



“Twelve Men”  
Luke 6:12-16

**Idea:** Believers trust God’s wisdom in His callings and actions.

**Intro:** Would you prefer to be a player on the team or to be a spectator watching the team? I guess your answer depends on what kind of team it is, so let’s ask a different question. If you want to make a lasting impact and be part of seeing people’s lives transformed, would you prefer to be a participant on the team or be a spectator watching the team? Personally, I want to be on the team. I want to play a role alongside others.

The Lord has a team, and He is constantly recruiting, equipping, and sending out team members on His mission. In our walk through the Gospel of Luke, we have been watching this unfold. Jesus announced the purpose and mission of His work in Luke 4:18-19.

*<sup>18</sup>“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, <sup>19</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*

Jesus announced His intentions in His hometown of Nazareth and began His work on His own. He traveled through the towns of Galilee preaching the Kingdom, healing the sick, liberating the oppressed, and calling followers to Himself. Simon and Andrew, James and John, and Levi are some of those who have been called and recruited to Jesus’ team in the first five chapters of this Gospel. Many others were also following the Lord.

By definition, a team is greater than an individual. A team can accomplish more than any one human being can do. Now, Jesus, as God the Son, could accomplish anything. He is the God-Man, so we dare not place this limitation on Him. As such, He did not and does not need the help of others to achieve His goals. However, He graciously invited and utilized His followers in the carrying out of His mission, and He continues to do so.

As we have been working through Luke, we discover that Jesus is touching and transforming people’s lives. More and more people are joining Him. They are traveling with Jesus from place to place, watching Him do miraculous things. The time has come for others to join the work. The Lord knows that He will not physically be with them forever. He is going to the cross to lay down His life as a payment for sin. He will rise from the dead, but He will only be with His disciples for a short period of time before ascending back to the Father. The work, nevertheless, will endure. Jesus will continue to preach the Kingdom, heal the sick, liberate the oppressed, and call people to Himself, but He will do this through His team. He will do it through His followers. Therefore, Jesus begins preparations for this by calling twelve men to be His apostles. These twelve will get their first taste of active ministry in Luke 9. Let’s look at the calling of these twelve men.

Luke 6:12-16.

**Inquiry:** Jesus called His disciples (μαθητής) to Himself and chose twelve men from them to be apostles (ἀπόστολος). A distinction is made here between the people who were following Jesus. All of them were disciples or followers of Jesus. A disciple is simply one who follows, learns from, and imitates a teacher. Based upon this understanding, every person whom Jesus called to Himself on this occasion was a disciple, including the twelve who were designated as apostles. The term apostle speaks of a special calling and responsibility greater than that of a disciple. This designation (ἀπόστολος) is used in the Gospels to specify the twelve disciples personally called and sent out by Jesus to preach the message of the Kingdom and demonstrate its presence by performing signs and wonders. These are the men through whom the Church will be established and built up (Acts 2:42). There are three aspects of the call of the twelve men. Let's examine them and the lessons they offer.

## 1. An Authoritative Call

Authority has been an important theme thus far in Luke's Gospel. It has been especially prominent in chapters 4-6. It began with Satan offering Jesus an easy path to authority and victory (4:6-7). It was a temptation He rejected. Then, Jesus declared His authority in Nazareth before everyone in the synagogue was filled with wrath and sought to throw Him down the cliff. He, however, passed through them and went on His way (4:28-30). Jesus continued to demonstrate His authority by teaching with authority, healing the sick, casting out demons, and eating with sinners.

This authority motif peaks in the calling of the twelve apostles. Luke has clearly expressed to us who Jesus is. He is God the Son who possesses the throne of King David and reigns over the house of Jacob forever. There will be no end to His Kingdom (1:32-33). Luke has also clearly expressed that Jesus as God the Son has veiled His divinity by taking on humanity. He placed the exercise of His divine attributes at the discretion of God the Father. During this time, among other things, He was not omniscient and perhaps did not possess all knowledge. Therefore, His unaided knowledge was not sufficient for the tasks at hand. On His own, Jesus did not know who to choose to carry out the important role of apostle. So, He continued to pursue community with the Father as He had enjoyed it in eternity prior to entering time and space (vs. 12). Jesus retreated to a quiet place to pray to the Father like He had at other times (4:42; 5:16).

Prayer was everything to Jesus. Even though He was the eternal Son of God, the Creator of all things, the Alpha and Omega, and the One to whom everything is moving toward, He could not live His human life apart from dependent prayer and fellowship with the Father. His authority resided in the Father. For this reason, Jesus declared:

*“When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him”* (John 8:28-29).

The Lord's calling of the twelve was issued with the authority of God the Father. This authoritative call leads us to a second aspect.

## 2. An Effectual Call

After a night of prayer and fellowship with the Father, Jesus knew the Father's will, so He acted with decisive authority. He chose twelve men and named them apostles (vs. 13). This was an office and role sovereignly placed on the twelve men. They did not seek out or lobby for this position. Jesus chose them to serve in this special role and extension of His ministry. He would send them out in Luke 9 to do as He did, preaching and healing. As such, His call to them was an effectual call. They were equipped with the power, authority, and resources needed to carry out the tasks and mission.

Their effectiveness was grounded in their fellowship with and obedience to the Lord. Jesus said, *“I am*

*the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing”* (John 15:5).

Mark emphasizes this effectual calling to the mission and apostolate in His Gospel. He says:

*<sup>14</sup>And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach <sup>15</sup>and have authority to cast out demons. – Mark 3:14-15*

According to Mark, there are two parts to their call and the second was intimately related to the first. They were first called to be with Jesus and second to act on behalf of Jesus. Their ability to effectively carry out the mission was directly related to their fellowship with the Lord. They were too weak to carry out the mission on their own. Their calling was not unlike God’s invitation to others throughout the storyline of Scripture. Gideon was from the weakest clan in Manasseh, and he was the least in his father’s house. Humanly speaking it made no sense for the Lord to summons Gideon to the great task of delivering Israel from the Midianites, but God did just that. In addition, He cut his military forces down from 32,000 to just 300 men. Midian outnumbered Gideon’s forces 750 to 1 (Judges 7). We see similar plots in the stories of Moses, David, and Jeremiah. This effectual calling and use of those who seem to be weak displays a third aspect.

### **3. An Unexpected Call**

Jesus called ordinary men to serve Him and carry out His mission. Except for Judas Iscariot, these men were country boys from small towns and villages. Four of them (Simon, Andrew, James, and John) and possibly three others were fishermen (John 21:1-3). One was a tax collector (Levi). The occupations of the other four men are unknown. None of the men were famous or wealthy. It is probable that Levi had wealth, but he gave all of it up when he followed Christ. None of them was a scribe, priest, or elder in Israel. Instead, they were all “uneducated and common men (Acts 4:13).

Again, we see in these twelve apostles that the authoritative and effectual call of God is often also an unexpected call. Jesus worked in and through these men in such a powerful way that His life and ministry continued after He was gone. Through the apostles “*the world was turned upside down*” (Acts 17:6).

Paul magnified God’s unexpected calling of the weak.

*<sup>26</sup>For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup>But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; <sup>28</sup>God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, <sup>29</sup>so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. – 1 Cor 1:26-29*

R. Kent Hughes has said, “One of the supreme glories of God’s call is that our weakness is the opportunity for His power – our ordinariness makes room for His extraordinariness.”

If you were assembling a team to carry out the mission of the gospel, would you choose the kind of people Jesus picked and empowered? The men Jesus drafted were common, ordinary, rough, and doubtful. They are not the kind of team members we would expect to see. In fact, it would have made a whole lot more sense for the Lord to go after professionals. The scribes and Pharisees should have been first round draft picks, but the Lord never even considered them. Therefore, we draw from this passage that the ability of the one called is not nearly as important as the power of the One who calls. There are three lessons for us to take away today:

Lessons Learned:

**1) Prayerful fellowship with the Father is essential to living out your calling as a believer.**

Jesus modeled for us that if we want to live out God's calling on our lives, then it is necessary to get away for private prayer. And He went a step farther, Jesus said, *"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5).

He both modeled and instructed us on how to live out God's calling. If the eternal Son of God could not live out the Father's calling on His life without prayerful fellowship, then how much more is it essential for us to pray and depend on God? How disciplined is your prayer life? Do you schedule time for prayerful fellowship with the Lord?

## **2) Obedience to the Father's directives is essential to living out your calling as a believer.**

Jesus selected the twelve apostles from His disciples at the direction of the Father. He did nothing on His own. He did only what the Father directed Him to do. Jesus models for us perfect submission to the Father's will. Christian, if you want to walk in the will of God and experience His blessing and favor on your life, then it is found solely in a life of obedience to His directives. It is found in a commitment to living out God's Word. Obedience like this will not make sense in a sinful and fallen world. Others will think you are crazy and fanatical, but it does not matter what other people think. Disciples are only concerned with what the Lord thinks.

## **3) Trusting the Father's wisdom is essential to living out your calling as a believer.**

Our Lord knows what is best. His wisdom is flawless and complete. Jesus trusted the Father's wisdom in the calling of the twelve. On paper and humanly speaking, they might not have been the best choices, but heavenly speaking they were the only choice.

**Conclusion:** Believers trust God's wisdom in His callings and actions. We recognize His authoritative, effectual, and often unexpected activity in our lives. The responsibility of the Christ follower is not to call the shots but to accept and carry out what the Lord has said. We are followers of Christ not leaders of Christ. And life is so sweet when we are operating within that space. How similar to Jesus' example is your approach to life? Are you experiencing prayerful fellowship with the Father? Are you obedient to His directives? Are you trusting His wisdom?

None of us do these perfectly. We all fall short. We often need to recommit ourselves to following Christ's example, so I encourage you to lean into these lessons.

Good news: God loves you. He created you and desires to know you.

Bad news: You are a sinner in rebellion against your Creator.

Best news: God has done everything necessary to justly deal with your sin and bring forgiveness and restoration to your life. Today, He calls you to turn from your sin and self and turn to Him as Savior and Lord. Do you need to be forgiven?

Jesus knows everything about you. He has assessed your life and knows your sin. In the face of your sin, He has also issued a call. Will you today decide to follow Him?