

Dream Team or Nightmare?

Luke 6:12–16 (ESV)

INTRODUCTION: The success or failure of any endeavor rests upon a leader's ability to build a team. No one man can do it all alone. Knowing who to call and who to cut can make all the difference in the world.



Just this week, the Jags Head Coach Doug Pederson had to cut his own son Josh from the team's roster, which makes for an awkward Thanksgiving.

Nevertheless, that is what leadership is all about. In the words of Jim Collins, it's "knowing who belongs on the bus and which seat each person should fill."

Teamwork does make the Dreamwork.

John Maxwell said it well, *"One is too small a number to accomplish greatness."*

- The Lone Ranger had Tonto!
- Batman had Robin
- R2-D2 had C3-PO

Even Jesus Christ, the very Son of God in the flesh, had a team.

- He had the **multitude**. The multitude was made up of some who were genuine followers, some who were curious, some who were there for the wrong motives, and some who were there to destroy Jesus.
- From the multitude he had the **70** - they were sent out two by two to do the work of the Kingdom.
- From the 70 he called **12**, who would ultimately serve as His Apostles.
- From the 12 he had **3**, whom he would give unprecedented access to. These three would be His leaders of leaders. They would go with him up to the mount of transfiguration and deep into Gethsemane.

Today, we are looking at his selection of the team. The 12 men who would be responsible for an impossible task. The evangelization of the whole world.

ILLUSTRATION: Several years ago, Dr. **S. D. Gordon** wrote a book entitled, "Quiet Talks on Service." In that book, Dr. Gordon paints a vivid fantasy. He shows Jesus walking down the golden streets of heaven. He has just returned from the earth in His ascension. And heaven is eager to greet Him and welcome Him, and the first to greet Him there is Gabriel, and so He and Gabriel are arm in arm, walking along the golden

street. And Gabriel engages Him in a conversation that in the fantasy goes something like this:

"Master, You died for the whole world down there, did You not?" "Yes." "You must have suffered much." "Yes," the Lord said. "And do they all know what You did for them?" replied Gabriel. "Oh no.. no, only a few in Palestine know about it so far."

Gabriel replies, "Well, Master, what's Your plan? What have You done about telling the world that You died for them and shed Your blood for all of them? What's Your plan?"

And the Master is supposed to have answered, "Well, I asked Peter and James and John and Andrew and a few other fellows if... if they'd make it the business of their lives to tell others. And then the ones they tell could tell others, and then the ones they tell could tell others, and finally it would reach the farthest corner of the earth, and all would know the thrill and power of the gospel."

And Gabriel is said to have replied, "But suppose Peter fails? And suppose after a while, John doesn't tell anybody? And what if James and Andrew are ashamed or afraid? Then what?"

To which Jesus says, "Gabriel, I have no other plan. I'm counting entirely upon them."

What a task, and what a team!

I doubt any of us would have selected the team Jesus chose. These are not men experienced in revolution. They are not community organizers. The greater portion of them were fishermen.

BUT IT WORKED - how? Why? Let's look at it carefully and see if we can make sense of the make up of this team.

TEXT: Luke 6:12–16 (ESV)

¹² In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.

The ebb and flow of Jesus's days were not altogether different than ours. He worked hard and ate meals; he slept at night. But at times, he gave an entire night to prayer.

This night, before selecting His team, he spent the entire night seeking the face of the father. Likely praying through various men he had worked with. Praying about each one as Samuel would have stopped and considered each of Jesse's sons. Waiting on that clear prompting of the Father saying, "This is the one."

Prayer is the often overlooked yet indispensable resource in leadership.

- You can build a profitable business without prayer, but you can't build a fruitful life without it.
- You can assemble a team of sharks to corner the market and dominate the competition without prayer. But you can't do so while simultaneously shaping the hearts of your kids and perpetually winning the heart of your wife without it.

We say this often, but the Christian does not have the luxury of living for a single bottom line. We are required by God to manage multiple bottom lines.

In fact, the task before you is absolutely impossible without God as your resource.

Martin Luther was in the habit of praying 4 hours per day, except when he was busy, then he prayed more.

You don't have enough time in your day NOT to pray.

And you better know which things require you to pull an all-nighter.

1. They were Faithful

¹³ And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles:

Now, remember, the word **disciple** means student. There were many disciples, but the 12 would receive the commission as **Apostles**. Apostles are authoritative messengers who would go out in the power and in the name of the one sending them.

Jesus would choose 12. Judas would disqualify himself and be replaced by Mathias. Then Paul would later be added to the number again by the personal appointment of Jesus Himself.

There are no Apostles of Christ today in that sense. The Apostles had a certain calling card - they were able to demonstrate and manifest the same types of miracles Jesus performed. Paul said it this way in,

2 Corinthians 12:12 (ESV)

¹² The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.

These Apostles had the authority to walk into any church at anytime and pull rank.

Even today - every staff member and every Pastor works under the authority of these men as they submit to the Word of God. You see, these were the men responsible for our New Testament. Each book of the NT was either written by these men or under their auspices.

14 Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, 15 and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, 16 and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

2. They were Men

The most obvious things at times can be the easiest to overlook. Every single individual called to be an Apostle was a guy. Why is that?

3. They were Ordinary

- The first four men mentioned were all in business together. Peter, Andrew, James, and John were all fishermen on the Sea of Galilee. They had servants or employees, so they were likely very good at what they did. They were basically small business owners. They didn't have an enterprise large enough for a corner office. They still had to get on the docks and pull in the fish. But they were certainly good at what they did. They probably sold both wholesale and retail.
- Matthew (or Levi) was in the government sector. He was a tax collector. Tax collectors were white-collar. They did have the C-Suite office. They rode to work on the finest of camels.
- Simon the Zealot was deeply entrenched in cultural reform. He wore the Gadsden flag on every jacket. He went to every protest. He was at every right-wing political rally.
- James and John were the most interesting of the bunch. Jesus gave them the name, "Boanerges" which means, "the sons of Thunder" (Mark 3:17). Both of these men had forceful personalities, zealous and passionate about... well everything. That passion was at times misguided... Zeal without Knowledge.

On one occasion, they saw a group of Samaritans who insulted Jesus and they answered, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" (v. 54; cf. 2 Kings 1:9–12).

The thing we do not find in this band of brothers is a single expert in religion. You see, working for Jesus is much like learning to play golf. You have a distinct advantage if you are a novice - you haven't learned a ton of bad habits.

It is far more difficult to **UNTRAIN** than it is to **TRAIN**.

I've seen this with staff. If they come from a healthy church, they can be a great asset. If not, they tend to view our team through the lens of their old team. If they were at a

church of 500, it would be difficult for them to function in a church of 1,000. At times, it's better for us to hire a person with no experience at all.

- David was a shepherd when God called him.
- Elisha was a farmer.
- Daniel was serving in the court of a Gentile King.
- Luke was a medical doctor.
- Paul was a tent maker.
- The great evangelist D.L. Moody was a shoe salesman.
- Billy Sunday played professional baseball.

Don't think because you are a grown man with a clear career path, you will never hear the call of God. God works in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform.

They were remarkably ordinary...

4. They were Diverse

a. They were Financially Diverse -

We have already pointed out that the team was made up of people from different socio-economic backgrounds.

But the differences went far deeper than that.

b. They were Culturally Diverse -

Phillip for example, was called by the Greek version of his name. That shows us that he was a Hellenist. The Hebrew community was basically split over those who thought it best to go with the flow and adopt Greek language and customs, and those who liked it better the old way.

Remember we talked about the intertestamental period how Antiochus Epiphanies sought to wipe out Jewish culture by a process of Hellenization? Well the Hellenists were those who went along with that.

It was incredibly controversial. We read of the first major church fight in **Acts 6:1 (ESV)**
¹ Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.

The Church selected 7 men as Deacons. Now interestingly those 7 men, were not only full the Holy Spirit and Wisdom... they were also made of a majority of hellenists. Notice the names...

Acts 6:5–6 (ESV)

⁵ And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and

Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. ⁶ These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

Jesus team of 12 had some people who saw the world differently. You see, we aren't called to robotically line up on every single issue. That is what a cult looks like. A Church is different - we will all agree on some things and we won't agree on some things.

They were economically and culturally diverse...

c. They were Politically Diverse -

We see Matthew (Levi) was a tax collector. He was a Roman Sympathizer. In fact, he was on Rome's payroll. Then we have Simon the Zealot. Those men didn't vote the same way. They didn't watch the same news channel.

- Matthew spent his adult life working for the very administration that would eventually make his religion illegal.
- Simon spent his adult life resisting Rome and just praying that a riot would break out like what happened during the Maccabean rebellion.

Yet, there they were in the same small group. Neither misunderstood Jesus. They were BOTH called to be there.

Both would have to surrender some of their previous beliefs for the sake of the Kingdom.

- Matthew could no affirm the Roman Motto that Caesar et Kurios.
- Simon could no longer seek to advance the Kingdom by the sword.
- Simon would have to surrender his previous prejudices and serve a Master who wanted even the Romans in the Kingdom.
- Matthew would be called to reach the very Jews he had taken advantage of in his former life as a tax collector.

But it worked. Community has a way of doing that - when you are brought into a community with people who are different than you, you learn how to think and act in a way that doesn't sabotage the process.

5. They were Teachable

These men were all going to mess up in all sorts of ways.

Matthew 16:13–20 (ESV)

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴ And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.” ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” ²⁰ Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

Now our friends in the Roman Catholic Church would suggest that this was Peter’s ordination at the first Pope. Why we ask, “Because Jesus said he was the Rock on which the church would be built”. But if we continue reading we find that just a few verses later Jesus calls the same man, “Satan”.

Matthew 16:21–23 (ESV)

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” ²³ But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

So the ROCK on which the church would be built would not be the rock of Peter but of the confession of Peter made possible only by the illuminating, regenerating work of God the Father through the Holy Spirit.

It is the CONFESSION not the CONFESSOR, that Jesus is affirming.

By the way, this is also one of the great confidences we can have in our profession of faith. If you give the good confession that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior and Lord of the World - you can rest securely that flesh and blood did not reveal this, but God in Heaven did a prevenient work of grace in your soul.

Peter gives me a lot of hope.