, common-sense guy. He sees the glass as “half-empty,” and misses the big picture and seems to be the guy who always finds what’s wrong with an idea and why things can’t be done. At best he was a pragmatist, at worst a defeatist. Yet when Jesus finds him, he believed easily in Jesus and the first thing he wants to do is tell his friend what “he” found, rather than the Messiah found him. But while is heart is there, and clearly has faith, his faith is weak. Jesus reveals this to him when he asks Philip to feed the 5000, and all Philip could see is the impossibility of the task. Jesus wanted him to see more. Even at the Last Supper, Philip still misses the truth when he asks Jesus to show them the Father. After 3 years gazing into the very face of God, and after Jesus just told them that He and the Father are one, it was still not clear to Philip. Somehow his earthbound thinking, small-mindedness, materialism, skepticism, and obsession with details had shut him off from a full apprehension of what was right in front of him. But that IS the good news! Philip overcame his limited ability, or rather, Jesus worked through Philips weakness to make him into a great preacher. Tradition has it that Philip was stoned in Asia Minor for spreading the early church there. If Jesus could use a man like Philip, imagine what he could do with you…if we just let him?*

**Today’s Story**

*As we read these scriptures, try to envision what Jesus may have seen in Philip….*

Read

* John 1:43-46
* John 6:1-8
* John 14:7-11

**Quiet Reflection** *(2 minutes of silence…listen to the Holy Spirit is telling you, by reflecting on…****how Jesus ‘found’ you …***

**Small Group Table Talk**

* What strikes you as a significant about Philip?
* As far as Philip was concerned, he had found the Messiah rather than being found by Him. How would you re-frame *your* story in terms of Jesus finding you?
* Philip couldn’t wait to tell his friend, Nathanael, to come and see the Messiah. What friend do you long to invite to ‘come and see?’ What is preventing you?
* It appears that Jesus’ inquiry of Philip in John 6:1-7 was to test Philip. Have you experienced a testing by God? What benefits do you experience when being tested?
* Philip was blind to the vision Jesus had for feeding the multitude. Can you think of a time in your life when preoccupation with details prevented you from seeing the big picture of what God was doing in your life or in your church?
* What is an impossible situation you are currently facing that you are reluctant to trust the Lord for?
* After spending three years being personally trained by Jesus, Philip still didn’t get that Jesus and the Father were one. Re-read the questions Jesus asks in John 14:9-10, but substitute yourself for Philip. Do you *know* Jesus? What do you still *want* to know?
* Jesus challenged Philips comfort zones. From what comfort zone does the Lord desire to push you from?
* If Jesus chose Philip to be one of his disciples, what might Jesus have in store for you?

Today’s Thoughts and Prayers ….

**John 1:43-46 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)**

**43**The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” **44**Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. **45**Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.” **46**Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.”

**John 6:1-8 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)**

**6**After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. **2**A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. **3**Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. **4**Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. **5**When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?” **6**He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. **7**Philip answered him, “Six months’ wages[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+6%3A1-8&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-26254b)] would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.”

**John 14:7-11 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)**

**7**If you know me, you will know[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=JOhn+14%3A7-11&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-26665a)] my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

**8**Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” **9**Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? **10**Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. **11**Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.

Next week: Matthew the Tax Collector

Twelve Ordinary Men

***Week 7: “Matthew the Tax Collector”***

**Welcome** **Facilitator**

**PRAYER Facilitator**

**Five Minute Get-to Know Each Other** **Facilitator**

Warm-Up question: (5 mins!!): Introduce yourself and 3 persons (living or dead) you’d love to have dinner with.

**Small Groups Guidelines -- Reminder** **Facilitator**

**Set the vision of the theme:** Twelve Ordinary Men

*Jesus chose 12 ordinary men to be his disciples. Under Jesus’ touch and teaching, they become a force that forever changed the world. Imagine, if Christ can accomplish His purpose through the lives of common men like these, imagine what he has in store for you. Today we take a look at John.*

**Set the scene of today’s Scripture(s)**: Matthew

*We know very little about Matthew, even though Matthew is credited as the author of the Gospel bearing his own name. He is often called by his Jewish name, Levi. What we can gather, though, indicates that Matthew was probably a humble, self-effacing man. That he kept himself in the background. After all, if you were writing the story of Jesus, wouldn’t you use your interactions in the story? Matthew was a tax-collector (a publican). Thus, he must have been despised and ostracized in his community. A tax collector gets a franchise from the Roman occupiers to collect taxes for them. In addition, they have the power to levy taxes as they wish so they could line their own pockets. They would use thugs to strong-arm money from people. No self-respecting Jew would ever choose to be a tax collector—they were seen as traitors to their people…and were cut off from the social life of Jew, and more importantly from the religious life. They were banned from the synagogue and the Temple. Therefore, he must have been stunned when Jesus chose him! Some spiritual hunger must have been stirred when he met Jesus, and the promise of forgiveness from his sins must have been so enticing. The first thing he does is invite other ‘low-lives’ to a banquet in Jesus’ honor (these are the only people he knows and would come to a dinner at his house). He wanted others to meet Jesus. In the Gospel that bears his name, he quotes the OT 99 times, so he must have had a love for the scriptures, and a desire to prove that Jesus is the Messiah. Tradition indicates that he was burned at the stake. Not only did Matthew walk away from a lucrative career, he ultimately gave his all for Christ to the end.*

**Today’s Story**

*As we read these scriptures, try to envision what Jesus may have seen in Matthew….*

Read

* Luke 5:27-32
* Luke 18:10-14
* Matthew 21:31-32

**Quiet Reflection** *(2 minutes of silence…listen to the Holy Spirit is telling you, by reflecting on…****the sins that you would love for Jesus to forgive and set you free from …***

**Small Group Table Talk**

* What strikes you as a significant about Matthew?
* Have you ever been hated? What effect did that have on your life?
* What about your work set you up to be misjudged by peers? How does that tension affect your day-to-day experience of God’s presence in your life?
* Describe the most unusual place you have ever found yourself as a result of attempting to influence your world for Christ.
* Why do you suppose Jesus called Matthew, the tax collector? Why do you suppose Jesus is calling you?
* Matthew threw a huge party for Jesus at his home. In what ways might your home be a perfect place for ministry?
* How does Jesus’ concern for those who need a “physician” challenge you to your choices of who to socialize with?
* Complete these sentences: I am more likely to be like a tax collector when I …. I am more likely to be like a Pharisee when I….
* If Jesus chose Matthew, a hated tax collector who extorted money from his own people, what in your life is keeping you from giving your all to Jesus?

Today’s Thoughts and Prayers ….

**Luke 5:27-32 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)**

**27**After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, “Follow me.” **28**And he got up, left everything, and followed him.

**29**Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house; and there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others sitting at the table[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=LUke+5%3A27-32&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-25129a)] with them. **30**The Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to his disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” **31**Jesus answered, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; **32**I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

**Luke 18:10-14 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)**

**10**“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. **11**The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. **12**I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.’ **13**But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ **14**I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.”

**Matthew 21:31-32 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)**

**31** Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. **32**For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.

Next Week: Thomas the Heroic Pessimist

Twelve Ordinary Men

***Week 8: “Thomas the Heroic Pessimist”***

**Welcome** **Facilitator**

**PRAYER Facilitator**

**Five Minute Get-to Know Each Other** **Facilitator**

Warm-Up question: (5 mins!!): Introduce yourself and the best thing that happened to you this week.

**Small Groups Guidelines -- Reminder** **Facilitator**

**Set the vision of the theme:** Twelve Ordinary Men

*Jesus chose 12 ordinary men to be his disciples. Under Jesus’ touch and teaching, they become a force that forever changed the world. Imagine, if Christ can accomplish His purpose through the lives of common men like these, imagine what he has in store for you. Today we take a look at John.*

**Set the scene of today’s Scripture(s)**: Thomas

*What’s the first thing you think of when you think of the apostle Thomas? (Doubt). But ‘doubting Thomas’ may not be the best nickname for him. He was actually better than that name suggests. A better description might be ‘pessimistic.’ And, although he seemed to anticipate the worst in every situation, there were also some interesting redeeming qualities. In the story of Jesus going to Bethany, so close to Jerusalem where the authorities were looking to kill Jesus, it was Thomas who spoke up to go there “so that they might die with him.” Although his pessimism couldn’t see anything but disaster, his devotion to Jesus led him to be courageous. Later, when Jesus mentioned that he was going to leave them, Thomas over-reacted with pessimistic panic that he didn’t know the way to where Jesus was, but showed his deep love in his worry about being permanently separated from Jesus. Lastly, after the death of Jesus, Thomas mourned alone, and did not get to witness a resurrection appearance with the other disciples. And although they were full of joy, his hopeless pessimism wouldn’t let him believe it. Note, it wasn’t his doubts as ALL the disciples didn’t believe in the resurrection either. But, with Thomas’ powerful testimony after touching Jesus’ resurrected body, “My Lord and My God,” all of Thomas’ pessimistic melancholy was transformed, and he became a great evangelist. Tradition has it that he spread the church to India, where he was martyred. It might be better to think of Thomas as a heroic pessimist.*

**Today’s Story**

*As we read these scriptures, try to envision what Jesus may have seen in Thomas….*

Read:

* John 11:6-16
* John 14:1-5
* John 20:24-29

**Quiet Reflection** *(2 minutes of silence…listen to the Holy Spirit is telling you, by reflecting on…****your own pessimism about your life and world…***

**Small Group Table Talk**

* What strikes you as significant about Thomas?
* Do you identify with Thomas’ pessimism? Do you get stuck seeing only the negative? If not, how do you talk about what faith is all about with friends or family who are pessimistic?
* How do you feel about Thomas being labeled a heroic pessimist?
* Have you ever been invited to follow Christ into something daring? (Could cause physical or emotional harm; embarrassment; loss of income, prestige or relationship; etc.)? What happened?
* In what circumstances do you think you would be willing to die for your faith?
* Have you been through a time of grief, melancholy, loneliness, etc.? How does Jesus gentle treatment of Thomas encourage you?
* How should the fact that the risen Christ is present everywhere, even though we don’t see Him, elevate an ordinary disciple like you to an extraordinary one?
* If Jesus used Thomas, a devoted but pessimistic follower of Christ, what do you think Jesus could do with you?

Today’s Thoughts and Prayers ….

**John 11:6-16 New International Version (NIV)**

**6**So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days,**7**and then he said to his disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.”

**8**“But Rabbi,” they said, “a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?” **9**Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world’s light.**10**It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light.”

**11**After he had said this, he went on to tell them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.”**12**His disciples replied, “Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.” **13**Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

**14**So then he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead, **15**and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” **16**Then Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

**John 14:1-5 New International Version (NIV)**

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. **2**My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?**3**And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. **4**You know the way to the place where I am going.”

**5**Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

**John 20:24-29 New International Version (NIV)**

**24**Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. **25**So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

**26**A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” **27**Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

**28**Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

**29**Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”