

The Twelve: Andrew and Nathanael

BIO: ANDREW

Name: Andrew, meaning *manly*.

Hometown of origin: Came from the little fishing town on the North coast of Galilee called Bethsaida.

Relatives: Simon Peter's brother

Profession: Fisherman, in partnership with his brother, Peter and their friends, James and John.

Married: Unknown.

Age: Unknown. Probably younger than Peter.

Best remembered for: Introducing people to Jesus; Peter his brother, the boy with the fish and loaves of bread and some Greeks.

Social status: Unknown. Perhaps slightly higher than others if his low opinion of Nazareth is considered.

Personality: Skeptical.

Position amongst the 12: Seems to have been friends with Philip.

General facts: Andrew is not a startling character: there is no dash and activity like Peter, no strong determination and unpredictable character like James and John, and no dramatic conversion like Matthew. He appears to be quiet, thoughtful, persistent and unassuming – but his work was vital. He brought his brother to Christ and little realised what far-reaching results that would have. In fact, he seems to have learnt from John the Baptist that the most important task in life is not to make a name for oneself, but to bring people to Jesus: his brother, a little boy with some bread and fish, and a party of Greeks. There are no impressive exploits, no crowds following him, no miracles recorded and no great preaching. But through Peter, thousands heard of Christ and millions have read his letters, through the young boy thousands were fed from one of Christ's most outstanding miracles, and through the Greeks our Lord finally revealed his purpose to reveal himself to the whole world as its only light.

Ministry after the ascension: According to Hippolytus (an early church father from Rome);, Andrew preached to the Scythians (modern day Georgia) and Thracians (modern day Bulgaria, both Georgia and Bulgaria are adjacent to the Black Sea near Turkey).

Death: He was crucified, suspended on an olive tree, at Patrae, a town of Achaia (Greece); and there too he was buried.

BIO: NATHANAEAL

Name: Nathanael or Bartholomew. Nathanael means “gift of God”.

Father's name: Unknown

Hometown of origin: Cana in Galilee

Profession: Unknown. Perhaps a fisherman. He was fishing with Peter, James and John and three others on the Sea of Tiberius when Jesus appeared to them after his resurrection, resulting in the second miraculous catch of fish.

Married: Unknown.

Age: Unknown. Probably young. Most sources say Peter or James were probably the oldest of the 12, being between 20 and 25 years old. It is quite possible that he was still in his upper teens or low twenties.

Best remembered for: Being introduced by Philip to Jesus. Being seen under a fig tree.

Social status: Unknown. Perhaps slightly higher than others if his low opinion of Nazareth is considered.

Personality: Skeptical.

Position amongst the 12: No significance.

General facts: Often mentioned with Philip. Was skeptical about Jesus being the Messiah because he came from Nazareth. He obviously had a low opinion about Nazareth.

Ministry after the ascension: Initially in Jerusalem and then we have no sure Biblical account. Tradition puts him in various places, including having traveled to India, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Parthia, Ethiopia and Lycaonia. He is said to have converted Polymius, the king of Armenia to Christianity.

Death: Traditional accounts claim that he was martyred in Albanopolis in Armenia. Some say he was beheaded others that he was flayed alive and then crucified upside down.

INTRODUCTION

When we look at Andrew and Nathanael, what we want to highlight is that it's about learning to become Christ followers. In this series there are two things God is putting his finger on: character and mission. And as we look at these two disciples we see how God developed their character.

Character is not an old fashioned idea that we no longer need. It's still extremely important to God. In fact, God looks at character more than He looks at gifts and callings. Whenever you read about the qualifications for leaders in the Bible, most of the time it focuses on character more than anything else.

There are times when God will shape us in a way that will hurt us a little. He will work in us and do whatever He needs to do so we can have Godly characters. It may be painful and uncomfortable, but don't run away when God is dealing with you. He wants you to stand before Him at the end of the age and declare over you, "Well done, my good and faithful servant." He wants you to become more like Jesus - that's what counts the most.

With godly character comes the mission. We're not just to have good character for the sake of character, but for the sake of God's mission and purposes.

LESSONS WE LEARN FROM THESE MEN

Andrew

There are three notable references to Andrew in scripture, and in each he is introducing people to Jesus!

John 1:35-42

The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).

So what do we see here?

Firstly, he was a man of character. Why? Because even though he came to Christ first and introduced Peter to Jesus, he seemed content to play “second fiddle” (as it were) to his more famous brother, Peter. John even refers to Andrew as Simon Peter’s brother even before Peter had come on the scene.

Many of us might have been offended by that sort of thing if it were us. But we don’t see any record of Andrew being offended by this. He passed the test of being seemingly overlooked.

how well do you do when you’ve been overlooked and aren’t included in something, or are seemingly forgotten? Do you respond like Andrew, knowing that everything is in God’s hands and you don’t have to fight for everything? That God will make room for your gift and for you? Too many of us, because we seem to have been forgotten and overlooked, want to fight for our rights. But when we fight for something not of God we end up fighting God.

We need to realise that life, ministry and calling is not about us! If you feel forgotten and overlooked, settle this in your heart - God has not forgotten you but wants you to pass the test of loneliness and being seemingly overlooked or forgotten. At the right time and way he will open the door and bring you out.

Secondly, Andrew was an evangelist. The first thing he did was find his brother Peter and introduce him to Jesus. He had found the Saviour and wanted to share that with others, starting with those close to him. If you found an oncologist who had a hundred percent success rate in healing cancer, wouldn’t you go and tell everyone who had cancer? Especially those closest to you? Well, we have the saviour of our souls, why is it that we wouldn’t want to tell others about Him and share this good news with them? Unless, of course, He isn’t the pearl of great price to you; unless you haven’t had a revelation of the awfulness of your own sin and how Jesus forgives that totally and completely. We need to have that revelation.

Now we don’t hear too much more about Andrew. He just appears thirteen times in the Gospels and Acts, as opposed to Peter whose name appears 160 times. But Andrew could never have known the legacy he was leaving for the church by introducing Peter to Jesus. Who knows the far-reaching results that come about by the small actions of those hardly known?

A Moravian missionary led John Wesley - the founder of the Methodist movement - to Christ. An elderly preacher led the teenager Charles Spurgeon - well known for his powerful preaching - to the Lord.

John 6:1-15

After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. Lifting up his eyes, then,

and seeing that a large crowd was coming towards him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii[a] would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?" Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost." So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"

Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

Andrew's faith may not have been that great (see verse 9) according to how we might measure faith, but he was willing to go out on a limb and risk his reputation. At the back of his mind he might have thought, "These other guys are going to laugh at me, all I've managed to find are these five loaves and two fishes." But he must have had a confidence in Jesus' ability, otherwise he would have never offered these meagre supplies to Jesus.

Later we know Jesus would teach about having faith as small as a mustard seed. **It's not about how much faith we have but where that faith is placed.** Only a mustard seed is needed! Today, many believers put their faith in many different things: their job, their career, their investments, their retirement plan etc. But when it comes to life and ministry and the call God has for us, the best place that we can put our lives and faith in is into His hands. We might not know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future and our lives are best in His hands. When we make decisions about life and need faith, let's ensure that our faith is in the right hands.

John 12:20-22

Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

This was during Passover week, so there was a lot of activity. Philip approaches Andrew, perhaps not too sure if Jesus would have time for these Greeks. After all, Jesus had often made it clear that his primary ministry was to the "lost sheep of Israel". But Andrew had no doubts about this - he had learned enough about Jesus to know that **Jesus always has time for those who look for him.**

Andrew had begun the Great Commission without Jesus having even given it yet. The foreigners mattered to Andrew as they mattered to Jesus. Jesus wanted to seek and save what is lost, this was Jesus' mission statement as it were; if lost people matter to God they must matter to us. So one of the great lessons from Andrew is this - **introducing people to Jesus should be and must be our highest priority in life.**

Nathanael

There is only one passage of scripture that features Nathanael.

John 1:43-51

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

There needs to be a background understanding before the enormity of this passage can be grasped. Nathanael is sitting under a fig tree in prayer and meditation. His meditation is concerned with the life of Jacob - the swindler who God called Israel when his life changed. Nathaniel was considering how Jacob's life had changed and is concerned with who he is in the story, the manipulator or a sincere servant of God.

When Jesus proclaims to him that he is a sincere servant and he is not Jacob but 'Israel', instantly Nathaniel knows Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus just revealed to him what he was meditating on in the private thoughts of his mind.

Nathaniel immediately follows Jesus even though he has some cultural prejudice with regards to Nazarenes.

So what can we learn here?

Firstly, we can see that Nathanael started out as a man of impeccable character, where Jesus said of him that there was 'no deceit'. **But he still needed fine-tuning for the mission Jesus was calling him on.**

Here is a simple lesson - it's not how well we start or how noble we are when we start, but it's how we finish and how well we finish. It's not only about what we've done but how we've done it. Is the character of Christ more seen in us? It's about allowing Jesus to tune us and shape us and become what He has called and purposed us to be. That's a life-long journey. We must remember that no matter how well you may be doing right now, you haven't arrived.

In fact if we think we're standing firm we've got to be careful we don't fall. If we're going to live in the fullness of this call and mission God has for us, we have to be continually vulnerable to his dealings with us. Don't short-circuit the process and subsequently the purpose and plan God has for your life.

Secondly, we see here that it's possible to go from sceptic to true believer in a matter of seconds. That should give us hope for those we're holding out for, that they would come to know Jesus. One Holy Spirit encounter and a person's life can radically change. **We need to grasp those opportunities to share Christ as they have eternal consequences.** The most sceptical person can be transformed into the most passionate believer for Jesus with just one word spoken, one experience with the Spirit.

But are you willing to take those opportunities?

Thirdly, God uses people we think he couldn't or shouldn't use. Nathanael couldn't believe that the Messiah would come from Nazareth - surely national pride and religious zeal demanded He come from a place and city far more prominent. But that's not how Jesus operates and it's not how He wants us to think and operate.

Nathanael would learn that by spending his years in an unknown place, God was showing that He would choose the foolish and despised things of this world to achieve His great purposes. Why? So that those who feel they have it all together and have arrived would never be able to boast in their ability to see the purposes of God outworked. If we would choose to be foolish and ashamed for him, He'll use us. He wants to use you.

It is still God's purpose to choose ordinary people like us and choose those we think he shouldn't choose. He will use whoever is willing to be used of him. Are you willing? Because God wants to use you for His mission.

Fourthly, there is great blessing in store for those who walk with Jesus. See where Jesus talks about Nathanael seeing "the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." (vs 50, 51). Clearly this is a reference to Jacob's dream at Bethel (Genesis 28). But in essence He was saying to Nathanael that he would see evidences of the Kingdom like Jacob did, but in a far greater way.

Jesus is the mediator between heaven and earth and God's blessings come down to us by and through Jesus. It's in Jesus that heaven meets earth - he is the staircase between heaven and earth; no one comes to the Father except by and through Jesus. The "you" here is plural in the

original Greek - meaning it's not just referring to Nathanael but to everyone who puts their faith in Jesus. Jesus opens up heaven for us. Because of Jesus we have abiding and constant fellowship with the Father. It's because of Jesus that God hears our prayers.

Have you allowed Jesus to open heaven for you and give you access to the Father? Only Jesus is the way to God and the truth and the life of God. We can only come to the Father through Jesus. Outside of Jesus there is no eternal blessing or security; He is Lord.

QUESTIONS

1. As a Christ-follower, am I submitted to God's processes of transformation? (character)
2. As a Christ-follower, am I one who introduces people to Jesus? (mission)