

Study Guide for Personal Reflection

March 31 – April 1, 2007

“The Twelve”

Focus Scriptures

One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Luke 6:12-16 (TNIV)

Background Notes on Greg’s Sermon

Jesus of Nazareth started a movement the likes of which the world has never seen. The Kingdom of God that was lived out in Jesus’ life and ministry has touched millions of people all over the world. What’s impressive is that Jesus began with just 12 chosen people. In Luke 6:12-16, we see Jesus choosing twelve apostles from among his disciples. An apostle is simply someone who is given authority by another, and is then sent to carry out the message and mission according to that authority. Even though there is a special significance as to why Jesus chose 12 apostles, it should be noted that they were not the only apostles spoken of in the Bible. Actually, the term apostle can be appropriately given to any person who is called, gifted, and sent by God in a leadership role to carry out God's commission. From the twelve apostles, Jesus gathered a force of transformation that began to change all the ideas of what the Messiah was to do.

When looking at Jesus’ choosing of the 12 apostles, there are three main questions to be asked and answered. They are the following:

Why twelve persons and not some other number?

The number 12 was an important number in the Old Testament because it represented the 12 tribes of Israel. As Messiah, Jesus was placed in the role of God’s supreme Servant, representing the God of Israel. He was the living reality of what Israel was supposed to do for the world. His choosing of the 12 apostles indicated a new renewal of things. In this time of renewal, the twelve chosen apostles were seen to be replacing the 12 sons of Jacob, from whom the 12 tribes of Israel emerged. They were to sow the seeds of godly knowledge and living throughout the world...just like the 12 tribes of Israel were supposed to have done. In the “New Israel”, belonging has nothing to do with human ancestry rather; it has everything to do with the Person of Jesus.

Why did Jesus choose Judas to be one of the twelve?

There have been many who have wondered why Jesus chose Judas to be an apostle when it seems that he was already “destined” to betray Jesus. Unfortunately, there are many misunderstandings about this. Looking at the nature of prophecy fulfillment in the Scriptures can help clear up this misunderstanding. Contrary to popular belief, the idea of “fulfillment” doesn’t solely mean the prediction of future events. It refers to a time when something or someone “supremely demonstrates or illustrates” a principle that’s been articulated by Scripture. In this way, Judas, in choosing to work against God’s plan in Jesus, made himself a traitor in a deep way that supremely demonstrated the principle of betrayal that David talked about in one of his Psalms. It is not necessarily the case that Judas brought a predicted future event from the Old Testament to pass.

Why did Jesus choose the particular 12 that he chose?

We have no way to know exactly why Jesus chose the 12 apostles. What we do know is that there was not a "popularity contest" going on when Jesus made his choices. He chose people of various stages of life and perspectives. Moreover, in choosing the 12, he called them to a life of courage and sacrifice. Each person that Jesus asked could have just said "no", but in saying "yes" they were making the decision to active discipleship under Jesus' care, which was distinct from being someone in the crowd who supposedly supported Jesus.

Questions for Personal Reflection

1. What would give some people the belief that God has "favorites"? What are some things to help change people's minds about that belief?
2. What are some ways that people can grow in their ability to live self-sacrificially?
3. What do you believe are some things that cause followers of Jesus to become more passive "spectators"? What can be done about these temptations?
4. Think about your life, particularly about your interaction with God. What are some ways that you could get more clarity on what God has called you to do for his Kingdom? Write these down for future prayer.

Prayer Requests for the Week

Prayer is the very life and breath of Woodland Hills Church. It sustains the momentum of the church to fulfill our calling and destiny by releasing God's anointing and power on behalf of his people. Please help us pray weekly for the needs of our church at large.

1. As Easter approaches, please cover both the Good Friday service and the Easter Sunday service in prayer. Many visitors will likely attend (who perhaps only find themselves in church this time of year), so pray that their hearts will be open and receptive to the message they will hear. Ask God to work through Greg to speak to each person who attends a service that weekend.
2. Starting April 11, for three Wednesdays, the Care ministry will present "Discover the God of Love," a series that explores how we create internal images of God that either move us toward or away from more intimacy with him." Pray for those attending the conference that through learning how they view God they can change their personal concept of him and grow to know and love him better. Pray for those who will be presenting the material, that God can use them to accomplish his will.
3. We will be holding our Discover Covenant Relationships class April 14. Pray that those who attend these classes will catch the vision and mission of our church and feel led to call Woodland Hills their primary place of worship and ministry. Pray also that they will start to see the unique gifts God has given them and how they can be best used to further the Kingdom.

Thank you for your commitment to this church body!