

Jesus did not pick his disciples because of any worldly qualifications that they possessed. Many of them had ordinary occupations. A few were wealthy, most were not. Some had occupations that were often vilified and ill-spoken of by the public, like Matthew (a tax collector) and Simon (a Zealot – a radical militant Jew who fought against the Romans). It was not necessarily what Jesus called them from, but rather what Jesus called them to, that was the most significant. It also was not by their own ability but rather the enablement of the Spirit and faith in their master Jesus, whom they walked with, that enabled them to do extraordinary things. During Jesus' ministry the disciples baptized those who believed in Jesus **(John 4:1-2)**

and they also went out two-by-two into many cities in Israel to tell people of the Messiah who had come

(Matthew 10)

. Jesus gave them the power to cast out demons, heal the sick, and perform miracles as they went from town to town. All this came from the power given to them by divine authorization, support, and their receptive faith to carry out their task.

The faith of those among his group of disciples varied, and each had their own distinct personality. Philip was inquisitive. Peter was outspoken and prone to act first and think later. Other disciples were more quiet and didn't get in the way much, yet were no less firm in faith. Jesus however saw the condition of their hearts and their potential to operate in faith, over and above what ordinary people might have perceived them to be capable of. Thus he entrusted them with his most private sayings and treated them all as friends, even Judas the betrayer. Jesus had more disciples than just the twelve during his ministry, but the twelve were his most loyal followers who stuck with him to the end (strangely even Judas remained with Jesus till near the end). This shows the twelve disciples as his most loyal followers, even through their faults and weaknesses.

Jesus at one point in his ministry had many followers, but when he taught some things that were hard to accept many forsook him: *"As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore"* **(John 6:66)**. Yet Peter, when asked along with the remaining disciples whether they would like to leave also, replied *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life"*

(vs.68)

. The twelve proved to be those that listened to those words of eternal life and the teachings of Jesus and dearly clung to them. The kind of disciples that Jesus used to spread his eternal

Gospel were those who had been tested in faith and found worthy: not by virtue of their former professions or accomplishments but because of their faith and their subsequent works of obedience which they demonstrated in following him. Jesus commended his closest disciples saying to them, “

You are those who have stood by me in my trials

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(Luke 22:28)

. They endured trials and were found to be worthy and loyal.

Because of this loyal faith demonstrated by the disciples Jesus was able to use them for the glory of his Father in heaven to spread the good news of the coming kingdom of God. Jesus after his resurrection told the disciples, “*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*

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Matthew 28:19

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. If it were not for the disciples’ faith and God’s enablement they would have been here laden with an impossible task. The equipping for ministry was given to them by Jesus in the form of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, which they received because of their faith and expectation that Jesus would perform what he said he would. Jesus told them “

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth

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(Acts 1:8)

. The moving forward of the kingdom was relentless, as Jesus alluded to when he said about the kingdom “

everyone is pressing into it

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(Luke 16:16)

. The command to go out and preach the Gospel was given by the Lord of all things, and the disciples were working with the relentless momentum and movement of God’s kingdom upon and throughout the earth. If God was for them, who could be against them?

The entire book of Acts bears out the witness of how the faith of the disciples carried them forward and out into the world with the marvelous testimony of Jesus Christ, not only in word but also in deed and power! Though preparation and training is required for effective discipleship, faith and obedience are the main requirements and the main qualifiers for anyone carrying out ministry. The Gospels and Acts prove that any man or woman, no matter how humble a background they come from, may be used to powerful effect for the kingdom of God by trusting in Jesus Christ and his power to affect people’s hearts and lives. The relentless power of the

Gospel is God's very own, and we are merely given the task of faithful stewardship in the act of carrying and releasing it to the world!

Very simply these action-words sum up the ways the disciples became effective followers and proclaimers of Jesus Christ, which act also as admonitions for us from Scripture: Believe, Learn, Trust, Follow, Obey, Proclaim, Mature, Endure, Pray, Rejoice, and Hope. These are all fruits of faith and of the Spirit which the faithful believer will cultivate and produce in effective ministry and walking after Jesus, the Lord of all creation.