Philip, “The Practical Disciple”
John 1:43-46, 6:5-7, 12:20-22, 14:8-11

Introduction: **What kind of people does God use for His purposes?** What kind of men did Jesus Choose? Often, when people think of the twelve Disciples, they are prone to think of stained-glass saints, men without faults, men who manifested none of the failures that beset the rest of humanity. But if you look at the Apostles that way, you’re wrong! They were people just like all of us. Even though they were specially called, specially transformed, specially trained, and specially sent by Christ, they were people just like us.

In identifying the twelve Disciples we have focused on Matthew 10:1-4 where again we read, “And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. (2) Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; (3) Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; (4) Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.” We have already discussed the first four disciples Jesus chose. As we review them, we are reminded that they were people much like we are.

Jesus used dynamic, strong, bold leaders like **PETER**, who took charge, initiated, planned, strategized, confronted, rebuked, and commanded people to Christ.

Jesus also used humble, gentle, inconspicuous, quiet souls like **ANDREW**, who sought no prominence and never preached to crowds, but quietly brought individuals to Christ.

Jesus used zealous, passionate, uncompromising, task-oriented, insensitive, ambitious dynamos like **JAMES**, who wound up getting killed because nobody could handle them.

Jesus also used sensitive, loving, believing, intimate, truth-seekers like **JOHN**, who spoke the truth in love and attracted men to Christ.

Those four men, **Peter, Andrew, James** and **John**, made up the first, most intimate group of Apostles. Now let’s continue on to the second group and to the Disciple **PHILIP**. This is **PHILIP** the disciple, not to be confused with **PHILIP** the deacon in Acts 6 who later became an evangelist.

Now all the Twelve were Jews, but for some reason, **we don’t know why** Philip always went by his Greek name.

It’s interesting to note that when those of Greek descent wanted to see Jesus in John 12:20-22, they went to Philip. Since his name was a Greek name, it’s possible that they felt more comfortable going through him if they wanted to see Jesus.

In all the lists of the twelve Disciples, Philip is always mentioned at the beginning of the second group. This seems to indicate that Philip was the leader of group two which included three other men, Nathanael, Thomas and Matthew.

According to John 1:44, “**Philip was of BETHSADIA, the city of Andrew and Peter.”** In all probability, Philip had grown up with Andrew and Peter, and was perhaps a close friend of theirs. In fact, there was probably an established friendship between Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Nathanael and Thomas prior to their discipleship since they most likely were all fishermen from Galilee.
This was the Bethsadia Jesus referred to when He said in Matthew 11:20-21, “Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.” Here is a city that had seen the mighty works of God, yet had not repented. But one day the grace of God reached down in this wicked city and God put His hand of mercy upon a man by the name of Philip.

That means something to me. There are wicked cities all over this nation, even in this area. Wickedness is everywhere. The environment of the earth is a depraved one. But God, even in this environment, is able to lay hold of men’s lives, save them and change them. That is what God did here. And that is what I believe God can and will do even in our area, if we would be willing to respond and do as Jesus said in Luke 14-23,

“So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. (22) And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. (23) And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.”

Matthew, Mark and Luke did not mention anything about Philip except his name. On the other hand we discover in John’s Gospel that Philip was mentioned FOUR times, giving us an opportunity to get to know him.

First: John 1:43-46, “The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. (44) Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. (45) Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. (46) And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.”

From verse 43, we have the first direct call of a disciple. Peter and Andrew had already met Christ, but they had sought Him out. Philip was the first individual to whom the Lord expressly said, “Follow Me.”

Looking at verses 43 and 45 raises a question, “Did Jesus find Philip or did Philip find Jesus?” In verse 43 it says that Jesus found Philip, but in verse 45, Philip told Nathanael that he found Jesus. From the Lord’s viewpoint, He found Philip; but from Philip’s viewpoint, he found the Lord. So which one is right? I believe both are right.

The sovereign view is that God finds you, but the human view is that you find God.

When salvation occurs, both you and God are seeking each other.

Jesus said, in Luke 19:10, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

God also said in Jeremiah 29:13, “And ye shall seek Me, and find me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart.”

God seeks the true heart that seeks Him; and this is illustrated in the call of Philip. Jesus found him, but He found a man who was honestly seeking the truth.

Now at the beginning of verse 45 we find Philip’s immediate response to his own conversion: “Philip findeth Nathanael” and Philip, right away, had a personal testimony. If you are saved, you too have a personal testimony to share with others. I do not believe in this “closed mouth” kind of Christianity where people say:

“I am a Christian, but I don’t believe in acting like a fool about it.”

“I am saved and sure of heaven, but who am I to share what I believe with anyone. I don’t want to offend anyone with my religion.”

Listen folks, does not the Bible teach us in Romans 10:11 “For the scripture saith, Whosoever
believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.” Does it not say in Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” Invariably, when someone becomes a Christian, their first reaction to that experience is to find a friend and tell him what has happened. Unfortunately, many Christians lose this initial desire to share their faith in Christ with their friends. And when that happens, it’s a sad commentary on one of two things: either they think that they don’t have any unsaved friends, or they don’t think their salvation is important to others. Both viewpoints are tragic!

**What do we learn about Philip from this account in John 1:43-46?**

First: We learn that he was truly a religious God-fearing Jew who was honestly seeking the Messiah.

Second: We learn that his immediate response to his own salvation was evangelism. He immediately went to his friend, Nathanael, and told him about Christ.

So Philip had a seeking heart and the heart of an evangelist.

**Second: John 6:5-7:** As we come to John 6, it’s important to remember that Philip had seen Jesus make water into wine, (John 2:1-11) as well as many other demonstrations of His supernatural power. In fact, Jesus had just spent the entire day teaching and healing the diseases of a crowd of 5,000 men and at least 20,000 women and children. As evening approached, this massive crowd began to get hungry. With that as background, notice John 6:5-7, “When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? (6) And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. (7) Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.”

Now, why did Jesus single Philip out? I believe that Philip was in charge of the food. We know that Judas was in charge of the money, so it’s reasonable to assume that somebody was in charge of the food. Therefore, it seems reasonable to say this was Philip’s area of responsibility. So the Lord said, “Philip, how are we going to get the bread to feed these folks?”

Perhaps you are asking, Why, did the Lord ask him that? Verse 6 gives us the answer. “And this He said to prove him” or we may read it, “Test him.” Jesus knew that He was going to feed them miraculously, but He was testing Philip. In other words, He was saying, “Philip, you’ve seen me perform miracles, now since we don’t have enough food for this multitude, what would you suggest?”

In verse 7, we have Philip’s reply, “Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.” The fact that Philip gave Jesus an instant answer proves to me that he was responsible for the food. He had already analyzed it and figured out that 200 denarii would not be enough money to feed the crowd. The reason 200 denarii wouldn’t be enough was because one denarii equal to a day’s wage only bought 36 barley biscuits. So, when Jesus asked Philip how they were going to feed the crowd, we see that he had already figured out that 7,200 barley biscuits wouldn’t be enough to go around.

**What do we learn about Philip from this account in John 6:5-7?** The Supernatural resources of Jesus Christ totally escaped his thinking; he just calculated everything out on a human level. Philip was **analytical**, **pragmatic**, and **pessimistic**. He was the kind of person who would sit in a church meeting and punch all the figures into his calculator, and then say, “Can’t do it! We don’t have the money! It can’t be done!” **Philip analyzed too much to be adventurous, and was so stuck on facts that he missed faith altogether.**

It’s interesting that Jesus had been healing all day long and Philip had been watching the demonstration of His supernatural power. But he still said, “It can’t be done!” He was a “Facts and Figures” guy with a blind eye to the supernatural; he lacked **FAITH**.
God still tests our faith today. There are times in which all the calculations say, “there is no way, it can’t be done”. It is then that we need to sit back and say, “Lord, I believe you are who you say you are, You have the way, the means, and the power to pull this off, beyond any human facts and figures. So I’ll just sit back and watch my supernatural God pull this one off for His marvelous Glory.” You see the Bible says:

- In Hebrews 11:1 “Now faith is the substances of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”
- In Hebrews 11:6 “But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”
- In II Corinthians 5:7 we read, “For we walk by faith, not by sight.”

Third: John 12:20-22: In verse 20 we find several Greeks desiring to find Jesus. “And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast:” These were God-fearing Greeks who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Notice verse 21, “The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.” These Greek devotees of Judaism heard about Christ and wanted to see Him, so they went to Philip to arrange a meeting. Well, Philip may have been an approachable, warm-hearted fellow, but he didn’t take these Greeks to Jesus. Verse 22, Philip said you guys wait here, and then we read, “Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.” He must have been thinking, “I don’t know if I can let you see Jesus,” so he gets Andrew to go with him to ask Jesus if the Greeks can visit with Him.

What do we learn about Philip from this account in John 12:20-22? Do you know what was bothering Philip? He was still living under Jesus’ command of Matthew 10:5b-6, “...Go not into the way of the Gentiles...But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Philip didn’t know if Jesus would see these Gentiles, because he was always going strictly by the book. HIS VISION WAS SO NARROW THAT HE MISSED THE MESSAGE OF GRACE. Yes, Jesus did come to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but He also said in John 6:37, “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Unfortunately, Philip lacked the power to see beyond the specifics to the spirit of grace. Sometimes that happens to us in the church.

We sometimes say it can’t be done that way because it has always been done this way. So we think it is this way or no way. How misguided and shortsighted when there are 1000’s of souls out there dying and going to hell because we can’t see beyond the “this is the way we have always done it” mentality to the spirit of God’s eternal grace needed to reach those souls.

Fourth: John 14:8-11: The setting in John 14 was the upper room on the night of the final Passover Supper. Jesus was unfolding His heart to His disciples since He knew that He was about to be betrayed, arrested, and crucified. In verse 8, Philip speaks unto the Lord, “...Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” Now notice our Lord’s reply in verses 9-11, “Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? (10) Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. (11) Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake.”

What do we learn about Philip from this account in John 14:8-11? For three years Philip had gazed into the only face of God men ever saw, and he said, “Show us the Father.” Can you imagine that? Is it any wonder that we have people today who are saved, going to church on a regular basis and still really don’t know who Jesus really is? Remember it was Paul who said in Philippians 3:10, “That I may know Him...” Not just know the facts about Christ, but know Him intimately through the experience of having the Lord touch our heart and soul and life on a daily basis.
The Gospel of John shows us that Philip had a heart that was seeking and evangelistic. But it also shows us that he was a man of limited ability, and inadequate faith. He was a man who immersed himself in facts and figures, but missed the big picture of Christ’s power and grace.

Philip’s faith was limited by money, circumstances, and proof. He was pessimistic, reluctant, insecure, unsure, analytical and skeptical, yet the LORD USED HIM anyway!

In fact, someday he’s going to reign over the tribes of Israel in the kingdom.

Tradition tells us that Philip died as a martyr, because he wouldn’t deny his Christ. He was stripped naked, hung upside down by his feet, and pierced in his ankles and thighs so that he would slowly bleed to death.

I’m glad that God can use the slow, faithless, analytical skeptics. Why? Because many of us find ourselves in that category, don’t we?

If God has spoken to your heart after reading the sermon, Philip, “The Practical Disciple” then right now talk to God about what He has spoken to you.

Do you have the assurance that one day you will go to heaven? If you have no assurance that you know Jesus Christ, then I trust you will decide to accept Him as your personal Savior. The Bible tells us in

Acts 16:31, “...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...”
Romans 10:13, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

This prayer is here for those who need to ask Jesus to be their personal Savior: “I do want to go to Heaven. I know I am a sinner, and I do believe Jesus Christ died for me. I realize I cannot buy this great salvation, nor can I earn it. Knowing Jesus died on the cross and arose from the grave to pay my sin debt and to purchase my salvation, I do now trust Him as my Savior, and from this moment on I am completely depending on Him for my salvation.”

If you made the decision to accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, would you please let me know? Please send me an e-mail to pdnikBBM@aol.com, and in return I will send you some literature that will help you in your Christian life.

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