

The background of the image is a photograph of a stone church. The church has a dark red tiled roof and a large, ornate Gothic window with tracery. To the left of the church, there is a large green tree. In the foreground, there is a green lawn and a stone pillar with pink and white flowers. The sky is blue.

# The Church of 12 Members

GRACE AKALONU

## **Elohim Be Glorified**

To our Heavenly Father, who reveals the secrets in the tenets of the Scriptures for our edification, learning, and wisdom, be glory and honour forever.

# The Church of 12 Members

Grace Akalonu

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the King James Version of the Holy Bible

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## THE CHURCH OF 12 MEMBERS

*And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils: And Simon he surnamed Peter; And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder: And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite, And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house. Mark 3:13-19*

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## Introduction

After several weeks and months of prayers, I dragged my feet to get into looking at the lives of the disciples. Hesitant because it is one of the foremost teachings of the Christian faith. The assumption is that everyone knows about them, hence the popular names Pete, Andy, Jon, Jamie, Tommy, Nath, Bart, Philip, and Matt, and no one dares Judas Iscariot, not even as “Juddy Isky”.

Sadly, we settled with window shopping them and have not gone in to see more on offer. On the showcase are ‘Thomas the Doubter’, ‘The Fishermen’, ‘The Sons of Thunder’, and ‘The Traitor’. We have not asked why Thomas doubted because he was such a good man during their stay with Jesus. Why did Peter deny Jesus despite being the Head Boy, and what about the ambitions of James and John? Could it be a family trait from their mother? So many intriguing things about these men will get us thinking and reflecting on our lives. We need all the pieces to get the perfect picture of the jigsaw. Please don’t stop at the window. Grab a basket, and let’s go in for some exciting shopping.

I had a conversation with a Pastor who was so distressed that their church had not grown. By growth, he meant numbers and not spiritual growth. He had thought of throwing in the towel and calling it a day. He was not alone. Many Pastors worry about the number of people in the churches they pastor as they think this determines the success of their ministry. Yet, have we noted that



Jesus had only twelve church members? By today's standards, this is a failed church with stunted growth, and the Pastor would be deemed to be without anointing or calling. A Pastor, with twelve people, for the time Jesus was on earth, will probably want to quit or will be summoned to the headquarters with immediate effect. It can be discouraging. The church is not about number chasing and games!

Why did Jesus choose only twelve, not five thousand, to show off his anointing and power to gather the crowd? He had a church of twelve people, and even then, one got lost. What the Bible says about the lives of these twelve is humbling, especially for those who count 'church membership' numbers as a yardstick of success. We can learn from this.

Building a church requires much diligence. It is about discipling, knowing, and feeding the flock and takes prayers, encouragement, mentoring, rebuke, correction, reassurance, and care. It is not easy to do that if you pastor many people. How far can anyone go with a thousand children? It is impossible to remember their names and faces, let alone how each one is doing. It's embarrassing to ask your child, "How are your Mum and Dad doing?". It happens in many churches with large crowds. Pastors do not know who the people are and are unaware of their problems, worries, pain, joy, and sorrows. Nobody wants to be lost in the crowd or be a statistic. We prefer to be part of where we are known, looked after, nurtured, and prayed for.

A perfect picture of a church is the one Jesus pastored. Among them was Peter, whose ups and downs were routing, James and John with the anger of thunder, Nathanael who would profile anybody, Thomas who would believe nothing, Philip who was unsure of himself, Andrew who would not settle for less, the two

## INTRODUCTION

whose voices were not heard, and of course Judas, who betrayed Him. So, for every twelve-member church, these characters will show up. A church of twenty-four people will have two of these individuals, and you can multiply as the church increases. It means that a church of one hundred members will have eight Judases, and who can survive them? Be careful of number chasing; it is better to pastor twelve to heaven than a thousand to hell.

## Peter

**T**he life of Peter is a wake-up call to what is happening in our lives. Peter, called with a clear proclamation on his life, was a man of mixed character with much that was good but also some less desirable personality traits. We cannot rule out that we might have the same faults and weaknesses. One day, Peter is at the top of the mountain; the next day, he is at the valley's base. Peter's struggles and success should encourage us to continue in the Lord; we will make it despite our limitations. Peter, who was so unstable, became the class captain. Despite everything he got wrong, he became number one. He was a leader who was concerned about the welfare of others. He made it to the pearly gates and left us with the challenge.

### The upside of Peter

There are many sides to Peter's character, which are commendable and worthy of emulation. His simplicity and open-mindedness got him a place among the twelve. His boldness further took him to the position of the resident Pastor of the team. Below are some of those attributes.

#### **Peter was called**

*Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to*

*become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him. Mark 1:16-18*

Peter followed Jesus immediately. He made no excuses and did not ask a thousand and one ‘whys’. No wonder the Lord bore with his deficiencies and inadequacies. He was unlike some of us who would have asked why we should follow Him. Some will say, “Nobody pulls the wool over my eyes; we are in the century of know-how”. Peter left his net and followed the Lord. The Lord uses those who will not ask Him who He is or want to see Him at their houses for a talk before they follow Him. It takes some people years to answer the call of the Lord because they have put other considerations first. People take their time. They cast a fleece like Gideon or set a ditch and ask the Lord to fill it with water before they can believe.

The Lord may be telling you He loves you. He may ask you to come unto Him with all your heavy labour and burdens. Like Thomas, some may want to say, “Until I see Him, I can’t believe”. With all his deficiencies, Peter followed the Lord without hesitation because it wasn’t about the little things that pulled him down but about the heart. Jesus saw in him the material that would last. Anyone who will forsake anything to follow the Lord is the right person. Watch out for such people in the church. Once you tell them something needs to be done, they offer help and never give excuses. We have a Pastor at church who goes out of his way to serve. It doesn’t matter what you say to him, he agrees to do it, and it gets done. He may look tired, but he still does what needs doing. Such people will go a long way with the Lord; you can spot them easily. It doesn’t matter what, they will put everything aside to do God’s work first. Have patience with such people. You will go a long way with them. Please nurture them. They have some qualities others don’t have.

Serving the Lord is about sacrifice. Those who enjoy excuses deny themselves of being used by the Lord. You might use being stuck in traffic, your job, as an excuse. Those things are okay, but you will not be counted worthy by the Lord.

*Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. Psalm 50:5*

Peter gave up what was his life for Jesus. May the Lord open our eyes not to throw away the baby with the bath water. The Lord knows Peter will last the test of time. Look beyond people and focus on their strengths.

### **He had a large heart**

*And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Luke 5:1-3*

Peter was happy to loan Jesus his boat, although he caught nothing through the night. He should have been moaning and complaining about not having anything to feed the family for the day. Jesus asking for his boat would have been an excellent opportunity to make a hard bargain on what he would pay him for his ship. At least to make up for the loss of the night. Peter kindly allowed Him to use his boat. That act was a good example and an indictment of those who do transactional Christianity. They do nothing for nothing and look for a reward in everything.

### **Soft-hearted**

Peter was forewarned that he would betray his master, and he refuted it. It did happen, and he wept bitterly for it.

*And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out and wept bitterly. Matthew 26:75*

Few people will be convicted of their wrongdoing. You will be looking for trouble if you try to correct them. The correction may be taken later when they reflect on their actions, but at first instance, they will argue. Some people don't repent at all. They are so filled in their ways.

May we have a tender heart like Peter to cry unto the Lord and ask for forgiveness when we do something wrong or deviate. Fall forward to the Lord. Don't fall back to Satan. We should not sin; if we do, we have an advocate, the Father. We should ask for forgiveness. God is faithful and just to forgive us for all unrighteousness.

*My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 2:1-2*

When the Lord took a towel to clean the disciples' feet, Peter refused to have his cleaned, probably for humility. The Lord told him, "Peter, if I don't wash your feet, you will not be part of me". And quickly, he asked for his feet and body to be cleaned. People who make up when they are corrected are genuine. Such brethren are teachable and good examples to others. They will endure till the end.

I pray we can cry when we do wrong and not justify ourselves and blame others for our failures. We pray for more tender-hearted people. May God help us acknowledge our weaknesses and run back to Him. We should not allow ego, chauvinism, conceit, and

arrogance to hinder us. Let's take pride out of the way. The Lord needs people who are more tender at heart and in every way. For some, they have a sense of confidence when they harden themselves. God is the Potter; we are the clay. Allow Him to break you up and remould you. He may have moulded us as a cup but now wants to use us as a plate. Give Him a chance to break the cup and remould you to be a plate. He is our maker. He will use us the way He wants. I pray we will be as malleable as Peter in the hands of the living God.

### **He could take corrections with grace**

Those who do not understand their journey with the Lord get offended when corrected or rebuked. They complain and murmur, not knowing we are pruned to remove the dross from our lives. When Peter was rebuked, he did not retort rudely:

*But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men Matthew 16:23*

You cannot say 'Get thee behind me' to anybody today. You will be taken to the front page of social media for the world to write their piece of mind on you. You would be dubbed 'The most horrible Pastor of the year', yet those brethren are not savouring the things of God but of men. They are spots in our feast of charity and a bad example to the brethren. They do not want the Pastor to say a word about what they are doing in the church. Peter said something unadvisedly. The Lord knew it wasn't Peter but Satan speaking through him. The Lord rebuked Satan. Peter continued, and he didn't run off. For some, that would have been the last day at church. May the Lord humble us. Peter knew what he was looking for, a better city whose builder and maker is God. He did not allow anything to put him down. Please don't run off when

you are corrected. It is the only way to make it in life. David did not justify himself when he sinned against God by numbering the children of Israel. He acknowledged his fault and pleaded for forgiveness. When asked to choose between falling into the hands of God or his enemies, he opted to fall into the hands of God than his enemies. He knows God is compassionate, and His mercies endure forever. It is not His will that any man should perish. David knew it. Do you know it?

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9*

Don't justify your sin so that the promises of the Lord can be fulfilled in your life. Satan will happily push you out of the church, where you get the word of eternal life to stand firm. He will bring ego and pride; don't fall for him. Some people will ask you to correct them when they do wrong. Dare correct them, and that will be the beginning of problems. Give them three weeks, and they are gone with evil speaking. It is only a joke when they ask you to hold them to their word. They will go if you cross their red line. Pray the Lord will break every spirit that will stop the grace of God in your life. He will give it to you in the name of Jesus.

### **Understood things more than others**

It was clever of Peter to understand and acknowledge that Jesus knew everything and needs not anyone to tell him. We cannot hide our thoughts. He knows our persona and what we can do.

*So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the*



*third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. John 21:15-17*

The Lord asked Simon Peter, “*Lovest thou me more than these*”?

He would have thought: “Lord, you know my inconsistencies, denial, conceit and tender heart. You don’t need to ask me; you know all things and created me. If I lie, you know how I feel, you know. You’re the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords and know I love you. You did not commit yourself to any man, for you knew all men (*John 2:24-25*). Although I have one or two things that trip me off right deep in my heart, I, Peter, love you. I will go with you, and I will stay. I will remain a believer to the end of my life”

## **Discerning**

Jesus made a strong statement regarding himself. He said, “*Unless you eat my flesh or drink my blood, you have no life in you*”. People got offended by that. The Scribes, Pharisees, and the crowd asked what He meant. Is he going to kill himself? This is a hard message. Who can hear this, and what is this man talking about? Many of His disciples left except the twelve. Some leave the church when things get unstable at church. As soon as the church announces any mission trip, work or contribution, you won’t see them in church again. Off they go. Any little thing, any persecution, any trial, they pull away. They complain about how long they are in church, yet their problems still linger. They will leave and try another church, looking for a miracle. They don’t understand who Yeshua is.

He turned and asked them if they would go also. Of the twelve, he knew Yeshua.

*Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. John 6:68*

I am happy for you to go too. It was hard teaching. Some people have left the church because of a message on holiness and stopped being your friends on social media. They do not repost your messages because they think it is hard and not politically correct. Message on holiness is not for the 21st century and will not attract people. They will compare you with preachers with 30,000 members. You will be told their words are smooth, kind, and encouraging and tell people they can make it. Mark the broad way, many go through it to hell, but narrow is the gate, and very few go into it. Are you part of that team that frowns at hard messages? Such messages hurt the Scribes and Pharisees. They couldn't stand it because it convicted them of the sin of righteousness and judgement.

Will you also go? Peter said, 'No, we know who you are. We are going nowhere'.

### **Insightful**

Peter showed vital insight when Jesus asked them who they thought He was.

When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of

the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ. Matthew 16:13-20

Being insightful, he knew Christ was Elohim, The Messiah to come. This answer brought promotion to Peter and transited him from Simon Bar-Jona to Peter. That was how he became the class captain, and others looked up to him.

### **Courageous**

Peters was very courageous. Peter asked the Lord to bid him come. He stepped out on the water. He was a hero. They supposed Jesus was a ghost. They have seen no one walk on water as an experienced fisherman. The Sea of Galilee is not one you joke with. May the Lord give us the grace to trust him even to do impossible things.

*And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. Matthew 14:26-29*

This courage is required to face demons, principalities, and powers. Another instance of Peter's courageousness was at the sepulchre.

*So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about his*

*head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. John 20:4-7*

If Peter could walk on water, entering the grave was nothing to him. John got there first, looked in, but couldn't go in. Peter went in straight, not being afraid of anything. Being a leader has some attributes that go with it. You take the lead. In the olden days, Kings lead the war, but nowadays, they hide in their bunkers and give orders to those on the field. Many Overseers cannot pray or confront and challenge the principalities oppressing the brethren. They don't go on evangelism, and they slouch back. They are afraid to preach the truth for fear of men. Peter was not so.

### **The downside of Peter**

There are the downsides of Peter, which are still predominant among us in the church. We pray to learn the lesson from them.

#### **Slow in understanding deep things**

*And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: not that which goeth into the mouth defoliates a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications,*

*thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man. Matthew 15:10-20*

The very Peter who discerned that Jesus is the son of God displayed a lack of understanding. Have we wondered why some people in the church are cold to spiritual things or make mistakes you did not expect? Honestly, it is not because they are malicious or do not want to be stable. Look well, they do not understand spiritual things. They are shallow. You beat them for nothing; they have no clue what you are talking about. Pastors should learn from Peter's case and explain things more. Please don't take it for granted that everyone followed, especially those older in the faith. They may have been in the church for many years, but their spiritual growth is stunted.

Peter asked for an explanation of this parable which seemed straightforward. Jesus said to him, are you yet without understanding? The main issue is understanding. It's not zeal, service, and how long you have been at church. It's about understanding what the scriptures say.

I know how often people come to us for counselling with various issues. One verse of the scripture sorted everything for them. This is why our Lord Jesus did not stop telling us to preach the gospel to every creature but added to teach them to observe all things He has commanded us; *Matthew 28:19*. If you don't teach people the word, they will not understand and may make rash decisions.

Peter didn't understand the simple parable. Don't take it for granted that everyone in the church understood what was said. They didn't get it. If Peter didn't get it, some people would not. Give more explanation, and when questions are asked, do not be offended. May the Lord give us grace.

## Self-interest

Peter wanted to know what is in following Jesus for them.

*Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? Matthew 19:27*

Jesus told the rich young man to sell all he had and give to the poor. He sorrowfully left because it was a hard thing to do. Jesus told them it would be hard for a rich man to enter God's kingdom.

Peter couldn't take that.

"What was wrong with being rich? They are already enjoying heaven on earth, so they will have a free pass to heaven since they own a lot of things here on Earth?"

Peter supposed that man's life consists of the abundance of things he possesses. In his imagination, if the rich would not make it to the kingdom, then who else would make it?

He was very outspoken. He told the Lord,

"If they can scarcely make it, as the road is so narrow, what happens to us who have forsaken everything and followed you? I have left my net, my father and the fishing industry. James and John left Zebedee and Sons Fishing Limited. Matthew left his work as a tax collector, which gave a lot of money in those days." And Peter asked, behold we have forsaken all.

You may be in the same shoe as Peter today. Recounting all you have left for the sake of the gospel, things you have been deprived of, and you are asking God what your reward will be. That is transactional Christianity. Give God £10, and He will give you £20: "Casino and Jackpot Christianity." While others are into the prayer of intercession and warfare, you are into the prayer of complaining and moaning. Don't forget:

*If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. 1 Corinthians 15:19*

We of familiar sayings like, “I’ve been here sweeping the church. When will I be made the assistant pastor? I’ve been on evangelism. I’m looking forward to the day I will be crowned Evangelist of this church.” Position seeking is the most common reward seeking in churches. These brethren do not cause trouble. They persevere, doing the job, but they are looking for a bonus right inside their heart. May the Lord help us know there is a bigger reward in heaven.

Man cannot reward you. Everything we do should be as unto the Lord and not as unto men. It should be unto him. Hear the answer the Lord gave Peter:

*And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first. Matthew 19:28-30*

The answer Jesus gave Peter contradicts what most Pastors will provide today. They will tell Peter he will be the next exchequer of his nation. He will own 100 houses, 100 shoes, and a fleet of cars and will defeat his enemies. The likes of Peter at church will shout the loudest Amen and Amen!

As a preacher, do you give people answers like Jesus or give them a “cork and bull” promise that is neither here nor there? Jesus pointed them to everlasting life. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His word will not. It’s all about eternal life. Peter was thinking of an earthly reward, and Jesus reassured him that his reward is eternal. They will be with Him forever to judge the twelve tribes. Peace shall be upon them, and He will be their light.

They will sup with Jesus on that beautiful table that many were called, but few were chosen to dine on. When people seek only earthly good, may we remind them of the good that moth cannot eat and thieves cannot steal from where it is being stored. Point them straight to the Lord. Jesus did not promise him an aeroplane, Jet engine, children, riches, miracle, etc. He pointed Peter to the ultimate.

Satan took Jesus to a high mountain to show Him the kingdom of this earth. He told Jesus he would give it to Him if he bowed. Jesus said: “No, that’s not it. I created it. It is temporal and only for a season.” Please, when Satan tries to convince you of what he can give, look up to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, and refuse Satan. Amen.

## **Cowardice**

Peter, who could discern that Christ was the Messiah, walked on water and was timid and cowardly. Peter would be our time’s timid Apostle, Bishop, Prophet, and Evangelist.

*Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. Matthew 26:69*

He acted cowardly to a young damsel. She told Peter blankly that he was one of the disciples. He would have acted manly, and the girl would have kept quiet; instead, Peter acted cowardly and denied the Master. He repeated that to another maiden. Peter said: I do not know this man. He called his master “This man,” which is heartbreaking. They that stood by confronted him. He cursed and swore. We can point fingers at Peter, but many have denied Jesus openly. When you are ashamed of Christ in public, ashamed to preach the gospel, you are not known in the office or school as a Christian, and you party along with pop and fashions of the world, you have denied Jesus. If you continue in lies, fornication



and adultery, luring others to sin, engaging in fights, pornography, abusing oneself, and idolatry, you have denied Christ openly. The spirit of timidity will make you lose confidence in yourself. Getting that little warmth put him into trouble. It will war against anybody's soul at a critical point.

Please check occasions where you denied your faith because you feared being ridiculed, excluded, or persecuted. You joined them because you didn't want to be looked down. Peter did it. Don't deny the Master.

### **Controversial**

*Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head John 13:6-9*

Peter may have thought it was of humility to refuse to be washed by his master, but there was more to the exercise. He wanted to teach them something. The position they are called into is for service. Not the place of taking big titles, grand chairs, or sitting on the throne of their congregations.

It is pride to make yourself a big chair with a big arm and sit back to be served. I wonder how people are comfortable doing so. That's pride. It is the other way around. Leaders are there to help and wash the brethren's feet. If you are being served, it is a privilege not to be abused. No wonder Peter wrote of the example Christ has left us with.

*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: I Peter 2:21*

## Little Faith

*But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? Matthew 14:30-31*

Halfway through coming to Jesus on the water, the wind became boisterous. He cried out. The other disciples were quiet, but Peter asked to bid him come but didn't have enough faith to carry on his adventure. The wind came he started sinking. Embarking on a mission without commensurate faith will sink you. Peter was looking at the wind. In his mind and as a fisherman, such wind will sink your ship. He forgot the master of the ocean was in front of him. Can He not save him if he could bid him come on water? He wavered and good, a thing, he cried out for help. Some people will not cry out. The lesson is to look unto Jesus, not the winds of life trying to blow you off. Peter would have just believed when the Lord told them it was him, but he wanted proof. Don't sink in unbelief.

## Selfish

*Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. Matthew 17:4*

Peter wanted them to build three tabernacles to stay with Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. They were taken to the transfiguration to see what others didn't see. He wanted to build three tabernacles to remain with them. What happens to the other nine downstairs? They can go home. Some people don't care about others when they get what they want. They keep moving. They don't look at others to know if they are following. You might think they are focused on what they do. It is not necessarily so. They are acting

like Peter in this case. We should look out for others. Check out on others to see if they are well and everything is okay. Stop running off on your own. It's not zeal at all. Make sure you carry everyone along. Peter said let's build three Tabernacles: that was not zeal. He saw something he had not seen. Many see revelation and run with it so enthusiastically that they don't consider whether it's crushing others. Don't run alone; get others involved.

### **He went back to the old**

*Therefore, that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. John 21:7*

He jumped into the water because he was embarrassed. A leader's sin is a leading sin. The suggestion to go fishing came from Peter, and others followed without questioning. When Leaders do wrong, everyone follows them. Peter forgot the mandate that they would be fishers of men and no more fish. If others wanted to go fishing, Peter should have been the one to say no, but he led the team. Please do not take God's people back to servitude. Jesus called them little children because they behaved like one. How can one be called a little child after being made an Overseer? They left their first love and convictions and went back to spiritual Egypt. Compromise mellowed them down. When one tolerates the things the Lord hates and does not want to see you are not focused on what you are called to do anymore. You have allowed the crowd to press you hard, and you melted.

Peter toiled all night and caught nothing, and the Lord asked him to launch out into the deep, and he saw the miracles of fishes he could not handle. Please check that venture that is not working. It will be a vain toil when you leave God's mandate to chase after yours. You will definitely catch nothing. It might not be Satan

hindering you. You might be the Jonah in the boat, causing the high tides ready to spend a 3-day holiday in the belly of a fish.

It is not right that we go back to the things we have forsaken: worldly ideas which we have rejected at salvation, change our church lyric from Satan to Jesus, yet the same disco and pop music. It ought not to be so.

Peter took the class backwards. How many pastors have taken the church backwards? Showing a bad example at church will take people back to the old. Don't come to church exposing your body. You cannot use summer as an excuse. Those in the Sahara Desert are still covering. Showing off your cleavages is indecent. Wearing a bikini on the beach with all eyes feasting on you is wrong. Please don't return to Egypt; it will mean enslaving yourself again.

Please conserve your gunpowder and do not throw it at Peter. Anybody can go back to fishing. The temptation to return to what used to work or one's past comfort zone is real. May the Lord help us stand firm in the name of Jesus. Amen.

### **Inconsistent**

*Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. Matthew 16:22*

Peter rebuked his master when he said He needed to go because that was why he came. Familiarity can make us rebuke our leaders. Sometimes we think it is boldness, but be careful. We deny ourselves certain opportunities when we look at things with a carnal sense. Christ was teaching them the profound principle that will keep the body of Christ, but then his mindset was not renewed, and his understanding was poor. Some people need more explanations to understand spiritual things. Don't be confused with their service and forwardness. Teach them; if not, you will assume a lot about them when they are actually in the baby stage. He left himself open, and Satan spoke through him. It doesn't

matter what position you have attained, be humble. Don't rebuke your leader, especially when you are not privy to the revelation given to them.

### **Vengeful**

*Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. John 18:10*

He cut off Malchus's ears quickly at the garden of Gethsemane. Why did he do that? That is Peter for you, too quick to talk or act; he is very forward. Anyone who behaves this way makes a lot of mistakes. Jesus told him to withdraw his knife. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.

Peter did not despise his inadequacies in the fulfilment of God's promise. Only be strong and of good courage, don't run off. Many people run off when they have failed in certain areas, and sometimes churches do not help matters. People are thrown into the backyard when they sin instead of praying, encouraging, and urging them to get up again. It is a race: If you fall, get up and continue.

*For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: But the wicked shall fall into mischief. Proverbs 24:16*

Don't sit back on the floor. Satan will love to kick you down but deny him the joy of watching you sit on the floor. Get up as long as you still have your feet to walk, and if you can't walk, do crawl and make sure you are not where Satan has put you. Get up! Peter was a rugged fisherman with no formal education or finesse. He believed what was spoken about him, and you can do likewise. Peter kept on. Though Peter was rebuked sometimes by the Lord, he remained because he knew Jesus had the word of eternal life.

Job also knew life is only in God and said:

*Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: But I will maintain mine own ways before him Job 13:15.* All it takes is desiring and confessing it.

### **The punctures on Peter's tyre**

We have looked at Peter and his attributes, inconsistency, roller coaster life, and being funny on one occasion in the valley and the next on top of the mountain. Sometimes he will act cowardly, another time bravely, one time lack understanding and another time full of insight. This could happen to anyone today.

A diligent look at the occasions Peter made mistakes reveals what goes on in our lives today. We are born again, but inherent unpleasant attitudes beset us. They are not outright like stealing as with Judas, but the weight of little foxes can bear one down and limit the pace of progress in our Christian lives. We pray the Lord will open our eyes in humility to recognise ourselves and be saved.

### **High self-esteem**

*Peter answered and said unto him, though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Matthew 26:33*

He esteemed himself more highly. The Lord told the disciples that trouble would come, persecution would come, and they would be offended by him. Peter was so sure of himself and boasted of being the last man to stand. Anyway, he was the second to fall after Judas. Jesus knew the future. The Lord who formed us out of the dust knows us from the beginning to the end. Before we were conceived, He knew us. He told Nathanael before I knew you when you were sitting under the fig tree.

Self-esteem is the worst enemy of man. It keeps one in blindness. It boasts of great things and leaves one in a bubble. You see what you can do and not what you cannot do. Your contributions are the best at meetings, and your decision is final.

*For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. Romans 12:3*

Don't think more highly than you are. Peter felt so, but he failed too cheaply to a damsel, a maid and the men. How many times have we said we cannot fail but have crashed out before one can say, "Jack Robinson?" You can ask the Lord to help you. Some have been ordained into the ministry and thought they could do more than others. They boast about the innovative measures they will apply, but till today, they have done nothing in church. Some ask to be ordained as Apostles when unhappy with persecution and false accusations. They will not give up things, take a risk, denied of convenience, be beaten, suffer, take their cross daily, and pay any price that goes with it.

Some want to be Pastors but are not happy to follow people through difficulties, sit with them, comfort and be patient with them. Some people want to be Evangelists but are not pleased to reach out to people, travel, go to remote areas to preach, go on the street and knock on doors. They are ashamed of the gospel. Paul said he was not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation. Some desire to be prophets, but their prophecies are to those in the palaces and not to people with low incomes, unlike John The Baptist, who wore Carmel's skin in the wilderness and ate locusts and wild honey. They do not want to be like Elijah, who confronted Ahab and Jezebel and told them who they were. They are not happy to be Nathan, who was bold enough

to tell David his sin. How can the titles be when these qualities are missing? They don't know themselves. Peter was confident when he told the Lord not to worry, and he would not deny him. Hopefully, we ask the Lord to reveal who we are so we don't go down this route.

### **Boastful**

*And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.” Luke 22:31-34*

Peter over-evaluated himself. The Lord tried to call him to order, but Peter was conceited. He was proud and boastful of his achievements and the things he could do. Some individuals get angry when you warn them of their attitude. They may argue but are ignorant, make a mistake, and return to square one. Nothing gives Satan joy more than messing up a brother/sister who will not heed counsel. He hardened the person's heart; sometimes, they do things intentionally to tell you they are grown and free to do what they like.

Peter thought he knew himself, and sometimes we are happy to talk about ourselves with certainty. It is the Lord that searches the heart. You may occasionally find yourself in this position. The good news is that you shall be saved. Peter doesn't have the capacity, and the Lord knew his limitations.

*For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.” Galatians 6:3*



Everything is by the grace of God. All our wealth, experience, or everything it takes to be somebody is nothing to boast about. They are gifts of God.

*And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. Matthew 23:12*

The world is about selling oneself, self-projection, and proving oneself, though with craftiness and deception. People take on jobs pretending to be experts, but they will learn on the job with many mistakes in the first year. This can also be seen in the church when people take on responsibilities they cannot do. If you leave it with them, it will not be done.

### **He was at ease in Zion**

*Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. Matthew 26:38*

He asked them to watch with him, but they slept off. We can blame them, but let's think of ourselves first. Do you leave the responsibility given to you to do other things and give excuses to back your negligence? You are in the same boat as Peter. Some of those excuses may be very valid: tiredness, work, friends, children, travel, delay, sickness and so on, but the thing here is that flesh was not resisted. The job, children, and promotions we prayed for and got blessed should not be used against God. The deliverance from poverty is what we are using to excuse ourselves from God. Peter was tired, and that was valid, so what are our valid excuses for neglecting the things of God?

*And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Matthew 26:40-41*

Because Peter and the others slept off, they didn't know when the soldiers surrounded them. If they were awake, they would have seen them coming. If we are alert in the spirit, we will see danger coming. Worldliness, pride, and boastfulness can go with us when asleep in the spirit.

*Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came! Amos 6:1*

Some people don't understand what is happening at church because their spiritual antenna is not sensitive, and they are at ease in Zion. Mingling with the world when we should separate ourselves will dull your spiritual senses. If you entangle yourselves with the flesh, you may not understand God's will for you.

*Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. Mark 13:33*

*Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. Luke 21:36*

We do not want to repeat the mistake of Peter. He was asleep on the war front.

How many of us are at ease in this time and age that the trumpet is too close to sounding? How many are engaged at other things than the things of the Lord? Samson thought he could wake up after telling Delilah the secret of his power. His hair has been shaved off, and his strength went. Many hairs have been shaved off, sanctity lost, eternal life lost while mingling with the world, all in the place of ease. Many have lost eternal life with just one moment of carelessness and compromise. Everything they built in the Lord struck down. We must ask the Lord for grace to be watchful and continue in prayers so we don't fall into temptation.

All these are written for us as an example. We have to take a deep breath and tread carefully. May Elohim help us.

### **He followed from a distance**

*“And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.” Mark 14:54*

*“But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest’s palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.” Matthew 26:58*

Because Peter followed afar off, he went on to the wrong track and got into temptation. He joined the wrong company, and anything goes with such people. Many have followed the wrong track and lost their heavenly high way of righteousness and holiness to follow the broad way. When people warm themselves with the wrong people, it affects how they talk, reason, dress, and do things. Their attitude will change, and you doubt if they are born again, especially in times of trials and heat. They will deny the faith at a split moment of pleasure. Just for a birthday, some people have gone back to worldly things, alcohol, worldly music and dancing and lose the good work done in them. They can argue that it is a onetime treat. Please don’t treat yourself to hell just for one day. Moses took the kingdom’s reproaches instead of enjoying Egypt’s pleasures for a while. I have seen Christians who dress so indecently at their weddings, and you wonder where our holiness has gone. It is as if they are blinded and cannot see. Do not allow any occasion that lasts only a few hours to spin off your salvation.

### **He was rash at doing things**

*Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant’s name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the*

*sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? John 18:10-11*

Peter drew his sword and cut off Malchus's ear. He was too quick to act and did not think, which is common among those who do things rashly. They do not deliberate before taking decisions. Rashness also goes with talking too quickly before you think. You might realise afterwards that you would have done it better with a good strategy.

*Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD , Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone , a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Isaiah 28:16*

The grace and vision may have been given to you. Please wait for it. It will not tarry and will surely come to pass. May we be sober and diligent because our adversary, the devil, is going like a roaring lion seeking whom to devour. Don't be carried away by excitement. Ask God how to do it, and you will be guided.

### **Peter joined the wrong company**

*And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself. John 18:18*

He found himself in the wrong place. A Sea of Galilee fisherman warming himself in the palace. You can imagine that! That was a misfit. He may have been dazzled by the decors, marbles and magnificent pillars and lost himself. No wonder he denied his master. Anyone can do so. You will be lost when you leave the quiet, protective place where the Lord had kept you to seek the goodies and pleasures of the high cities. Those fancies will rock you off the cliff. You can't handle them. You will be overwhelmed and jump off the cliff. A typical case will look like a village girl

who finds herself in the city for the first time and tries to dress like a celebrity. She will look so ridiculed.

Be careful who you join with zeal, especially mature people who think they can do what they like and want.

A conversation started in the wrong company, and they detected Peter's accent and asked him if he was a Galilean. His accents betrayed him. You will no longer fit in with the outside people when you have been with the Lord for a few years. You will dress corporately to attend a rock and row or Rastafarian party. You won't speak like them or conform to their ways. Everything will go wrong. It will be like swimming against the current, putting a new wine in an old wineskin. After being with the Lord, it will be a struggle to go back to the world.

No one says you should not keep warm, enjoy yourself, chill out, party, or holiday. Be careful not to do the right thing at the wrong place and time. Be cautious so you don't deny your master. Peter did when they recognised him, and what can anyone do in the face of pressure? Those who go on beach holidays and wear bikinis on a body meant to be covered should be careful. Your body is the temple of the Living God and should not be exposed for people to feast on.

Don't be carried away by the enjoyment. I know a sister at church who asked me if she could go on holiday with friends. Of course, by all means, do, but where and who are those? She said Egypt with an old friend. I jokingly said, "*Woe unto them that go back to Egypt to seek the pleasures*"; *Isaiah 31:1*.

"Old friends," I said. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. What have you got to do with the old? I begged her not to go. Anyway, she went on holiday and came back smelling woe. The cigarettes and alcohol she gave up came back. Thank God she recovered. We should all be careful.

## He denied knowing the Lord

*And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. John 18:25*

Christians who are ashamed to identify with Christ, especially in the office, school and gatherings, deny Christ. Their dispositions and manner, speeches, preferences, things they go for and the things they take pride in doing can deny the Lord.

I was in a tearoom, and some men debated tithing. A lady who was a woman leader at her church was asked if she paid tithe to the church. She said she was not foolish to do that. Despite being a woman leader, she goes to church with her senses. She denied Christ to conform to the people. They expected me to comment as a Pastor. I knew they were lying in wait, and I was the target. I ignored them. You don't preach doctrine to an unbeliever and avoid endless genealogies that engender strife. What they needed to know was salvation and not the argument on tithing. I asked the Lord for wisdom and took on the Sister some days after. She had been expecting that. I told her she denied Christ in the face of adversity. She was repentant and was convicted and had expected our meeting. I prayed with her, and she learned her lesson. Denying the Lord may not be intentional, and we can ask for forgiveness. Some of us are not known to be Christians in our communities and families. They are surprised when you are not involved in some things because nothing of you shows Christ.

## He cursed

*But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept. Mark 14:71-72*

When you put yourself in a tight corner, you will go to any length to curse and swear to deny the Master. Peter's case is to tell everyone not to boast about anything or regard ourselves more highly than we ought to. Though born again, serving the Lord, ordained, one could easily fall into this.

A little carelessness, being at ease, following the Lord from afar, cursing, wrong company, wrong place, and lack of understanding can throw one off. Satan needs a tiny hole given to him, and he will use a bulldozer to widen the opportunity and gain access to one's life. Please don't give him a chance! Resist him steadfastly, push him back. He is like a crack in a wall in winter. The cold draft can be chillier than the outside temperature. Don't leave a crack in the wall of your life. Close up every gap.

Please don't stop at what tripped Peter over because he bounced back to vibrancy, new Peter, glorious Peter and was bold to talk to anyone. No wonder Jesus told them to tarry in Jerusalem until the power came.

## **The Life of Peter After the Pentecost**

### **He tarried with others to receive the power of the Holy Spirit**

The life of Peter after the Pentecost typifies what the power of the Holy Spirit can do in the life of anyone whose Christian life swings from the low to the high. The transformations and renewing are spectacular.

Peter persevered and believed the Lord for his life and what was said of him. He didn't allow his shortcomings, the things of the flesh, to take him off course but stayed. When the power came, he fulfilled his ministry, became a pillar to others, and represented the team as the head.

The Lord knew what would manifest in Peter at the coming of The Holy Spirit. No wonder the Lord told them to remain in Jerusalem until the power came. Stay in His presence, wait on Him until the power comes, for by strength shall no man prevail.

There is nothing we can do without the power of Elohim. He will teach and guide us in all truth. He will direct us. The world we are in is a world of trial with many temptations. Satan goes back and forth in this world, seeking whom to devour. Jesus knew that and told them to tarry until He visited them. Promises are yet to be fulfilled, work to be done, and more journeys to make. He still needs Peter to bring them together.

Many people are so impatient to tarry. Thomas left and returned to doubt because he was not there when Christ visited the team. The Christians Paul met in *Acts 19:1-6* did not know any other baptism because many left before the power came on them in *Acts 2*. They knew only the baptism of John. The 120 that tarried in the upper room got the power. I pray that you will wait on the Lord and say this: "Lord, renew me, walk out yourself in my life, strip me of myself and put your glory into my life."

### **Boldness**

*But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to Hearken unto you more than on to God, judge ye. For we cannot but Speak the things which we have seen and heard. Acts 4:19-20*

It is amazing how the power of The Holy Spirit transforms and emboldens a man. When the Lord took over, Peter, that was a coward who denied his master three good times, stood in boldness to respond to the council. He withstood them eyeball to eyeball and asked them if obeying them rather than God was right. He confronted the same crowd of High Priest, Scribes, and Pharisees he feared. Peter did not hide from them anymore. When The Holy



Spirit fills you up, the boldness that came on Peter will come unto you in the name of Yeshua.

## **Grace to discern**

*But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Acts 5:1-3*

Peter was so filled with grace that he knew Ananias and Sapphira were lying. The power of God struck them. This grace on anyone makes it impossible for deception to pass through. Fake preachers will not pass, lying brethren will not confuse the church, and secret sin will not prevail. As a church and individuals, we will be in the knowing. We should desire this grace in our lives and ministry.

## **Healing Anointing**

*And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength Acts 3:4-7*

Peter and John told the man at the beautiful gates to rise and walk in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. It doesn't matter where you are coming from. If you allow Yeshua to fill you, you will do the same.

*Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. John 14:12*

Peter remembered this scripture and knew the power was now in him. He did not doubt, and the miracle happened through them. The disciple did many miracles and signs that the shadow of Peter was healing the sick. That was the incredible power of God in a yielded vessel.

*Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed everyone. Acts 5:15-16*

Peter who asked Jesus why they couldn't cast out the demons from the lunatic boy in *Matthew 17*, now heals folks vexed with unclean spirit. And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.

*Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder*

*place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting. Matthew 17:14-21*

## **Fearless**

Peter became fearless and preached in the name of Jesus openly. No more intimidation and cowardice.

*Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? And, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Acts 5:28*

Those still crippled with fear of declaring the word are yet to have the power of God come on them.

## **He Endured Persecution**

*And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ. Acts 5:41-42*

This time around, the scourges on Peter meant nothing. Before the Pentecost, Peter could not endure persecution or bear any hardship as a good soldier of Christ. He couldn't wait for an hour in prayers in Gethsemane. Peter denied The Master when he saw the scourges, the spats, ridicule and dragging of the master. He will not be roped into this kind of agony. He could see the cross coming on him and didn't want to bear any pain or suffering. He treasured the flesh more. He cherished the life that would end at any time more than eternal life.

They were thoroughly beaten and let off. Instead of Peter crying, he rejoiced they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ. Both Peter and John, in one accord, rejoiced and counted themselves worthy of suffering shame for Christ. Many will not

take the persecution today, making room for false preaching. When things go hard, some comment, "If not this Christianity, I would not have been suffering." They only want to hear what will gratify them, what to eat, drink and wear. Churches that preach thus get people in their numbers to fill their churches. They do not want to suffer for Christ at all. They can't give up sleep for Christ and give excuses for any inconvenience. Anything to touch their pleasures is not accepted, and they will drop a note. Such does not make excuses at work even if it snows 2 feet of snow, but the brightest sun will stop them from church. They pay all sorts of contributions but nothing to the church. Peter took the shame with joy. Shame can come through trials, sickness, ridicule, open persecution, and rejection. It can come through lack, and you watch others with their silver and gold. Rejoice as long as you are not suffering for evil doing but for good.

### **He became a pillar of strength**

Peter wrote the letter to the churches to encourage all not to give up on anything. Peter went through a lot and, on one occasion, said what he had no insight into with boldness. The Lord told him Satan had desired to sift him like wheat, but He prayed for him. The First and Second Books of Peter were letters written from experience.

*Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:5-7*

He knew the power of the Lord kept him. If not, he would have gone. Peter was mentioned 27 times in the Gospels. He is a man that recognises grace and salvation and now admonishes us the power of God keeps us. The temptation and trials can be quite challenging, as was with Peter. He is concerned that we don't make the same mistake but hold to the salvation we have as Jesus is the Rock we can stand on. Peter went through trials. He knew what it meant to have a free fall with your tummy flat on the floor. He is telling us not to give up. Please don't fall for any trial; they work together for your good. The trial of your faith is much more precious than gold. Without a test, there will not be any testimony. Until you are thrown into the Lion's Den, you will not know the lions can be your friends. Until you are in the fiery furnace of fire charged up seven times, you would not know that the fourth man will appear. If you don't get to the Red Sea, it will not part. If you look at it from far, it will loom large, and fear can kill you. Walk to it. As soon as your feet step into it, it will part.

His faith was tried with fire in so many instances. His denial of The Master was fire, and he's telling us to stand firm so that we might be found unto praise, honour, and glory at Jesus Christ's appearance.

### **He warned against Fleshly Lust**

Peter admonished us to avoid fleshly lust that once put him in trouble. He knows what fleshly desire can do, as he had been a victim.

*Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God which had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; 1 Peter 2:10-11*

He was a nobody, an ordinary fisherman. Peter knew that fleshly lust could war against the soul of anybody, as it did with him. He would have remembered Yeshua asking him if he loved to fish more than Him. It will resound like this,

‘Peter, I called you to be a fisher of men earlier. But Peter, you’ve not seen me just for a few days, and you have returned to that fishing. Peter, why all these fleshly things? Why the carnal food that fill you for now and goes to the drought? You left the everlasting food that I will give you to hunger no more? The drink I will give you to thirst no more.’

Peter remembered his days in the flesh and the questions of who would be the greatest. We have left all to follow you, so what is our gain? What is in this kingdom for us? Many people will not engage in anything for nothing. Something must be in there for them. Fleshly lusts will war against the soul. He remembered warming himself in the palace, a thing he shouldn’t have done in the face of adversity.

### **He warned against vengeance**

*Not rendering evil for evil, not railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are unto called, that you should inherit the blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.  
1 Peter 3:9-10*

Peter was too quick to talk before the Pentecost. He is telling us to refrain our tongues from evil. He asked how often my brother sinned against me, and I would forgive him. It didn’t take him time to draw his sword and cut off Malchus’s ear. The power has come, and Peter is writing that we should not render evil for evil.

When the power of the Lord comes into your life, old things will be past. People want to know how we made it and what we went

through. It is good to share so that others can get strengthened.

Knowing what it means to be vengeful, he tells us not to go down that route. Hopefully, we will heed him.

### **He warned against conceit**

Peter knows where conceit landed him as the team captain, sitting in the seat of the scornful and, at the same time, following Yeshua. It led to his denying his master.

*Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, is a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in faith, knowing that the same afflictions that are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all Grace, who had called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you are so far the word may make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle to you. To him be glory Dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 5:7-11*

Humility is essential for our walk with the Lord. Those who despise it will not please God, though they might be preaching so eloquently. No one should be confused with such. The Word of God is powerful and can convict anyone, irrespective of the preacher. There is no need to wonder why God is still using those who are not humble. If God can use an ass and a stone, he can use anyone. He could use anyone if he could open Nebuchadnezzar's mouth to proclaim the Lord's name and speak through the mouth of Kings that do not know him to say prophetic things concerning his name. On the last day, many people would come and speak to Him: "Lord, I did this in your name, I did that in your name". He said to them, "I don't know you depart from me, you workers of iniquity." They may gather a crowd, but don't be deceived; the Bible must always be true. Peter knew about being lofty; he didn't

humble himself and made mistakes here and there.

Peter worried about what they will eat and drink and asked us to leave such worries with the Lord.

Peter was warned of the trick of Satan to sift him, and so was the best man to write on sobriety and diligence. He didn't listen when he was warned and denied his master thrice. Some of us do not heed this counsel and prat about in arrogance dotting around the pulpits. They don't know Satan is walking like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

### **Admonition on Virtue**

Peter escaped the corruption in the world. The power of The Holy Ghost helped him. He is writing frankly to anyone who will take it.

*And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*  
*2 Peter 1:5-8*

Peter cannot over-emphasis diligence and faith. He would have sunk in the sea for being faithless. If you don't know Christ and take Him for granted, you will make the same mistakes Peter did, but if you know him for who He is, that all power belongs to Him, He is coming again to take us to heaven, and things would be different for you. Make sure there is temperance in all you do. Peter knew what he did to him in the past, but now advising every believer. Be patient. Tarry for the Lord. Don't run off again to take your brethren fishing. No, wait when the Lord says wait, the Bible



said, for the vision is for an appointed time, though it tarries wait. It shall surely come to pass.

He realised the importance of virtue. If these things are lacking in you, you'll be like Peter before the Pentecost. You will be with the Lord, following him, seeing all the signs, with a great proclamation made on you, yet it will not be fulfilled. As we add all these things and be diligent in ensuring our calling and election are right in line with the will of Elohim, we will reap the promise below;

*But beloved, be the ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:8-9*

Those who do not believe that The Holy Spirit exists today will remain in Peter's old life. Ever learning and not coming to the knowledge of the truth. They will not overcome their sin. Peter turned from a coward to a bold man, a fearful man to a fearless man, timid to outspoken when the power of The Holy Ghost came on him. He did miracles he could not do in the past, talked about fleshly lust with clarity, and endured persecution. When we get it right, the sky is not your limit, but heaven.

May anyone who sees himself as Peter before the Power of The Holy Ghost receive strength in Jesus name. The secret to the transformation is not to run off when you do wrong or do not get it. Peter endured and received the promise.

### **He thought about Humility**

Peter admonished the need to be humble. He knew what boasting could bring about in one's life as it dealt with him. He

did not insist on chairing the first Jerusalem council but conceded the role to James.

*And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. Acts 15:13-14*

*Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time 1 Peter 5:6*

### **He expounded on leadership**

Peter can talk about leadership as the leader of the team. Jesus emphasised the feeding of the flock to him. Peter took others to fish when Jesus was not there, which was wrong. He does not want us to repeat the same mistake.

*The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. 1 Peter 5:1-4*

### **Encourages us to rely on Jesus**

*Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion,*

*walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. 1 Peter 5:7-9*

The Lord was patient with him. He was not watchful and was ignorant of Satan. He did not resist him but is now aware and encouraging us to take heed and resist Satan. Peter knew there were layers of virtues to add to every diligence. We thank the Lord for the life of Peter. He is strengthening us through the things he went through. Peter was very tender-hearted and a self-sacrificing person.

## Andrew

**A**ndrew was Peter's brother. He have a noble attitude and displayed it well during their stay with Jesus.

### **He first findeth his brother Peter**

*He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. John 1:41*

Andrew first found his brother. The Lord will use those who will find others. They wouldn't keep grace to themselves alone and would not want to go to heaven without their families. He is looking for those he will use as fishers of men with compassionate hearts. We are saved to reach out to others.

Some think evangelism is meant for ordinary church brethren or new converts. Many Overseers and Bishops do not go for street evangelism anymore. They have retired themselves from evangelism or outgrown it. Thank God for the remnants who still do. Unfortunately, evangelism teams in churches are not well attended, yet we pray for revival.

If you can't win one person, or knock on doors to evangelise, you will never win a million. No way! The wisdom to win a thousand comes as you reach out. It is about gaining experience from each outing.

Crusades nowadays are about miracles, what the Lord will give, signs and wonders like the sign seekers during the time of Christ.

They were not going to Jesus to repent for their sins. Please do not be ashamed to go out there and speak to people or feel you've outgrown it. I pray we will get focused on our primary calling of winning souls.

## **No Complexity with him**

*And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone. John 1:42*

When Andrew brought his brother Peter to Jesus, the Lord made a pronouncement on Peter. He didn't feel bad about it. Andrew was the first to find The Messiah but was neither given any title nor changed name. As soon as Jesus saw Peter, He changed his name.

The ordinary person will complain about this.

'He came to the church first and should be recognised for that. Why was Peter, who joined later, given a title and name change before him?'

He didn't get offended. He didn't get angry. He didn't say;

'I brought my brother. Why would Jesus give him a title and recognise him, not me?'

'I've been in this church for ten years, and you've given me no title, but this brother came yesterday, and you've given them a title.' We see these things in various churches today.

Andrew was a typical example of someone who had a right Spirit. Well, he brought his brother; if the Lord changes his name, fine. It means the name Andrew doesn't need changing. He was okay with Simon to Peter and Cephas as long as he was in the Kingdom. If Peter is more qualified to do the job, so be it. Why will he stand in the way? The Lord knows the capacity of each person. On a positive note, he is a king-maker; without him, the

king will not be crowned. I pray we see everything from a positive perspective.

Peter affirmed Paul when the Lord demanded he reach out to the Gentiles. The disciples and the early church did not say he won't be recognised or ask him to keep quiet. They accepted him and were okay with the calling.

*And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. 2 Peter 3:15-16*

They were accepted when Paul and Barnabas returned to report to the council at Jerusalem what the Lord did with them in missionary journeys. This should be our attitude. We should rejoice in the church when the Lord uses any of us. It's still all of us. We want the ministry to grow, so if the Lord is using any brother or any sister to do things we cannot do, we should give Elohim praise. There's no need to be angry, push and shove, or play politics in the church. It doesn't make sense; we are there to complement each other.

*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; So that the church will profit withal. Ephesians 4:9-14*

We are given unique gifts. Your gift is bespoke and the best. No one else can do it better than you, so there's no need to be angry, jealous, or our doing carnal things to outshine the other person. Some speak louder to overrun others, even in spiritual things like speaking in tongues. They sing out loudest in the choir to be heard

and shout out their prayers to be hailed. There is absolutely no need for such things. The gift of the Lord is given to the church to profit withal.

Gifts are not just for the church but in the place of work, schools, and families. Be diligent and put every effort into the things you do. It will come out the best. A man's gift makes room for him. Your gift will make room for you. Sometimes people don't do well because they leave what they are gifted to do and struggle with what is not given to them, especially in a career. If the Lord has called you to be a carpenter, be the best carpenter, the world is still looking for the best furniture. Ask the Holy Spirit for the spirit of craftsmanship to be the best. Be the best you can, whether a Lawyer, an Administrator, or a manager; your organisational skills will not be matched with any.

Whatever you do, do it with all thy might. In ministry, be content with the office gift given to you, don't covet. It is wrong to ask God to make you an Apostle, Teacher, Pastor, and Evangelist, all simultaneously, when you have not put to work the gift of hospitality given to you. Andrew was more concerned with spiritual things. The most important thing was that his name is in the book of life. He is among the twelve to judge the twelve tribes of Israel on the last day. He was with Yeshua, and that counts most. Amen.

Some Pastors take what Jesus did in changing Peter's name as an excuse to fly out titles to anyone they just met or, even worse, to the wealthy and the well-withal for their money to keep them attending. It is wrong and inappropriate. It is carnal and fleshly and a misnomer. Jesus knew who we were and who to use for offices. He knows the pillars and those who can speak, reach out, and be bold. Let us be content with what we have.

## He will not settle for less

*And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God. Again, the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. John 1:34-40*

Andrew was one of John the Baptist's disciples. As soon as he heard him bore witness that Jesus is the Son of God and The Messiah to come, he left John and followed Yeshua immediately. Though John the Baptist's teachings were excellent was powerful, when Andrew heard of Jesus, he wouldn't settle for the less. Andrew went for the best. How many of us today go for the best? We are in a place we are not adequately fed with the word. We know things are incorrect, the entire Gospel is not preached, and it is a place of error, and we still sit there.

When people complain about the wrong practises and teachings in their churches, I usually ask them what they are still doing there. Don't you know that complaining and murmuring are sins? Why would you sit in a place and mutter that they are not preaching the real gospel and the Lord is not there? Why are you still there? Some stay back for various reasons that are very flimsy. The Pastor trusted them, and they were so close to him. He is their friend, and their parents and friends attend the church, so they remain in a place of compromise. Well, maybe because it is close to the house, you are attracted by the charisma of the Pastor. He is of the same



race or tribe as you. Sometimes people go where they will not be noticed because they compromise their faith or do not want to be committed. You must be playing with your eternal life.

Worst still if you are in such a place because you were made an elder or have been there for a long time. Seeing the day approaching so fast, I can't imagine you doing that to yourself! It would help if you cared about your time being wasted. Some stay because they want to be one of the Joneses; they settle for the minimum. Andrew did not settle for less. He strove to enter when he got the opportunity. May God give us the grace to always go for the best. This action of Andrew changed my life. It turned me around. Some wonder what drives me. One secret is this action of Andrew's. He followed the Lord straight away. My word of encouragement to all is to rise and go for the best. No matter how low you are, Satan beats you, and your spiritual life goes down. Arise and do not remain on the floor. Nothing should stop you, absolutely nothing.

Andrew was allowed into the team because he knew what was good for him. He was a man that could go the length of the journey. Andrew would not leave Jesus for the Scribes and Pharisees. He had weighed them spiritually and knew they were empty, painted sepulchre full of dead men's bones, so he would not settle with them. He went for the real. Will you go for the real and not be tossed back and forth by every wind of doctrine? Andrew wasn't that way. If you want the Lord to use you, go for this quality of Andrews. He made a big difference. It doesn't matter what it takes. When you accept this, you will not go down any lower.

### **Possibility thinker**

*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? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew*

*what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? John 6:5-9*

When the Lord asked Philip where to buy bread to feed the lots, Philip wondered how five thousand men besides women and children could be provided for.

‘What is the Lord asking him for, he might have wondered. Where will it come from?’

Andrew was there. He discerned that something was being staged up. He remembered the nobleman's child got healed, and with Christ, all things are possible. He remembered that it was revealed to his brother Peter that Jesus is The Son of the Living God. If he can do all things, feeding these thousands will be nothing. Andrew saw that lad with five loaves and two fishes. He didn't kick it off. He didn't dismiss it or say it doesn't matter but brought it to the attention of the Lord. ‘If Jesus can ask them to fill empty pots with water and turn it into wine, he can feed five thousand with five loaves or two fishes. All I need to do is speak out’.

He quietly said, ‘There is a lad here with five loaves and two fishes’.

He didn't doubt in his mind. May we believe that with God all things are possible and know who He is and what He can do. I pray we make firm steps of belief in the name of Yeshua. Amen.

### **The Gate keeper**

*And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see*

*Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. John 12:20-22*

Andrew was the gatekeeper and kept his post very well. He was a quick thinker who did not delay connecting those seeking to meet with Yeshua. Certain Greek men asked Philip if they could see Jesus. Philip recognised the grace of God on Andrew and could not go further without asking him for permission. This point is salient; not much was said about this encounter.

### **He defected with others**

*And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. John 21:8*

He went fishing with the rest of the disciples. Nobody reminded each other they had transited from fishing fish to fishing men. They forgot too soon. A good excuse may have been that they were hungry and needed to look after themselves, just like any of us would. The pressure of rent, food, clothing and one and a thousand cares have driven us back to the things we came out from. It could be challenging in ministry, especially if you have a family and are called to the mission field. It could be difficult and tempting. Hunger and lack could haunt you to tears and frustration, all in the bid to see if you will defect. If the Lord lays in your heart to be a blessing to your Pastors or missionaries, please do so. Don't let them go back to fishing fish while souls are perishing.

### 3

## James

**J**ames stood with his brother John in the firm decision to follow Christ. The Lord is looking for those who will forsake Father, Mother and everything and follow him. The disciples left everything and went after Elohim.

### **They left their nets and followed Jesus**

*And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. Matthew 4:21*

They abandoned their profession, means of livelihood, their father, and their boat. They didn't look back or tell their father to keep some money from selling the fish for their use after their service term with Jesus. They didn't negotiate for the selling of their boat. Some of us take one step forward, two steps behind, just as Demas left Paul for the love of this present world.

Those who keep their silver and gold in secure places to answer the call of God will go back to them one day. Storing away the worldly dresses, fashions, and enjoyment when they should be done away with keeps the connecting loop firmly tied. If you keep them in a box or lock them out, you will remember where your treasures are one day. Your heart will be there. Part with them, or they will draw you back. It is sad to see fervent brethren who once manifested the gift of the Holy Spirit slide back to alcoholism

and drinking. They never parted with them. May the Lord help us today to part with sin in the name of Yeshua. We are not of them that drawback.

### **He had fierce anger but didn't quit when corrected**

*And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village. Luke 9:51-56*

Jesus surnamed James and his brother John Boanerges because of their anger. They didn't get angry when the Lord rebuked them. The Lord is looking for brethren who will be happy to take correction. After all, we came to Elohim to take off the dross in our lives.

*And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder. Mark 3:17*

Today, people get angry when they are corrected. They leave the church, speak evil, and defend themselves. What a heart to wish such for their fellow beings. Jesus pointed that to them.

Whatever the reason, the Samaritans wouldn't allow Jesus to pass through their territory is best known to Jesus, who knows all things, but for James and John to take laws into their hands

to command thunder is crossing their line of authority. Don't get involved in the so-called prayer of vengeance. Satan is the one who has come to steal, kill and destroy. Jesus has come that we may have life and have it more abundantly.

Hopefully, we will learn a lesson from the rebuke of James and John. Please don't be part of fire and brimstones prayers; neither buy their books nor watch their preaching. They will make you a spiritual murderer. It is a ridicule of our Christian faith. Those who command people to die are false prophets. They don't have the mind of Christ. They don't have the love of Christ. They don't have the compassion of Christ. Don't say amen to their prayers. Jesus asked us to:

*Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. Luke 6:28*

If they take your outer coat, give them your inner. Bless and curse not, so why would anyone go into the business of cursing people? It's not about them but about Satan, who is working through them to offend you. When the Lord rebuked Peter, he wasn't condemning the physical Peter but the spirit behind Peter's words.

Some go as far as using a stick to beat the images of their enemies. What a joke and a waste of time. That is witchcraft. These vengeful attitudes of praying reduce one's estate. How can you wish for the death of your relatives and friends because they disagree with you? They are still in darkness, and your duty is to extend the light to them. Times used in praying for their death should be for their salvation. Satan is trying to cheapen our Christianity. We should resist him.

## **He was among the Core group**

*And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. Mark 5:37*

James was among the three the Lord called into the inner cabinet. It was okay for him. May we be seen, recognised, and qualified by the Lord. He saw what others didn't because of the privilege of being in the inner court.

## **He was privileged to see the Transfiguration**

*And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. Luke 9:28-31*

He was among the three that saw the transfiguration.

## **They were partners with Simon**

*And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. Luke 5:10*

James and John partnered with Peter. They understood the power of synergy. Christ sent them out to preach, two by two and prayed that they may be one. Some people run alone. They run away with their gifts and callings to do the lone star show biz. They give the ministries their names which is idolatry. You are taking glory by giving the ministry your name, and God cannot share His glory with anyone. We died for no one and cannot save anyone. Those gifts are made for the church that we may all profit withal.

*And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. John 17:11*

### **He defected with others**

*And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. John 21:8*

He went fishing with the rest of the disciples. Don't go back to what you have been saved from. Forward ever.

### **He was the first to be killed of the Twelve**

*Now about that time, Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John, with the sword. Acts 12:1-2*

James and John and their Mum requested to sit one at the right and the other at the left of Jesus in glory. That was very ambitious, and others were offended at that time. Christ offered them a low-hanging fruit by asking them a question that should have helped them decline such a request, but they were insistent. Jesus asked them if they could drink from the cup, which he did, and their answer was loud. Yes! They thought it was a physical thing. They were reasoning with the carnal mind. Jesus told them it was not for Him to decide but for the Father.

Nevertheless, it was their decision and wished to drink from the cup Christ drank from. Wow, that was a tall order for them. Be careful what you ask of.

Some of us are not content with our positions, and we ask for more. One person wants to be the usher, prayer warrior, Apostle, Bishop, and evangelist. The question is, can we take the challenges



that come with these offices? If you crumble on plastics, how can you sustain a stone? Those asking for an Apostle's office or taking the title on themselves have no clue what befalls the Apostles. If they know the implications, the local and international demons to fight, the hunger to go through, new territories to gain in danger, I am sure they will refuse it even offered for free. Those who want to be Evangelists and are full of themselves have no clue what they are asking for. The ridicule, the rejection, beatings and imprisonment. Are they happy to go with all these?

The Lord appoints, gives grace and anoints. If he has not called you, don't make yourself one. If you try to make yourself one, what happened to James will happen to you. He was the first to be killed of all the twelve. James may have thought he could do anything for Christ, but he died without fulfilling his ministry.

## John

John was the brother of James. John had his ups and downs, but it pleased the Lord to choose him despite them. Once we can yield ourselves to the Lord, there is no limit to what the Lord can do with us.

The Lord allowed these things to be written to encourage us to take heed, look inward, and learn lessons.

### The upside of John

#### Obedient to the call

*And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. Matthew 4:2*

They were busy at work with their father in Zebedee and Sons' Fishing Company and not idling away. They have a business to run and should not be called out. When called, they followed immediately, without excuses or consultation with their father. Their father did not ask Jesus who Jesus was.

To answer God's call might be a struggle, considering the cost of doing so. People have bills to pay, car maintenance, family to feed, houses to run, and many other legitimate life reasons. We should be mindful of other businesses around us that may hinder

us from answering the call. The work of the Lord will get lean if we don't make out time. It took grace for Abraham to agree to give up Isaac. It is not easy to do so.

John and his brother were not at the bar or football pitch and assumed they had extra time to spare when Jesus called them. He did not meet them on their way to the airport for a holiday and thought they had extra time on their hands. They had an active job mending their nets with their father. Can we answer the Lord's call when our hands are full?

The Lord knows we are busy people with a lot going on in our lives, but he still called us to serve Him. Does it mean he is unrighteous and does not understand our circumstances? It is about personal consecration. If you don't make out time for the Lord, Satan will take it. If we are too busy, there will not be spare time to serve the Lord. The pressures of life will take all the time. The demand for an extra shift for more money will take it. He will promote and multiply the little you are earning. I pray we dedicate time to the Lord. John sacrificed his pay to answer the call.

### **He was part of the inner circle**

*And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled? And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you: Mark 13:2-5*

He was among the four who were more profound than the others. They wanted to know more. They were hungry for the truth. They

were like the Berean Christians who would search for more. They were not surface people, which is commendable.

### **He was privileged to see deeper things.**

*And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; Mark 14:33*

John saw the pain and agony of Jesus. He had the privilege of witnessing the transfiguration. He was close and saw in greater depth than the others. It made it easier for him to relate to the true life and testify to the depth of what they saw while with Jesus.

*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; 1 John 1:1*

*While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. Mark 5:35-38*

*"And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings. He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Luke 9:28-30*

Stay close and connected, and you will see greater things. Don't follow the Lord afar off. Some brethren distance themselves because they do not want to get involved, take responsibility,

contribute or even pay the price. Well, you will write little or no stories. You will see nothing to take on. Elisha was close and got the double portion. The disciples were with him and saw all. Joshua was close and was able to lead the children of Israel to the promised land. They were close, and committing the next stage to him was easy. Close the space in the work of the master to see more. The closer you come, the more you see. If you are not close, you will not see enough to help you fulfil your calling. Some use excuses to cover up, but you deny yourself the privilege of knowing more profound things.

### **Jesus loved John**

John showed a remarkable example here for us to follow. He was deep and spiritual, and Jesus committed His mother to him at the cross when Peter and others ran away. He was the only one who came back to stand by at the cross. I pray we have the grace to stand in tough times when others leave.

*Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. John 13:23*

*When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. John 19:26-27*

### **He wrote about the divinity of Yeshua**

He clarified that Yeshua HaMashiach is Elohim, the Three-In-One. He wrote on the "I Ams" of Christ. He recorded more of Christ's saying than the rest, especially the revelation about what Christ said of Himself as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Throughout the book are eternal life and faith. The last words of

instruction and prayers were in John. He concentrated on writing about the divinity of Christ. He started with, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1*

### **The cracks on John's wall**

#### **Vengefulness**

*And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? Luke 9:54*

*And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder. Mark 3:17.*

John and his brother James were surnamed Sons of Thunder because they were vindictive. They couldn't take it when the Samaritans could not let them pass through. They asked to command fire to consume all of them. Some of us do the same today. The dangerous prayer to kill our enemies, the commanding of fire to destroy them, is a vindictive prayer. Those who justify dangerous prayer by cherry-picking some scripture from the Old Testament do not read the context in which scriptures were written, and they throw them out like firecrackers. Such is going the way of James and John, who were intolerant.

John and James had no clue what they were asking. To ask for the strike of thunder against the Samaritans was too much. Can they stand it themselves, or would they prefer to die that way? They would not have been alive if they had been stricken for every mistake they made. Jesus came to show mercy and not to kill people with thunder.

John and his brother were in a time of grace but chose to remain in the law. So is anyone who knows all the books of Psalm and Isaiah but can't say a verse in the books of Philippians and 1 Thessalonians. Some people have this spirit. They quote David in the books of Psalm but have never lived half of David's life. David dedicated his life to the Lord as a young man. He was obedient to the Lord. While others were in the city doing their own thing, David chose the way of the Lord. The Lord found him faithful. When his parents asked him to look after the sheep in the desert, he did not complain or say others were in the city going to parties, Jobs, marrying and giving in marriage. He obeyed. The Desert is a place of obscurity, but the Lord taught him skills. He was a man after God's heart. When David sinned, he ran to the Lord in dust and ashes, repented and cried. He will enquire of the Lord before he does anything. When they came to Ziklag and found out the Amalekites had taken their wives and children, he inquired of the Lord before he went after them, overtook them and recovered all.

Grace had not abounded at the time of David, and his way was to ask God to protect him. We are now in the times grace covers us, and the Holy Spirit lives in us. Those who quote all the hard times of David often forget his virtues. It will be nice to hear them quote: "That I may dwell in his house all the days of my life, wherewithal shall a young man straighten his ways, search me O Lord and know my heart." All they pick are the negatives. Congregations that engage in dangerous prayers should be called "Vengeful houses of Vindictiveness" Such places lack grace and mercy, and we should not involve ourselves with them. We wrestle not against flesh and blood and have no business fighting physical men but the spirit behind them; *Ephesians 6:12*.

They were rebuked for such thought, and I pray we learn the lessons. Christ came that all men might have life and have it more abundantly. He came that all may be saved. Suppose our enemies

had prayed that we die, as some of us were wicked before we got Born Again. We would not have been alive to have the chance to kill them instead. If Paul had died through the prayers of Saints at Jerusalem when he persecuted them, he would not have lived to convert the Gentiles.

We should pray for the salvation of others than commanding thunder, fire and brimstone to consume them. In some places, just by mentioning the Holy Ghost, they shout, Fire! All you see is the heart of unforgiveness, malice, bitterness, envy, and jealousy. Don't mess with the name of The Holy Ghost. Sin against him shall not be forgiven. It is blasphemy. The Lord knows all your trials and sorrows and will come through for you. He has called us to peace. The Christian life is filled with peace and gentility. Fighting makes the Christian life seem like a struggle, and there is no need. Stop the fight; Jesus is on the Throne. Leave vengeance with the Lord, and get busy with the work He has called us to. There is a lot on our plates, coupled with other things. Juggling between home and ministry is not easy. Don't get bogged down or waste your time with vengeance. Concentrate on the calling, and do not chase the rats around us. There is an excellent mousetrap to catch them. Don't waste your time chasing demons. They will bow when they see you. As the mountain is around Jerusalem, so is the Lord around His people.

When Elisha's servant panicked because of the surrounding armies, his master prayed the Lord would open his eyes to know that those with them were greater than the army. His eyes opened to see the Hosts of Angels with their swords unsheathed. Vengeful prayers are not proper, and we should repent of them. Be strong and of good courage. The Lord is with us.



## Party Spirit

*And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me. And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part. Mark 9:33-40*

The disciples argued about who will be the greatest among themselves, and Jesus illustrated what a leader should be. John was not listening, hence the irrelevant question, which had no bearing on the Lord's words. What have people casting out demons got to do with what Christ was telling them? They were filled with intolerance and party spirit. Those men were not in John's clique, so they should not be allowed. Cliques play out in the churches as well. You will not be invited to the pastor's birthday celebration if you are not elite. You can't serve in the church until you complete your ten years at church, "Church Citizenship". You will have no place in the church if you don't belong to the sects. New converts either leave the church or get on with the politics, corrupting the church. May the Lord have mercy. Allow others to exercise their gifts. Please don't complain that they are not ordained or an elder.

Some elders complain of young converts trying to overshadow them everywhere, but where were the elders when the ordinary people showed God's grace? It is because the zeal of the older ones was getting cold. So, there's nothing like Paul started yesterday and has covered the Gentile cities in record time. What were you doing in Jerusalem?

Pastors who encourage politics and sect formations at church should desist from doing so. It will not make for righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. John and his brother barged in, but Christ continued what he was saying. Don't let anyone distract you from the message or take you off course. I was once removed from a group because I didn't dress like them. They looked at the physical, not the spiritual man who was so zealous for the Lord.

John stopped the people from casting out demons in Jesus's Name. Why would you stop that brother or sister? Why will you quench that zeal? If you can't do it, keep quiet. Don't put down the fire of other people. There is no need. If you are too busy, please, stay busy. Don't ask other people how they manage. Do you mean work doesn't stop you? What of children? Please don't fester such questions. Carry on with your problems. Those who listen to such, be careful not to contact this leprose attitude. You have your lane to run.

## **Ambition**

*Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him/ to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again. And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we*

*shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and to give his life a ransom for many. Mark 10:33-45*

Jesus was telling them the ultimate reason He came for. It was not going in for James and John because their minds were on getting it all for themselves. The matter discussed is so heavy to make them think and reflect, but John and his brother were busy asking for the choicest seats. They didn't bother about the other nine. People switch off when you are discussing something they are not interested in. They frown because that is not the conversation they would prefer. This politicking and vying for positions play out in gatherings, even in church leadership.

Some go as far as campaigning to be voted for in church offices. It is not so. In *Acts 6*, they prayed, and the Lord revealed those to be in the offices with sound biblical criteria, not just anybody.

*Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant, that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. Matthew 20:20-23*

Their Mother came in to ask for the same thing. She didn't think of others and how they will feel with such demand. She asked for her two sons to sit at the right and the other at the left of Jesus. Did they discuss it at home, or is ambition running in the bloodline? It fits into the saying, "Like mother, like sons." They did not ask for asking's sake, it came from somewhere. There was a link to their mum. Some of us are so attached to the idolatry and curses that our parents have inherited and carried on with them. While you are in the same pit with them, you see nothing. When your eyes open, you will stay off. You will realise what you have been meddling with.

Jacob was a supplanter. It came from Rebecca. She did the trick at the birthright exchange. Jacob grew up to be an expert. He tried it on his father-in-law, Rebecca's brother, and he taught him a hard lesson too. He met his match and paid direly for it. He served an additional seven years to get Rachel. "Cunning man dies, a cunning man buries him." It was running in the family. It came a

point Jacob knew he would go no further with all those attitudes. He went to pray and hold on to the Angel to bless him and change him. This cunning parental gene must go. He cannot afford to live with it.

This passage helps us to understand the scripture:

*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:26*

Some survival strategies and instincts at home no longer fit the gospel. We have taken and survived some mannerisms, attitudes, and habits from families. This is why Jesus said to leave mother and father, so you don't carry on their baggage. Take them to the cross at the new birth. If any man is in Christ, old things are passed away, and all things have become new. Unhealthy background and family push can disrupt our Christian journey and take us off course. James and John did not take care of theirs and carried it into ministry.

I pray we take every wrong attitude and foundational baggage to the cross. Some people pride themselves on the negatives they inherited from their families. They say things like "they don't take rubbish in their families" and all sorts. It ought not to be so.

Ambition blinds, it plugs the ear, it dulls a sense of reasoning, it drives like drugs, you do anything to get them, it denies one of the eternal things.

People ask God to give them all the gifts for pre-eminence. They mask ambition by saying, "The desires of the righteous shall be granted". The Lord knows you are asking for a position to be known and seen and nothing else. He knows the intentions of our hearts.

Jesus asked them if they were sure of what they were asking for. Are they able to drink from the cup He will drink of? Of course,

they said yes. They were carnal and had no clue. Jesus explained more, giving them a chance to decline, but they still hung in. They took a lot for themselves. They forgot to whom much is given; much is required. James was the first to be killed of the twelve. Herod cut off his head. John landed at the isle of Patmos. Be careful of what you ask for. The Lord knows your capacity. The Lord knows what you can do. Don't let ambition come in. May the Lord give us grace in the name of Jesus.

### **John after Pentecost**

Like the other disciples, The Holy Spirit makes the difference. John was transformed, and the power of Elohim was evident in his life.

#### **He preached on love**

John became a man of love and no more fire and thunder. Twenty-five times he referred to love. The book of First, Second and Third John are called the Books of Love. A man who preached thunder before is now talking about love. When the Holy Spirit comes, there should be a change. Change from the old to the new. John changed, and so should we. May the Lord teach us to love.

*He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. 1 John 2:9-10*

*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's*

*good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but indeed and in truth. 1 John 3:14-18*

He could write about that because he knew what hatred meant. It didn't profit him. The intolerance and vindictiveness were gone after the power of Pentecost came on him. Dangerous prayer is not in the New Testament, and it is not of God. Don't pray it. May the Lord change us. We should not leave in vengefulness.

John knew Christ is the Door, the Husbandman, the Truth and Life, and nothing he went through moved him. When you get close to Jesus, the trial of life, persecutions, the wind of circumstances, and fires of life will not consume you.

### **The end was revealed to him**

The book of Revelation was revealed to him. John saw the revelation of things to come. He got the privilege of seeing the third heaven, the angels descending. I pray we prefer to stay in the bosom of Jesus to see the deeper things of life and the secrets of the kingdom than to be on the outskirts. John leaned very close to the Lord.

## Philip

Jesus found Philip. There must be something in Philip that is extraordinary. May we be found by Jesus. Amen. Straight away, Philip followed the Lord. Total obedience to His word is the key to serving God. Don't pick some and leave out some. Don't look for excuses to pull out. Jesus knew he would be obedient, and that was what qualified him.

### Obedience to the call

*Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus. Matthew 10:3*

*The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. John 1:43*

The Lord will use those he can tell: "Leave thy country, go to the land I will show you," they believe. "Go ahead, sell your possession, everything you have, give it to the poor," and they obey him. "Go ye to every nation and preach the gospel, baptising them," and they go. The Lord wants to use those that will live in obedience. They're not going to argue, reason him out, consult books, people and prophets or anything, but in simplicity, obey the Lord.



## **He was from the same city as Andrew and Peter**

*Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. John 1:44*

The culture of a people can be seen in their attitude. These men of Galilee must be very blessed and credible. Obedience was their hallmark. Hold on to the good of where you came from.

## **He had a “Go Ye” attitude**

*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. John 1:45*

The Lord knew he would find others. He was a strategic man and will go for the big fish. His evangelism was very easy. He went straight to the point: “Nathanael, we have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write of.” Nathanael, it is written, “As Moses lifted the serpent in the wilderness for healing, so shall He be lifted for our salvation.” Remember, *Isaiah 9:6-7* prophesied of Him. We have found him.

Philip does not have to attend Bible College or special training to preach the simple gospel. He doesn’t need a PhD in theology to be on street evangelism. He went with the much he knew, which was enough to win Nathanael.

Go to evangelism with what you know, your testimony, and leave the rest for the Lord. We may not know all the scriptures, invite them along, and the church will do the rest of the talking. Philip’s message was very profound. We have found Jesus. That startled Nathanael. What are you talking about, where, and who is he? This made room for further conversation, and the job was done. Philip has revealed a soul-winning secret. If you don’t know

what to tell people, friends and family, repeat Philip's words. Say 'I have found Jesus', and when they ask you how, give them your testimony of salvation. You would have done well.

*And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. John 1:4*

Nathanael asked a canny question. Some of us are put off by questions when we go out on evangelism, especially the controversial ones. Questions like "Is this not a Jewish religion? How do you know the Bible is true and many alike? Don't get kicked off. Philip was wise to answer in a few words. Sometimes it will require a straightforward answer. Don't make it complicated. If anyone doubts the righteousness of God in you, tell them to watch you from henceforth. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is straightforward. May the Lord give us wisdom when we go out on evangelism. All he said to him was come and see. That was wisdom.

### **He walked by sight**

*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? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. John 6:5-7*

The Lord knew where to get the bread but asked Philip, and this was to prove him. Philip answered him. Two hundred pennyworths of bread will not be enough for this crowd. Certain circumstances may come to prove us. They may look overwhelming and gigantic. They may come as issues at home, sickness, lack, bad habits, depression, etc. We may be like Philip, who had the solution yet

focused on the problem's size. Challenges may not allow us to remember that Jesus is by our side and He can do all things. It is all about faith. Philip saw water turned to wine, the nobleman's child healed and the Samaritans' incredible conversion. Why was he perplexed? Did he forget too soon? We sometimes forget the miracles God has done for us, especially when the Tornados of life hit our roofs. We scream out in fear, forgetting that Christ lives in us and will not allow any harm.

God's eyes are watching back and forth over us. He has us in his hands. We are engraved right in the hollow of his palm. He knows everything about us. Our attitude to issues of life and ability to see that he can do all things and can do more than we have asked is what counts. Job passed the test of being proved. God will help us pull through.

We pray for God's help, not to doubt even a little thing, and to know He is a miracle-working God. With Him, all things are possible. Though there may not be food, He is able to feed four thousand and twelve baskets will remain. If He can command the sea to stay still, there is no sickness He cannot cure, no rent He cannot pay and no child He cannot give. The Lord can meet all our needs if only we will believe.

### **He kept rank**

*And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. John 12:20-22*

Philip was a good team player. He consulted Andrew and didn't run off to tell Jesus himself. He was an orderly person. Probably he learnt his lesson of saying the wrong thing at the feeding of the

five thousand. He did not want to repeat another mistake. There is a senior in rank he can consult.

*Where no counsel is, the people fall: But in the multitude of counsellors there is safety. Proverbs 11:14.*

He went with Andrew to tell Jesus, maybe to see how Andrew would relate the message so that he could learn. Also, the lesson from Andrew's action is to learn to collaborate with others. The mono-gift chase of modern-day Christianity should not be embraced. We are to work as one as Christ prayed for us in *John 17*.

We can also see that the Grecians addressed him as Sir. It didn't go to his head to pose as the leading man. He went to tell Andrew. Some people today are carried away by title or recognition. Pride throws them off the cliff when they are called Sir or Ma'am. May the Lord help us not to use ambition to destroy the power and the purpose of what the Lord has meant for the church.

### **He could not see beyond the veil**

*Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father; and it sufficeth us. 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, Show us the Father? 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. Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. John 14:8-11*

Jesus addressed the mystery of the Triune God, which is still hard for some people to believe today. Philip had been with Jesus from the beginning. Two-thirds of their time with Jesus has been

spent. He has seen most of the miracles. He heard Jesus saying: He is the door, the way, truth, and life. Before Abraham, He was, He and the Father are one. What else does Philip want to see and hear? He was still covered with the veil of religion. If it could confuse Philip, who was physically present with Jesus, you can imagine those who argue the divinity of Christ.

Jesus said, if you had known me, you should have known my father also. Jesus explained further, "Henceforth, you know and have seen Him." Philip's heart did not get that. Some people know Jesus, but their understanding is not complete. They know him in one aspect but don't know him in another. They may know him as the healer but not the provider. May the Lord grant us understanding and open our eyes to spiritual things.

## Bartholomew (Nathanael)

### He was one of the twelve ordained by Jesus

*Simon who was also known to Peter and Andrew his brother, James and Philip and Bartholomew. Luke 6:14*

*And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus of Cleophas, and Simon the Canaanite, Mark 3:18*

### A man with no guile

*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. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man. John 1:25-51*

Nathanael was a simple man who said things as they were. He knew Nazareth and its reputation and asked in the integrity of his heart if anything good could come out of Nazareth. The Lord will not use someone who is black on the inside and white on the outside and whose words are not true.

The Lord looks at the heart. Some people want to be used by God, but their hearts must first be rid of irregularities. Those inappropriate behaviours should be taken to the Lord for cleansing. The Lord will use those whose Yea is Yea, and Nay is nay.

Some people may ask you a similar question when you are out on evangelism concerning the attitude of some Christians that do not measure up. Please do not get discouraged by them. In Nathanael's mindset, nothing good comes from Nazareth.

If people use the name of Jesus to extort money and do fake miracles, unbelievers should complain. Magicians are in churches, and that makes people wonder. When a church turns Praise and Worship into a dance club, and there is no difference between church music and rock music, those outside the faith are bound to get confused and would not believe it is a true place of worship. When a Pastor tells lies, cheats, fornicates, and is in adultery, and there is no difference between the Christian dress and that of celebrity stars, people are bound to ask similar questions as Nathaniel did. Can any good thing come out of the church?

Don't get angry. What the people are saying is true. Don't refuse to visit or go back to preach to them. Don't be put off by their questions. Continue to win them for the Lord. Press in; men need the Lord. Let's live the life, show a good example. We will win them for the Lord if we show them the example. That is what Nathanael did. Good to know there are good Christians, good churches, and the remnants. They have the mark of Christ on their forehead.

It is not commendable that those who do not go to church leave a good moral life than some people who attend church or have Christian names. Some children youth in the fellowship are disobedient, watch lewd things and are in gangs and knife crime. People out there will say things as they are. They are not persecuting the church.

The Lord Yeshua recognised Nathanael as a man of truth and will call those who do not deceive or play games with no guile. Jesus will not call those who will tell you they are just by the door and twenty minutes later tell you they are caught up in traffic. They know they will be caught up in traffic. They know they are travelling; they didn't want to tell you. They can desert you at any moment.

When we pray for God's visitation and open heavens in our churches, will the Lord find people with no guile to use? May we serve him in truth and spirit, with all our heart, in sincerity.

### **He confessed the Lord**

Anyone with a pure heart will readily receive the gospel. He was a man of integrity and was amazed that Christ could say something spot-on about him. He confessed that Christ is the son of God.

### **What was Nathanael doing under the fig tree?**

Even if you are jobless, idling away, Christ has a mission for you. Some people have tried many things that have not worked out. They feel empty, and their place is under the fig tree to think about what this life is all about for them. Have you considered if the call of God is on your life? Are you dissatisfied with your job but have a heart for the things of God? Have you considered if the Lord needs you? He gave Nathaniel a better job. He got him



occupied in ministry. The harvest is fully ripe, but the labourers are few.

### **A promise was attached to his calling**

Nathanael believed in the Lord, and a blessing was made on him. Will you believe that what God has said concerning you will come to pass? It shall be well with you if you believe. Can you believe and not allow your present situation or circumstance to deter you? There shall be a performance to him that believes. He saw the Lord being taken up at Ascension. He was a sincere man.

### **He was among the company that went back to fishing**

*There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. John 21:2-3*

He was with Peter and the others when Peter suggested they go fishing. Whatever company you find yourself in, be very alert. Do not follow the multitude to sin. There is no need. A plausible suggestion may arise, but you know it is not right, don't agree to it. Others may use excuses to cover up their intentions, be sensitive and stand on your grounds or they will compromise you. Some use work to cover up their inability to do things at church or attend fellowships. Excuses such as a busy work schedule and family chores may arise, which is understandable, but be sure one doesn't use them as an excuse for church but not for parties and outings.

They went back to fishing after years of following the Lord. They were experts at rowing and remembered their skills, so it was easy to go back. If you return to what you have left to be with

Jesus, you will catch nothing. Some brethren have gone to Egypt for mere onion and cucumber after drinking the milk and honey of the promised land and experiencing miracles under the shadow of Yeshua Hamashiach. That was why they caught nothing. The chase for bread and butter outside of Jesus yields nothing. They would have said no to Peter or asked him why they should go back after being told to leave fishing fish. They consented to Peter and entered the ship immediately.

*My son, if sinners entice thee, Consent thou not. Proverb 1:10*

When you backslide or return to an old lifestyle, you will not recognise Jesus again. It blinds and closes the heart, and you can't see or perceive. Some people post their fabulous indecent pictures on social media, and people comment on how glamorous they look. Could no one have asked them what was going on, why they dressed so indecently in public? Some will go to search for those dresses to buy. We have left Egypt and cannot go back. Let's watch the back of each other.

Wow, Jesus stood by them, and they did not recognise him. The person they slept with, ate with and lived with. This is scary. They did not remember righteousness anymore, and they didn't remember love not the world, nor the things in the world. They did not reflect the prayers of Jesus that though we are in the world, we are not of the world. Returning to the things we rejected is like a dog returning to its vomit. It denies Christ the second time. Don't let anyone take you back. Sin takes us away from God. Remain in the promised land, and if anyone tries to take you back, be bold to remind them we are called out people. We are told to be separate from the world, remind them we have no fellowship with darkness, and we will not start in the spirit and end in the flesh. Be bold to tell them nobody will take you back to darkness again. May the Lord count on you.

*Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment: Exodus 23:2 .*

God told Moses to warn the children of Israel of this danger. Those who go crazy in summer exposing their bodies that should be covered, remember that those living in the deserts are not primitive naked people. They wear clothes. The sun is to bless us and do what it should for our crops and health. We should not take it as an occasion of drinking, booking up festivals that do not glorify God, and rioting, thinking our senses will return in winter. It doesn't work that way. Some of those festivals are satanic and sun worship. Summer is one of the seasons and times God created.

*And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch. Mark 13:37*

Please, let's watch our spaces. It may be suggestions from prayer partners, brethren and even the Pastor. Remember, Peter was the resident Pastor of this group, but his suggestion was wrong. Will you say, because the Pastor said, I have to do it. The answer is capital NO, Sir, with all due respect! As a Pastor, you might want to do it like other congregations, be careful as you do not know their doctrines. They might have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof. It may just be a social gathering in the name of a church. Do what the scriptures said we should do.

### **He stayed until the end**

Don't give up. If you fall, get up and continue the journey. Satan can trip you over but has no right to keep you on the floor. Get up and move on. Most of the disciples stumbled, but they carried on with Jesus. Don't allow Satan to discourage you out of the kingdom. Stand strong!

## Thomas

**T**he popular thing about Thomas is a doubter. This religious mindset has beclouded the good things about Thomas. If you go by Thomas, the doubter, you cannot see other things God wants us to see and learn from him. The ideal thing is to learn from people's weak and strong areas.

### He was among the twelve

*Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphæus, and Simon called Zelotes. Luke 6:15*

Thomas was called. He may not have qualified with man's assessment, but He was called. Being with Jesus clears out the rubbles in our lives.

### He was simple

*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should*

*have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. John 14:1-7*

Thomas might have wondered where Jesus was going. He knew birds have nests and foxes have holes, but Jesus had nowhere to lay his head. What mansions does His Father have, and where are they? They have been with Him for a while and know He had nothing. The likes of Thomas are still with us. They read their Bible in the church but still wonder about certain truths.

Thomas saw through the carnal eyes. He couldn't see the promise of eternal life, to be with Jesus forever. Those in the prosperity gospel will not be too far from Thomas. They think of eternal heritage as earthly possessions and pursue wealth with every fibre in them. They want to take the 7 Mountains of society.

*If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. 1 Corinthians 15:19*

Thomas did not realise that this world shall be rolled away like a scroll. There is no need to chase the carnal things that cannot endure. Joy awaits those who have suffered in this present world. There may have been lack, sickness, loneliness, and uncertainty troubles. One thing is sure there is a crown at the throne of mercy.

Jesus told him I am the way, the truth and the life. Jesus is the ultimate, and you will find your way in Him. All truth and understanding in Him and the very life we all long for is Him. Praise the Lord!

Thomas's simplicity could be seen. Sometimes people may not understand immediately, just like in the average class. Please don't take it that they are asking too many questions. Be patient with such people and give them more explanation; that is their level. It may take them a long time to get it.

It was assumed that Thomas would have known, having been with the Lord all this while. If one ignores to pay attention, he will

not understand the rudiments of what is happening and predispose himself to doubt.

## Empathy

*Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless, let us go unto him. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him. John 11:14-16*

Thomas's reaction to the news of Lazarus' death was to go and weep with Mary and Martha. He was happy to die with his fellow brothers and sisters. The Lord will use men that have tender hearts and are selfless.

*Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Romans 12:15*

He was tender-hearted and could not bear the loss of a fellow brother. This should be our attitude in the church today. We should care for one another, not just for ourselves. Don't keep a closed eye on the need of other brethren. Let's be happy to sacrifice our time, life, money, and possessions for others.

The lesson here is to let go of the attitude of 'Me and mine', 'Just for me, friends and family'. We should look out for the things of others. If you have a car in a church and some don't have one, give them a ride and do some taxiing to get people to church. Please don't keep a blind eye when you see them in the rain. Some struggle with children going to the bus station or walking the long mile to church, yet some brethren can give a hand. Give people a pleasant surprise by being at their doors on Sunday morning to pick them up for church. It is a good thing to do. You might not do

it to strangers because you don't know them, and they might turn down your offer, but you know the brethren at church, and they know you. Please give them a ride. We are brothers and sisters.

### **Where was Thomas**

*Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her. Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained. But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. John 20:18-24*

The main thing is that Thomas was not there when Jesus appeared to the disciples, but where did he go? We do not know. It was not recorded. Maybe he went to the gym to keep fit; we still have a life to live. He may have gone to the shop, Hospital, or to see friends and family. These are genuine places to go to. On a good note, as one who had been with Jesus, he may have attended a crusade, prayer meeting, or gospel show. We don't know. Some people are all over the place in various churches and fellowships, which has made them unstable. They are not able to settle in one place. Every day of the week is a programme in a different location. They make no impact in the place the Lord has assigned them to because their attention is divided.

Thomas may have thought, “I’ll sneak out to do some business and come back to join them in prayers”. No, he missed out. Be there when you are supposed to.

Whatever the reasons, Thomas missed out on five critical things undergirding their callings:

- Peace be unto you, two times
- Seeing the hands and the signs which took off doubt from the others
- The breath of the Holy Spirit
- The promise of the power to remit sins
- The commissioning

That is what absenteeism can cause. Whatever reason you must absent yourself, know you are missing out big time. We have reasons to be at work and in a particular meeting but not church meetings. We are ready to travel far to see relatives, attend weddings and christenings, and visit friends, but not for church meetings. Mind those reasons, brothers and sisters. Satan loves it when you are not at the fellowship. He will suggest you will make up with other sessions.

*Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. Psalms 50:5*

Jesus paid the price by sacrificing himself, so there is nothing too big we can’t offer for the Kingdom in our lifetime.

*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. Hebrews 10:25*

Another lesson from here is to discover the root cause of people’s actions before concluding. If Thomas had been around, he would not have doubted. Sometimes people are not being healed because



of their unhealthy lifestyles. Problems at workplaces when a job change is needed, but the clutching at the familiar dominates. Things are hard for people because they are not givers, so they get what is just enough for themselves.

## **He doubted**

*The other disciples therefore said unto him, we have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. John 20:25*

Those who absent themselves are usually a problem in a meeting. They doubt and delay processes. They do not know the deliberations at the previous session and argue, ask unnecessary questions, and raise points already discussed. Obviously, they cause confusion and sometimes get angry or too loud in their ignorance. These individuals should be surnamed Thomas. They will always be away. In pidgin, they are called ‘see-able, when able’, meaning you see them when they can. ‘Sundays only’ Christians who are not part of any other event.

*And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. John 20:26-28*

The Lord reappeared because of him. Jesus is ever-present. He knows every happening, whether in secret or open. Don’t convince yourself otherwise. He saw and heard Thomas. This is a lesson for all who think they can get away with anything. The Pastor or

brethren may not know the intents of your heart and why you do what you do. Jesus is watching, and The Holy Spirit bears witness. He knows when you want to be a pain in the church's neck and lie in wait to accuse. Please don't show a bad example. The Lord sees you wherever you are and what goes on in your mind. The excuses you are making, he knows.

Jesus is omnipotent, omniscience and omnipresent. Thomas insisted that he must put his hands into the prints on his hands and sides before he could believe. Please don't let this happen to you in this time of the Holy Spirit. Don't justify your unbelief. There is no blessing in it. Thomas was faithless, and so are we when we judge things through the spectrum of our limitations.

Doubt and unbelief have denied many blessings and opportunities. It is easy to say I will not doubt, but when the billows rise, voices of issues scream at us. Fainting will not be far. We need to stand firm and believe in Jesus. If Jesus could raise Lazarus, He will raise us.

### **His doubt was a blessing to us**

*Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. John 20:29*

Thomas brought blessings to all of us. Those who did not see but believe will be blessed because of Thomas's doubt. We have learned to trust through his doubt. A typical example of this scenario is when brethren do not recognise the virtue of serving and avoid responsibilities because they can't see anything in it for them. They deny themselves, and the blessing goes to the simple brother or sister who does everything as unto the Lord, not as unto man.

### **He went back to fishing with others**

Thomas was among the company that went fishing. It was a mistake they all made.

*There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. John 21:2-3*

### **He remained till the end**

He was at the Pentecost and could not afford to be absent anymore, seeing the cost. You can never be the same after Pentecost.

*And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. Acts 1:13-14*

## Matthew

*A publican that became an Apostle*

**T**his profile is dedicated to those who compare their past to that of a publican and feel inadequate. One may have been written off, called the family's black sheep and shame taken over. You may have been in and out of prison, chained by prostitution and pornography, drugs and alcohol, cheating, fraud, murderer, sorcery, and idol worship. There is good news. Christ receives sinful men. There is hope. Sit back and enjoy the profile of Matthew!

### Background of Matthew

*Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the publican, James the son of Alphaeus and lepers whose surname was Thaddaeus Amen. Matthew 10:3*

*And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him. Matthew 9:9*

Matthew the Publican was among the four with descriptions attached to their names. The other three were Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus and James and John, nicknamed Boanerges.

A pub is a community place where you drink and eat; some pubs have free houses. On Friday nights, the police and ambulances stand around pubs picking up the drunks and wounded from a

fight. In Jesus' time, publicans were tax collectors who collected tribute and took bribes from people. They were corrupt oppressors. Your heart jumps when you see them. They were fierce as debt collectors and showed no mercy to anyone. Society didn't like them because of their attitude, extortion, bribery, and hardness of heart. It was the worst name on earth if you were called a publican. In the scripture, they are often referred to as publicans and sinners. Zacchaeus was a tax collector. When Jesus met Him, he promised to repay everything he had taken forcefully. Typical of a tax collector. Not good people.

Matthew was called a publican and tax collector, a "double badge of dishonour". His name would have been listed as other, but his was "Matthew, the publican." It means his past trailed him. I am not sure if your past is trailing you and you are being addressed on that premise. The Lord allowed this to be written as a life extension to you. The Lord will accept us irrespective of our background. I met someone who told me he had been a prison trotter since he was a minor. I asked him if he was ready to give his life to Jesus. Thankfully, he agreed, and we prayed.

Do not allow what you lived in or have been through to hinder you. You may have mended your life but are still being addressed as: "that man who used to be at the corner of the street." They are not seeing your new state. That was Matthew. Although with Christ, the old badge and stigma stuck on him.

### **He was among the ordained**

*And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.*  
*Mark 3:13-14*

If Matthew could be one of those Jesus ordained to be with Him, there is hope for all of us. We shall be chosen. Jesus said, come unto me, all you that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. For the son of man came to seek and save that which was lost, hallelujah! While men are busy looking at your dark past, the long list of reasons you should not exist, the stigmas attached to your name, and why you should be put in the back seat and forgotten. Jesus is interested in the bright things he has put in you, looking at your great potential and figuring out how best it will be deployed.

While people were busy looking at Matthew as a publican, Jesus saw the great things Matthew could do for the Kingdom. Humans see on the outside, but Jesus sees the inward, the tenderness of your heart. Although outwardly, one is chained by Satan, the cry for change, the longing in your heart to come off those lifestyles, has been seen by God. Preachers may be busy condemning you instead of showing you the way out. Jesus will deliver you. Don't worry; look up to Jesus, who created you. It doesn't matter what a child does. Parents still forgive. They may throw you out after some years and want you back. If humans could do this, how much more is our heavenly Father? You are known as a high street woman who has done bad things in the city. Now your conscience is battling with you. You might be wondering if you can ever be forgiven. Yes, you can. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all unrighteousness. God has forgiven us, but we need to forgive ourselves, as most times, the problem is the guilt feelings.

Funny enough, Matthew wrote most of the accounts about himself. He is no more ashamed of the past. Praise God! The siege was over, and he had overcome. The key thing Matthew was emphasising was where he came from. His yesterday compared to his glorious future. He was happy to let everyone know he was a publican turned around by Jesus. He is delighted to talk about the glory of a transformed life and what the blood of Jesus can

do to anyone who believes. How many of us are ashamed to talk about our past? Our past should be our testimony. If the Lord had delivered you from alcohol, you are now equipped to minister to those in alcoholism to get them out. Your testimony will resonate with them. Don't keep back the testimony. Please share it with people who were in the shoes you were in.

If you think you have gone too far into sin or your case is the worst ever, let's look at the following scriptures to see where Matthew came from, yet the Lord picked him up. References in the scripture made of publicans are very laden. It doesn't matter what good the publican does. It is not appreciated because their evil outweighs their good.

### **Publicans only love those who love them**

*For if you love them, which love you, what reward have you? Do not even the publicans the same. Matthew 5:46*

They love those who love them. If you live in the same neighbourhood with them, you will be in trouble of loneliness. They will never know your name or where you came from. Their love is for those who love them. They don't give gifts to those not in their circle or from their tribe, race, profession or clique. They are happy to travel miles to visit a brother in their church, but not their neighbour who goes to another church. They are close to those they can talk to.

### **Publicans' greetings are for their friends**

*And if you salute your brethren what do you know, what do you more than others, do not even the publicans do so. Matthew 5:47*

It is a 'scratch my back, and I scratch yours' attitude to life. Their smiles are for those who smiled at them, no more. The life

of a publican will not mean much if someone had not given their life to Christ, but to see it in the church is contrary to our faith. Jesus condemned their attitude and way of life. There was no good attached to the name 'Publican'.

### **They were associated with harlots**

*Which one of them two did the will of his father they say unto Him the first. Jesus said unto them verily I say unto you that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. Matthew 21:31*

*For John came unto you in the way of righteousness and you believed him not but the publicans and the harlots. Matthew 21:32*

Again, the publicans are associated with the harlots. You might be saying that although you were born again, you are ashamed of your past life. Situations may remind you of your misspent past, and Satan accuses you that you cannot make it to the kingdom, you are not forgiven, and your sins are equal to his. When people are sent to prison for the same crime you committed, your heart jumps. Matthew made it, and you will make it. There is great hope for you. Don't give up! The blood of Jesus is more powerful than any influence of sin of any sort and of any kind. Believe in the Lord and look up to him. The Lord reached out to Matthew at his table right there and then. We should not look down on anyone because they are indecently dressed or have tattoos. Reach out to them. You don't know who the next Matthew or Paul will be.

### **Their sins are many and should not be forgiven**

*The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. Luke 18:11*



Even at prayers, they were condemned and not expected to be answered. To the Scribes and Pharisees, Matthew would be the last to be chosen. He will not go near the Tabernacle. He will not even sit in the court of men. People will leave the row for him. Men may have condemned you, but Jesus sees what is inside you.

### **They were associated with sinners**

*And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”*  
Matthew 9:10-13

This time around, nobody should dine with them. They are outcasts and associated with sinners. Have you felt little in society, and nobody wants to associate with you because of profiling? Have you been called a low life? Christ came for people like you. Matthew got the deal.

### **They were associated with heathens**

*And if you shall neglect to hear them, turn it on to the church but if he neglect to hear the church let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Matthew 18:17*

They were compared with the recalcitrant and obstinate people. Jesus is not partial and does not segregate. His love for everyone is equal. He can go to the miry clay, pick up a pig man, clean him, and put him in a palace. He met us on our journey to hell and called

us back to life. The church should be involved in reconciliation, evangelism, and preaching. We need to bring people to Christ. The thought of reaching out to lost souls should occupy us. For Matthew, it was a badge of honour that once he was a publican but now a brother in Christ.

## **He arose and followed Jesus**

*And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him. Luke 5:27-28*

Matthew left all, cheating, extorting, and adding up unequal measures. Those things stigmatised him and gave him disapproval from people. He denied himself his profession, rose and took a bold step. That seat, lifestyle, position, friends, and associates are not for him anymore. He got up from the old life.

He rose and did not remain at the receipt of the table. Arise and walk out from the old. You have no business staying back as a bar attendant serving alcohol, praying not to smell or be tempted to drink. Such a prayer will be a joke. Go away from temptation and find another job. You cannot ask God to help you when you put yourself in temptation. Bar attendance is not the only job for you. Come out from among them, as the Bible says. It is self-deception to hide anything from God.

He rose and left with Jesus. Some will rise to follow Jesus but will take their seats with them. After a while in their Christian journey, when tiredness kicks in, they drop their seats and sit back. No amount of preaching will get them up. They are tired and need to rest. They carried their seat at Salvation and slid back into it easily. That is why you get shocked at some things people do in the church and wonder how easily they got involved.

The chair you took with you can be a barrier between you and Elohim. Although you want to reach out, you can't because of self, friendship, associateship, work, and attitude.

He left all social life and ties. He did not go for fifty-fifty "best of both" lives, which will not make for the entire consecration. Not sure if you have been asked questions like "Do you mean I should and should not? Well, I have been asked such several times. I mean nothing." The scriptures have got all the answers. Search through the pages. All the do's and don'ts are there. Struggling with inconsistency shows people's level and determines what the Lord can do with them.

Whatever you keep back from the cross will keep you in crisis. Don't keep back lying or deception. Take them to the cross. Your heart will be where your treasures are. If you don't let the past go, you will return to it one day. People hid their gold and silver and possession of great price. They laboured to get them and had not used them before they got born again. Remember how Lot's wife and the foolish rich young man missed out because they looked back. Satan will do all he can to convince you to keep the old life so he can use it against you one day. The Christian life will be inconsistent if we remain in the past.

### **He had a grateful heart**

*And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Luke 5:29-32*

Matthew made a feast. He had a heart of gratitude and thanksgiving. Salvation is worth celebrating, an invitation to become a royal priesthood, a holy nation. He transited from a publican to a Saint. Some people are so stingy and can't even do a thanksgiving for what the Lord has done for them. He invited other publicans to come and see. Like Mary, he loved what was done to him and made a feast. Mary broke her alabaster box and cleaned Jesus' feet with her hair. She was extremely grateful. She would have been stoned if Jesus had not come to her aid.

*Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. Luke 7:47*

Considering where we came from, the miry clay and pit of sin, we should dance in gratitude. Every morning and evening, giving Elohim thanks. The attitude of appreciation makes it hard to go back to sin.

It was no big deal for Matthew to do a great feast for Jesus. Looking after men of God should not be a burden. The elders that rule well are worthy of double honour. They pray, counsel, and minister to us. Find out how they are doing and be a blessing to them. Please make a feast for good leaders, or the fake ones will take it off you. If you don't sow into the Lord, Satan will definitely take it from you. Don't starve the kingdom of your resources.

### **He had good attention to detail**

Mathew was a tax collector who paid attention to details and could give accurate accounts. His accounting skills in adding together helped in detailing the book of Matthew. He gave a detailed history of Christ's Lineage from Abraham. He is well-read and informed. Peter would not have done that, and neither Andrew, his brother. Yeshua, who is best at choosing, knows who

to call for his work. There is a reason for being in the Kingdom. Whatever your profession, trade is, a carpenter, Lawyer, salesman, Doctor, teacher, cleaner, etc. As an Engineer on a mission to a remote place. You can help them build bridges and dig wells, which will be the vehicle to carry the gospel. As a doctor, the medical mission can reach people's hearts. Whatever skill you have, you profit the kingdom. Matthew was called for a purpose and those who murmured at his calling could not understand. He was a thorough person.

What matters is using what God has given to us for the kingdom. Use your talent, wisdom and knowledge for the benefit of the gospel. As an accountant, you could help with Church accounts, don't put a blind eye to things you can help with. Are you a decorator? Please support the church and other brethren to beautify their homes. Everything is not for sale. The church you worship in and are fed spiritually, charging them for your contribution is an unequal measure. Give your talent, and make out time to help. Some of us are experts in many things, but where we worship have not benefited from it.

Like Matthew, Paul did it through his education and eloquence. He ministered to the Gentiles. David did. He slew Goliath through the skills of using a stone and sling. Bezalel was good with craft, and God recommended him to Moses to build the Tabernacle. Nehemiah used his position as the King's cup bear to get favour to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Lydia was a seller of purple and looked after Paul and the team through her wealth. Dorcas was a seamstress and made dresses for people at church. You can clean if you have nothing. You have something to offer. That is why you are in the kingdom. The great heroes of today who are involved in missions are doing it. Be involved.

It doesn't matter where you are coming from; what matters is the new state. The past was offensive, unkind, and unjust and should not be referred to. Matthew referred to himself as Matthew, the tax collector, showing what grace can do in the life of a man considered a sinner by others.

## **He wrote some distinct Parables**

He recorded some parables and events that the other three gospels did not record. It is interesting to know why. They related to his life, and he could identify with them.

- *Wheat and Tares*

He knows what it means to be a sinner living among the righteous, who had a form of godliness but denied its power. The parable made sense to him because he recognised that he was a tare among the wheat.

- *Leaven*

He left all, took all Jesus offered, and went with him. He had come a long way and wouldn't risk compromise.

- *Hidden treasure*

He found the Messiah, like a hidden gem and went for Him. He wondered why the Pharisees could not have known this.

- *Goodly Pearl*

What is more to finding Jesus?

- *Draw net*

He was serious. He left all to follow Jesus. Some messages make sense because you can relate to them.

- *The parable of the unmerciful servant*

He was a tax collector, extorting money from people with no mercy. If Jesus could forgive him, how dare he hold another

person in the throat? What would have been his fate if he was not forgiven?

- *Ten virgins and ten talents*

The discussion on the judgement made sense to him. He knows what being judged means because he was considered to be unfit by the religious. The Pharisees had all it would take to deploy their knowledge into action in winning souls but didn't.

- *The tribute money*

He was coming from there, and it relates to him.

He recorded the suicide of Judas Iscariot, who picked up the money life he left. I am sure he would be wondering what was wrong with him.

- *He also recorded more of the emptiness and hypocrisy of the self-righteous.*

*Matthew 23* was dedicated to the woes of the Scribes and Pharisees. Matthew recorded more of the hypocrisy of the self-righteous because he was a first-hand victim of their arsenal. He couldn't see much of the life of those who claimed to have known the law of Moses. He knew there was no difference between them and the public. They were the worst sinners and could not eat with the publicans and sinners. He heard them clearly, could compare their lives with Christ's and saw they were broken cisterns.

Notably, of all the disciples, he was the only one with a record of outright sin before he was called, but no fault was recorded of him during the journey. Can you take the same challenge to say that though I was a publican and sinner, I will make it? We could make such a consecration today. We can make the same mark Matthew made.

The life of Paul typifies that of Matthew. Paul's past was not anything to write home about. He persecuted the church and killed them, a Pharisee, but when the Lord called him, he conferred not

with flesh and blood. He served the Lord with great strength, knowing where he came from. Remember where you came from, and don't go back. Decide to give back, dedicate yourself, and deploy all into the kingdom. Don't fall off halfway.

### **The downside of Matthew**

He did not object to returning to fishing, seeing that he was not a fisherman. He had only learned to fish men. Going to the waters to fish would have been a new skill he would have struggled with, but he obliged them.



## JUDAS THE BROTHER OF JAMES

Judas, James's brother, was only mentioned once in their entire time with Jesus. He didn't say much or maybe a person of few words. What mattered most was being among the twelve, and he made it to the Pearly Gates of Heaven.

### He was sincere

The question Judas, the brother of James, asked shows how sincere the disciples were and their eagerness to understand deep spiritual things. No need to play better than thou when he was ignorant. I have seen brethren who ask "why" for the simplest thing about our faith, but if they are ignorant, so are they.

*Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. John 14:22-24*

Philip asked a question Jesus answered on the Holy Spirit dwelling in them because of their love for Him and keeping His commandments. He further told them that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth and will guide them in all things.

*If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. John 14:15-17*

Judas, the brother of James, asked how Christ would manifest himself to them and not the world. The answer is simple. Those who reject Christ will be in doubt and will not get to know Him nor walk in His light. Their eyes of understanding will be blurred.

*But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them. Matthew 13:16-17*

He did not grasp who they were in Jesus. When we believe in Him, He makes His abode in us. Some are in the Lord but do not know the difference between them and those who are not in faith. This lack of understanding has made many complaisant and take their Christian faith for granted.

### **Benefits of being in the Lord John 14:25-30**

- Knowing the secrets
- Being loved by the Father
- Make our abode
- The Comforter will dwell with us
- Everlasting peace
- No fear

Loving and keeping God's commandments brings many blessings. Eternal life is sure. Secrets of things to come are revealed to them as shown to Daniel and John. They will see signs

and wonders, unprecedented favour will go with them, and Christ will fight their battle. Christ will be with them in trouble, he will provide for them and will be their reward.

*The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; And he will shew them his covenant. Psalm 25:14*

*But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 1 Corinthians 2:10*

## The Silent Two

*James the son of Alpheus and Simon the Zealot*

These are two people among the twelve that not much was mentioned about them. The safest place to be is to keep within the bounds of the written word.

### They were among the twelve

*And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor. Luke 6:13-16*

Simon was called Zelotes in Luke, the Canaanite in Matthew and Mark.

They were among those ordained to be with Him. There must be something special about them. He found them faithful, worthy to rely on.

They were among the 12 sent out to preach.

They were among the 70 sent out to preach

They were with the team all through.

They saw all the miracles that took place in the house.

They took part in feeding the multitudes and gathering the remains.

They heard what the scribes and the Pharisees, Lawyers and Priests said about Jesus to defame Him, yet they stayed with Him.

They heard all the parables.

They were with Jesus at the Gethsemane.

They were obedient to the call.

They were those to judge the 12 tribes of Israel.

They received the blessing Thomas missed.

They went fishing with others.

They were with the 120 in the upper room at Pentecost.

They followed to the end.

### **They may be silent operators**

Some people are silent operators and may not be heard in the church. They come early to intercede for everyone, praying for the glory of the Lord to go with the people and for the word to have effect with no distraction. They take authority over the Prince of the air in that environment. They are solid church pillars and do not want their names mentioned. They are always present in evangelism, visitations, and giving and seek the Lord diligently and sincerely. Consecration and commitment are their watchwords. They are not known. They are big supporters of the brethren and do not want to be seen. They believe so much in the scriptures that your right hand should not know what your left hand is doing. The Lord rewards them openly for what they did secretly.

We have them around, and God uses them more than anyone could imagine. Yet they said, "Don't mention our names, don't talk to anyone about it. Let's keep it within ourselves". We give Elohim praise for such people.

Silent operators at church are examples that we should follow. You see them in every department. Some are wealthy, but you will not know. They come to the church in a simple car, dressing like any other person but are the ministry's supporters. They participate in cleaning and serving, and you will not know they are millionaires. May the Lord help us humble ourselves and do it like Jesus.

*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. Philippians 2:5-10*

The place of humility cannot be overemphasised. Jesus exemplified humility to us. He was born in a manger among the sheep and humbled himself to death on the cross.

Whatever you are doing quietly at church is seen by the Lord. Whether cleaning, praying, or visiting others on follow-up as Dorcas did for the church in her time. You may be providing for young families, washing up, encouraging them, and sewing up their torn dresses and socks. Silent operators are not heard nor seen, doing what the Lord wants them to, but their work is great in the sight of Elohim. The Lord has seen it and will bless you.

The Silent Operator counters pre-eminence seeking prevalent in some individuals whose names are attached in all they do. They loom large to get noticed and offended if their praises are not sung. Even the little they did must be heard and recognised.

If you are one of those who are so quiet but doing a lot in the house of the Lord, you are in a great place. Do not let anyone intimidate you. The Lord will count it to you as righteousness.

God rewards those who serve Him without seeking to be known. We should not seek the crown that perishes. It is all about our hearts and doing what God committed into our hands to a high standard.

### **They may be content with being ordinary**

Some people are naturally very quiet and happy to remain so. If you call them to do anything, they will decline because of shyness or allowing others to do it. They are good people but do not make any impact. The likes of Peter do all the talking on their behalf, James and John do all the anger for them, and the likes of Philip and Nathanael do all the questioning. No persuasion gets them to come forward. To them, Peter, James and John are the inner core and should go on their behalf.

Being quiet is a good virtue, but not in all cases. God has given us gifts. Intimidation and shyness cannot take them away from us. The Lord has not given us that spirit of fear but of love, power and a sound mind.

On another note, some people are not quick to talk for other reasons. One such is those who are very analytical. They critically analyse every step, word, and grammar and stifle every process so that nothing happens.

## Judas Iscariot

Judas Iscariot is one name yet to be given to a child by any parents I know. Even Satanists don't name their children Judas. When you are called Judas, people understand what it means, including those who have not read the Bible for the first time. It is in our everyday language, connoting treachery and betrayal.

### He was one of the disciples

Most times, we talk about Judas in the church and Judas out there. We have not looked at Judas as a Pastor, Evangelist, Teacher, Prophet or Apostle. Remember, they were called the 12 disciples. He was also one of those that were ordained and one of those sent out. The original Judas are those ordained, so look out for Judas in the leadership.

*Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him. Matthew 10:4*

*And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor. Luke 6:16*

*And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house. And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his friends heard of*



*it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself. And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils. Mark 3:19-22*

## **He played along with others**

He was part of every activity. He saw all the miracles, heard the parables and slept alongside them. He won souls with others when they were sent out and came back joyfully. He was among those whose feet Satan was put under. He served the multitude with others in the desert. They couldn't understand why Jesus said one of them would betray him. He was with them on all the journeys, sea, land and everywhere. He obeyed all the instructions and was not mouthy like Peter, who would speak his mind.

Every Preacher will deny being a Judas, but let's look at some things we do that betray the Master:

- Preaching or teaching false doctrines not written in the Bible or representing the lifestyle of Jesus
- Extorting money from people in His name or being in ministry for your belly
- Questionable characters that make people speak evil of Christianity
  - Using diabolic powers and witchcraft to do miracles
  - Stealing church money
  - Living in adultery or fornication in the church or defiling vulnerable people that submit to you
- Taking advantage to defile children committed to you as a Sunday school teacher or Pastor, your middle name is Judas
  - Speaking evil of the church
  - Pretending to be running an orphanage or a charity when it is a source of income to you

- They dance and jump around in the church while their hearts are bitter.

There is nothing on Judas's face to tell what is in his heart. He can hug and kiss, but they are deceptive. Judas played along, and little did others know he was false.

### **He was remembered for his deeds**

He was crowned with two great titles, 'Judas the traitor' and 'Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him'. We will be remembered for what we have done after we pass away. Please do not let anyone deceive you that it ends here. The scriptures are true and cannot be annulled. Judas betrayed his Master, and it stuck with him for eternity.

### **He was the only one with a pronounced office**

He was the treasurer of the team. He had the purse, but unfortunately, he was a thief, stealing from the bag. He misused the opportunity given to him. The post would have motivated him to brush up on himself, instead, he abused the office.

### **He latched on hypocrisy and dishonesty**

But something was latching on in his mind. Judas hung onto something.

*Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was*

*not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always. John 12:1-8*

Very interesting to see how hypocrisy plays out. These people show up when Pastors' welfare is being discussed.

Mary was showing gratitude for what Jesus did for her and her brother. She broke her alabaster box, poured out the most prized possession of her life at the feet of Jesus and wiped it with her hair. The lovely scent filled the air. What a gesture! Are there not some who have given their life, are dedicated to the church and are committed to the Lord's things, but are despised? Instead of appreciating them, derogatory things are being said about them. Unmarried zealous sisters are told they have all the time because they don't have a family. Such comments come from the Judases in the church. Mark those who despise dedicated and generous people. Another example is when people cannot participate in church activities, and they suggest things should be cut down or limited to a few days.

Make sure these brethren don't take away your crown, deny you the blessings of the Lord, or pull you down because they are going nowhere. They have an ulterior motive why they are doing what they are doing. So they will complain, and you will think they are making some sense. Such are cousins to Judas. They argue over little things.

Looking for Judas in the church with carnal eyes will be a mistake. You will miss them. He may be difficult to spot. He is not as loud as Peter, angry as James and John, or doubtful

as Thomas. He is quiet with a rotten heart, and his mouth only knows to complain and murmur. Those who tag along with others without being in the Spirit can be a partaker of Judas' plot without knowing it.

### **He had a corrupting influence**

Judas raised the issue of selling the oil for 300 pence. The account of this story in Matthew included all the disciples, but compared with the version of John, you will find out the source of the statement. Judas spearheaded the murmuring and drew others in. Do not follow the multitude to sin.

*There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat. But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her. Matthew 26:7-13*

His comment rippled through the crowd, and some church members do the same today. These are Judas in the church. They corrupt the simple ones through their speeches and divide the church. They hide their criticism in conversations that sound justified, but the aim is to gather supporters. They argue over the welfare of the Pastor and question why he should be looked after, yet he is their Pastor. They suggest an amount to gift the Pastor so that people will keep within those bounds, not knowing that Judas

had hijacked the occasion. Please be mindful of Judas. They make people sin against God by complaining.

Jesus healed the people, raised their dead, prayed all night for them, fed them, and a little thank you token got Judas angry. I wonder what he would have done if a gift of a house was given to Jesus. He may have gathered squatters to occupy the place before Jesus moved in. Be a blessing to those God is using to bring you up spiritually. It is a righteous thing to do.

Judas could not imagine such an expensive oil poured on Jesus's feet. It should have been on His face or body to smell nice or look more handsome, but on the feet is a sheer waste. Judas is not a generous person. He is in the church to take and not to give. He absents himself on days of offerings for church projects. He will not contribute to the purse and will remind others of the inflation and economic hard times. Judas will have problems with money and will quarrel over tithe and offerings. Please do not go down the route of Judas or allow him to cheapen you.

Unfortunately, other disciples agreed with him without knowing what was happening in his heart. He had an agenda. Please don't agree with Judas Iscariot: evil communication corrupts good manners. Ask the Lord to open your eyes.

### **He sought to kill for the gentle rebuke**

*When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her. Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, And said unto them,*

*What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him. Matthew 26:10-16*

The gentle rebuke in this Scripture was for all of them, but he took it personally and finally bolted away to betray his master. The same rebuke was given to Peter multiple times, yet Peter took it graciously. People like Judas will speak evil at any given opportunity because they know there is no hiding for them. Their actions and motives are spiritually discerned, so they are unhappy. Unfortunately, other brethren may not understand what is happening and may even agree. Please disagree with Judas Iscariot. Ask the Lord to open your eyes.

### **He was a son of perdition**

*While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. John 17:12*

*Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve. John 6:70-71*

Many people had asked why Judas should be blamed for betraying Jesus since he was doomed for destruction. My answer is the saying my father told us when we were young. If someone draws a circle and tells you he will fit your head into it, you should not let that happen. It would be best to leave or run away from the circle's vicinity. If possible, move to another town or city or do whatever not to allow that. Moreover, it will take the person to lift and turn you upside down to do it. Make it difficult for him.

He was told this would happen and allowed it, which shows some weakness in his character. Judas fell for the negative said about Him. He should have asked others to keep him in their prayers or give up the bag. He was comfortable with his shortcomings, and it caught up with him. It doesn't matter how nice you are to Judas. He will not repent, so spending time with him is unnecessary. He will accuse you that you do not love him or ask why he behaves a certain way. Please do not be bothered. Judas knows what he is doing and takes advantage of ignorant brethren.

*Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. John 13:10-11*

Jesus told the disciples that they were not all clean. Judas was not clean. May we never be unclean among the pure in a group. The unclean are filled with jealousy, bitterness, fighting, backbiting, murder, deceit, greed, avarice, and envy. The push to betray was so strong that he left after he took his supper. He couldn't wait.

### **He meddled with avarice**

*And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them. And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him. Mark 14:10-11*

The love of money is the root of all and not some evil. We cannot worship God and worship it. The world is about what money can and cannot buy, but there are things which money cannot purchase. It cannot buy salvation, redemption, peace, joy, and the fruit of the Spirit. Judas played into the hands of those who hate righteousness, and they were glad to accept him. Satan will offer

fame and money if you agree to betray the Master. He has fostered false teachings and prophets through money. These preachers boast about affluence, and everything they teach is about money. They give fake promises that sound real and take the scriptures out of context.

Avarice consumed him so much that all the messages, miracles and wonders did not make a difference to him. The message that converted Zacchaeus did not change him, the words that convicted Mary did not move him, and the call that delivered Matthew from the tribute table did not touch him. He held on to nothing.

Let us embrace Jesus and what the Holy Spirit is saying and shun the dominance of mammon in our lives.

### **He left the door of his heart ajar**

*Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh which is called the Passover and the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him for they feared people then Satan entered into Judas surnamed Iscariot. Luke 22:1-7*

Judas left the door of his heart wide ajar, and Satan entered. Unfortunately, he doesn't come in gently but barges in, tearing up the flesh of his victim. If you give Satan an inch, he will take a mile.

Please don't give him any chance in your life. When a house is cleared and kept clean, he snoops around and comes in with seven stronger demons if not occupied.

*When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than*



*himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation. Matthew 12:43-45*

Satan will not force the door of our hearts open. We make room when we engage in the things that attract him. He goes about like a roaring lion looking for prey. When you till your heart with ignorance and fertilize it with unbelief, idolatry, and sin, you have prepared a ground he will flourish in.

We have seen people go into sin after many years of serving God faithfully and wonder why. They left something open that decayed over the years. These could be neglected bad habits, anger, malice, and Satan may have been meddling with the person until he finally took over.

Judas went out to negotiate with the Chief Priests, which means he knows where to find them and how to do the business. He has been with Jesus and knows His whereabouts anytime. He is best at identifying Jesus since he dresses and looks like them.

## **Lessons to Learn from Judas**

### **The covering cast was removed**

As Judas left the table in *John 13:30*, Jesus started revealing deep things to the rest of the team. They were not meant for his ears as they would not profit him. This is a lesson to anyone who will be disruptive at church. You will miss out on the blessings of the obedient.

In *John 13:31*, Jesus told them to love one another because hate has left the team, and they can operate freely. Chapters 14-16 shared the profound promise of the Holy Spirit to comfort them. He confessed His love for them and prayed for them in *John 17*. He revealed Himself as the Father, the Holy Spirit.

## **It took a kiss to identify Jesus among the twelve**

*And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? Luke 22:47-48*

*Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me. And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him. Matthew 26:45-50*

*And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? Luke 22:47-48*

It took a kiss to identify Jesus among twelve people. He was not different. He wore the same clothing, ate, and slept alongside them. Christ exemplified humility. Today you don't need anybody to tell you who the pastor is when you enter the church. They sit on the throne of their altars. Some have bodyguards, and claps go on as they ascend to their thrones as celebrity stars. All those things are superfluties, and we should keep away from them.

## **Regret too late**

*When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor. Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. Matthew 27:1-6*

Judas would have repented, but he committed suicide. The same people he connived with rejected him. We should be careful in agreeing with people that have no heart. They will deny you, and you will be left alone to regret.

## **He died before Jesus**

*And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. Matthew 27:7*

He didn't live to see his plot, which was a shame. It was an all-round loss.

## **Evil gain is a waste**

*And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the*

*children of Israel did value; And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me. Matthew 27:8-10*

*And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord. Zechariah 11:12-13*

### **His office was taken by another**

*For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, And let no man dwell therein: and His bishoprick let another take Acts 1:20*

*Let his days be few; And let another take his office. Psalm 109:8*

Matthias took his office. Please do not play Judas, it is an own-goal, and you will shoot yourself in the foot.

## What got them the job

One may ask: why did Jesus call the particular disciples he did? Why did they get the job and not others? They were not the most qualified or righteous of their fellows. They were ordinary people, friends and brothers, yet they all had certain qualities in common. The scripture that describes it best is:

*So, then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. Romans 9:16*

Every job has selection criteria. The little things that count are the critical things the Lord looks for and things to look out for in ministry. Let's explore the unique attributes that got the disciples through the interview.

### They were called and ordained

*And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils: And Simon he surnamed Peter; And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder: And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite, And Judas Iscariot, which*

*also betrayed him: and they went into an house. Mark 3:13-19*

*And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach. Mark 3:14*

*The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. John 1: 43-44*

As seen from the above passages, they were called differently through various means. We should give this a thought. If Jesus calls out people from the crowd, will we be among the hand-picked ones? Those who creep in through the window into ministry as hirelings are described as follows:

*But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling and careth not for the sheep. John 10:12-13*

Some people call themselves into ministry because they think they can do it better. They have the charisma and language and can wrap up words. People's ears can be tickled with wrapping, and they gather not for Jesus but to hear the preacher. If you are in ministry for the wrong reason, cry out to the Lord for salvation. Satan will make mincemeat out of all deceivers and those who climb in through the window, not the door. Be sure you are with the Lord first before you can serve. Don't run off to do your own thing without Jesus; Satan will notice that you are a soldier with no ammunition, and he loves that. He will trip you up when you think you are making progress. Beware, as a besetting sin, weight, or an aspect of your character you haven't dealt with will bring you down.

## Jesus knew them

He knew Judas, who betrayed him. A man that was given an opportunity but burst it. He knew them as well as he knows us today. Christ knew all men. He knows those who want to bury their fathers before they come, those who would like to bid friends farewell, and those who will be serious and those who will not.

The Lord knows those he will use. He knows those who will start well but end up like Judas. He knows everyone. Don't worry what others think or say; serve Him in Spirit and truth.

*Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men. John 2:23-24*

The Lord knows about the false prophets, knows who they are, and does not need anybody to testify of them.

*And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. John 6:25-26*

He knows those who are following him to fill their bellies. He knows those following him for miracles and what they'll get. And He knows those who are in ministry for personal gain. Why would people deceive themselves and do their own thing? Are they not afraid of Elohim, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, who has all power and sees everything?

## They were chosen

*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should*

*remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. John 15:16*

It is incredible how Yeshua chooses ordinary men of Galilee and its surrounding cities to be with Him. It gives us hope. Jesus chooses us irrespective of our backgrounds, culture, and status.

### **They found others**

*One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone. John 1:40-42*

*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. John 1:45*

Some people find it difficult to invite others to church. They keep their salvation to themselves and do not share it. One Pastor came to the school of ministry because the church she was pastoring was struggling. We asked her to invite other members so they could all receive first-hand information and revival could come fast. She refused and said, "If they get what I am getting at the same time, what will I teach them?". Andrew went straight away to get his brother.

I met another person with her friends, and she introduced me as her teacher at the School of Ministry. One of her friends asked her why she had not told them about the school. She replied, "I must finish before you can come".



These brethren wanted to keep what was free and become ministers before their brethren. That was classic selfishness! Do not hoard the grace of God. Andrew went to get his brother Peter. Philip immediately went and found his friend. Have you found your friend? Have you spread the good news, or are you hiding it? Have you let them know you are born again and Jesus saves?

Some of us have thousands of friends on social media. Please spread the good tidings to your thousands of friends. The name Jesus is mighty. There is no other name by which anyone can be saved. Those the Lord will use are those that will catch men. The Word can break even the hardest heart asunder.

### **They sought and dwelt with Jesus**

*Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. John 1:38-39*

They went, saw, and dwelt with Him. There was no argument, phone call or Internet search for His profile before they followed Him, as might happen now. Nowadays, people seem to need more consultation to be sure of what they are doing.

I wonder where the disciples dwelt with Jesus? The man in *Luke 9:57* said to him,

“I want to come with you and follow you.”

Jesus replied,

“That’s okay, but for a heads-up warning, birds have nests, foxes have holes, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head”.

So where did he show them? I am sure it was not a ten-bedroom mansion in an expansive estate with attendants and security. He sent them to the man who lived in the upper room and asked for a

space in his house for the last supper. What a way to end hardship! However, being with a famous preacher meant the disciples could be sure their days of poverty had ended. They would no longer toil all night in the deep sea of Galilee, henceforth, they will be served with dainty dishes.

These men of Galilee dwelt with Jesus, although there was nothing to see. Will we stay today if we see nothing? The common thing out there is to go with those that have jets, fancy cars, good suits, armour-bearers and the like. Some people cannot settle in a church unless it is a crowd of 5,000 or 30,000 to feel they belong. These men went to see an ordinary and straightforward lifestyle.

### **They did not wrestle with the Word of God**

As soon as Jesus said, “Follow me”, they left everything and followed Him.

How many of us will fast and pray for twenty-one days before answering the call of God? We will first check out the city online for volcanoes and famines and decide if we want to go where the Lord wants to send us.

Some will ask who Jesus is in the first place and what forsaking all means. Does it include our job, parents, children, and the new home we just bought? A lot of detractors are out there opposing God’s command to us. They say all sorts of things about tithing, fasting, what we wear, etc. None of these things are their business. We are kingdom citizens and are not bound by their opinions. We should keep away from them.

The disciples did not wrestle with the call of the Lord or make excuses. Some excuses may look reasonable, but you should know when Satan is offering you food on a platform of fire. Not all opportunities that come our way are from the Lord. If Satan knows you love opportunities, he will keep offering them on a

Sunday morning to remove you from church and church activities. Be careful! He did it with our Lord. He showed and offered Him the whole world if he would bow down and worship him, but our Lord resisted.

Not every opportunity that comes our way is for us believers. When people know you as a believer, they will not invite you to anything you should not attend because they know you will turn it down. Know when to say no.

The disciples followed Jesus straight away and without hesitation. Many of us are still clutching at what holds us back: dresses, shoes, and handbags. Others idolise their kitchen and change it yearly, making it difficult to give it up. One lady told me she couldn't think of cooking anywhere except in her kitchen. It means she can't go on a mission where she has to cook with stones as tripods.

Those the Lord will use are those who follow him immediately and without argument, without asking questions and without debating or murmuring. They won't allow anything Satan tries to put in their way to stop them.

### **They left all and followed Jesus**

*For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: and so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him. Luke 5:9-11*

The disciples forsook all the fish. They didn't sell the fish first, put the money in the bank, or invest it with yielding interest. They could have sold their boat and saved the money for rainy days. But they did not. They answered the call at once. Fishing for fish may

earn you money, but fishing for men will earn you eternal life. They chose the latter.

When we read the Bible, we might think the disciples were all single men, but Peter had a wife. Don't use your family as an excuse for not following Jesus immediately; Jesus died for them, too. Take them along on the journey to Heaven. Keeping them behind will make you look back, and the person will not be fit for the kingdom. Some married women use their husbands and children to cop out. They make excuses such as they need to feed him, dye his hair, cut his beard, pedicure his toes, and put him to rest before the service of the Lord. They need to spoon-feed their grown children. Unfortunately, some of these pampered husbands walk away with strange women, and the children bolt off at eighteen. Take them along and put Jesus Christ into them so they can stand and have Him for themselves. Do not shield your family away from God. You will not go to heaven alone.

If any Pastor says, "Let the dead bury the dead," to a brother today, he will be in hot soup. People will ask, "Did you hear what the Pastor said?" "You shouldn't bury your mum or your dad? What kind of church is that?" 'The Pastor must be a hard person. He should know you're grieving; he should know you're broken and be there to help you.' Eish! Many people today are waiting to catch out the Pastor's word.

### **The took every correction and rebuke**

True disciples will not get angry or offended when corrected and know God rebukes those He loves. Jesus even said, "Get thee behind me, Satan", to Peter. James and John were called Sons of Thunder. The disciples were told they had little faith and called little children, but they gracefully took the correction. They did not raise a vote of no confidence in Jesus but remained His followers.

## **They knew his background yet did not despise Him**

Jesus was a Galilean from Nazareth, a place people said nothing good could come out of it, yet they called him Lord.

*But these people who knoweth not the law are cursed. Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) Doth our law judges any man, before it hears him, and know what he doeth? They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. John 7:49-52*

Don't be held back because someone stereotyped you. Jesus came from a busy town full of soldiers, drink problems, drugs, rape, extortion, and cheating in trade. People said nothing good about Nazareth, yet Jesus came from there.

It is always the corrupt minority which gives a place or a nation a poor reputation. Don't let what people say about your tribe, nation, colour, race, and tongue limit you. There will always be stereotyping. Ignore it and get on with the work of the Lord. I have Caribbean friends who feel limited because their grandfathers were enslaved. Don't let the past define you. Some people are raised in the poorest corners of the city. Don't let that stop you. You might not have the education and certificates others have. Don't be held back, do what God wants you to do with your head held high. Keep your head above the water and carry on.

Everything surrounding our Lord Jesus was designed to make him seem insignificant. Genuine people will overlook this.

*Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Judas, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. Mark 6:3*

Jesus' followers knew He was the carpenter's son, but they honoured Him. While Satan will do anything to stop you, those

who truly follow Jesus are unstoppable. He had no cathedral or red carpet leading to the altar, but that did not stop His followers from following Him.

The Pharisees looked down on Him and called Him names like ‘Beelzebub’ and ‘devil’. The disciples were undeterred by that. There is something about faithful followers of Jesus. Those called by Him will look at who He is and see His power. They walk by faith. It’s not physical, but their hearts are always ready to go where He goes and will not be held back by stereotypes.

The famous phrase ‘dress how you want to be addressed’ has deceived some ministers. It ought not to be so. Some people prioritise the wrong things in ministry. They start by changing their clothing to resemble the Joneses, borrowing money to buy bands and stage lighting, and renting expensive halls. They fail before they begin because of pressure to live up to an image they made for themselves.

Some judge by appearances. They size up the church hall and the Pastor. If the church is a hired place, with no curtain, or door, they will not return. Have you looked down on a minister because of profiling? Remember, the disciples did not despise Jesus. They were looking for a better city. Daniel saw the house of Nebuchadnezzar, Moses the house of Pharaoh, Esther the house of Ahasuerus, and Joseph the house of Potiphar, but they purposed to keep with God rather than pursue the treasures of this life.

### **They had no guile**

*Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! John 1:47*

Those the Lord will use will have no guile, cover-up, or masquerades. They say things as they are. What you see on the outside is what is on the inside. Their hearts and minds are saying

the same thing. They are always consistent and do not act like Satan in the office or saints at church.

We know a lady we hardly recognised when she decided to stop using her make-up powder. It took us months to reconcile her new look with the old. If I do not know your natural face, how can I know what is in your heart? The people of the world need a mask to deceive. We do not need a mask; we need the mark of our Lord Jesus Christ. Satan, sin, trials, and demons see that mark and are scared.

The disciples were of honest report, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. They had no issue asking Jesus who amongst them would betray Him. The Lord seeks a clean, honest spirit and a pure heart with no deception. He is looking for people who won't make merchandise of His people, people without guile, secret agenda, hypocrisy, and hidden things in their hearts. You may not have money, education, or anything else to stand out to the ordinary eyes, but that doesn't matter.

### **They confessed the Lord**

Peter exclaimed, "My God and my Lord," when the miracle of the draught of fishes happened. Nathanael did so when Jesus told him He saw him sitting under the tree. The Lord will use those who respond to His word. They are the people the Word will break, remould and comfort. Such will keep the Word. Both Peter and Nathanael were very expressive and open-minded.

### **They were obedient**

Jesus' disciples were obedient to all the instructions given.

*And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. Luke 5:5*

Peter might have thought,

“I am a professional fisherman, and you are a carpenter with no fishing experience. I have toiled all night and know what it takes to fish. We used every tactic and knew when they were breeding. Maybe they’re quite young now. Let’s give them a little time”.

So many of us want to sit down and ponder why we will not do what the Lord wants us to do. We argue we have done something the same way for years and are very experienced. The challenge is, will we obey the Lord when we think we know it all and He asks us to do things differently? Peter obeyed and caught a draught of fish.

To obey can be tricky, especially when our ego comes into play. In December 2005, a brother surprised us with a luxury stay in an expensive hotel here in London. In the morning, my husband said we should go downstairs. I refused because I had no slippers and did not want to wear the white ones the hotel provided. As a lady, it wasn’t very comfortable. He insisted, and I obeyed out of duty. As we got to the third floor, a couple got into the lift, and I felt embarrassed because I was barefoot. He ministered to them, and they gave their lives to the Lord. Downstairs, the bar staff were not busy as it was so early in the morning. We walked up to them and ministered to three of them. They gave their lives to the Lord. Five people in total! I repented in dust and ashes that morning. Those five would not have heard the gospel if I had not obeyed.

Matthew, a man of letters, knew Christ was a carpenter, yet he obeyed Him. Anointing has nothing to do with education or wealth. The disciple filled the pots with water and poured them out as wine in obedience.

### **They were generous**

*And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear*



*the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people out of the ship. Luke 5:1-3*

Peter loaned his boat to the Lord to use. Matthew did the same by calling a party to celebrate his calling.

### **They believed in Him**

*Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. John 1:50*

Jesus' followers believed and trusted Him. There are lots of unbelieving believers in the church today. They believe in Jesus but do not think He can change their situation. They do not believe He can turn their water into wine, straighten their crippled leg, or make their dead bodies alive again. Will you accept the report of the Lord concerning you? Can you stop seeing mountains and giants and believe in the author and finisher of our faith? Have you given up on seeing the impossible? We do not need a hundred years for the Lord to do it. We do not need twenty-four hours. Like the centurion, we can say, "Speak the word, Lord, and it is a done deal". The Lord can do it right away in a second, in the twinkling of an eye. He will turn all sorrows into joy, all woes into laughter, and impossibilities into possibility. He is able to do it. The disciples believed He would make them fishers of men, and He did it.

You cannot love a master you don't believe in and cannot pray for somebody to rise from the dead bed if you don't believe it can happen. You cannot preach that the Lord can cause rain to fall if

you do not believe it. You cannot say “I know,” and you doubt in your heart. If the Lord will use you, you must believe Him.

### **They were humble**

With all their deficiencies, inadequacies, and shortcomings, the disciples remained so. They were humble people. The Lord knows that many people who come to church in expensive cars, wearing expensive clothes and perfume, will not lower themselves to clean the toilet. It takes humility to clean the toilet. God will resist the proud and give grace to the humble. Those wanting pomp and pageantry will not attend church if there is no special seat to sit next to the pastor. But the Lord knows that the humble will not seek a position or try to be seen and known in rain or shine. They only seek to know Him and the power of His resurrection and want to be like Him. These are the people that the Lord will use.

### **They kept rank**

The disciples respected Peter's team leadership. They also conceded to one another. They did not murmur when the core three were chosen from among them for specific assignments. When Peter asked them to go fishing, no one challenged him. They went with Him.

### **They were teachable**

When they began following Jesus, the twelve disciples had some personality issues and baggage they brought. There was a progression in growth and purification as they went along. They asked questions, sought explanations, and learned. Their faithlessness left them as they journeyed along with Jesus. It was easy to entreat them. They knew contact with Jesus would change them, so they accepted every opportunity to be with Him.

A great future lies before those who believe in God for their transformation. When you allow the Lord to guide you, you will not struggle with impure thoughts, bad habits and other aspects of a sinful nature. When people commit to Jesus wholeheartedly, nothing can hold them captive.

### **They were team players**

The twelve disciples stayed together despite the occasional quarrels and differences. They were from different backgrounds, cities, and cultures but worked together. Whatever Jesus asked them to do, they did as one.

### **Their profession**

Why did Jesus call fishermen to be His disciples? Fishermen are men of endurance. They are patient, long-suffering, and able to bear hardship. Traditional fisherman fish at night in their underwear, braving the coldest of nights. Fearlessly, they go deep into the sea to catch the larger fish. They are bold. If their boat sinks, there is no one to shout out to. They are sometimes at risk of drowning with no prospect of rescue. It takes courage and determination to be a fisherman. They are very patient and keep trying even if they catch nothing. They are at work while others are asleep. Perseverance is their middle name.

Your profession can help to bridge the gap between the people and the difficulties they are facing. Matthew, the tax collector, was a scribe. He was recruited to make a detailed genealogy from Abraham to Christ. Among the disciples was Simon the Canaanite, who should not have been there. He had a Jewish name but was from a Gentile nation. Either way, your citizenship determines where you are from. If you are eligible, you will be called. However, Christ has no prejudice.

## **The opposition did not deter them**

The crowd called them unlearned fishermen, but they had the strength of personality that meant they were determined to follow Jesus and not be put off by anything. Don't allow your accent to deter you. Everybody has an accent, colour, race, and culture, and none is superior to the other. Don't use these things as an excuse. For example, don't say you cannot minister in America because you are not American or in Africa because you are not an African. Don't let anyone make you think what they have is better than yours. You are uniquely qualified for what God calls you to do. You are beautifully and wonderfully made. Anyway, the measure of beauty depends on who is looking at you. Let go and do the work the Lord has given you to do. Don't allow anything to limit you. Hold on to the call and power of God in your life.

## It is Good to Give People a Chance

**W**ow! What a church of twelve people. The expectation would have been perfect people with no faults. That was not the case. Their weaknesses loomed with them even to Gethsemane.

They pushed and shoved about who would be the greatest, complained about not bringing food along with them, and were faithless sometimes. Their understanding of spiritual things was low. They were worried about the outcome of following Jesus. There were selfish behaviours, doubts, intolerant attitudes, vengefulness, and undue ambition displayed by some. There were occasions of anger with each other, and one betrayed Jesus. They ran away at the cross. They went back to the old.

One would wonder if they were with Jesus with all their hearts, but recall that Jesus knew them before calling them. They were easy to entreat, teachable, eager to learn, happy to be corrected, and patient. They persevered and paid the high price of forsaking all. They were faithful men you can count on. They were tender-hearted. The seed planted in them was yielding fruit. They stayed till the end. They laid their hands on the plough and did not look back. Their good outweighed their bad. They became like their Master.

## **What lesson can we learn from our Lord Jesus, and why they succeeded?**

- Jesus called the disciples to be with Him. He did not live in the stately home and had them stay in the servant's quarters. They learned by example. Jesus was visible and not absent. They saw how He dealt with issues, exhibited wisdom, and dealt with the opposition.
- He gave them assignments commensurate with their learning and understood where they were at. He corrected them when due. He was not a taskmaster.
- He encouraged them when the occasion called and took care of them. He offered commendations that could boost morale. He was compassionate with them. He bore their inadequacies.
- He hid nothing from them; they knew what he was doing. He had no secret life that would raise brows. He did not have the bag to occasion embezzlement. There was transparency.
- It took a signal from Judas to identify Him from a company of twelve. They looked and dressed like Him. They learned from His humility and meekness.
- He bore their weaknesses, loved them, prayed for them, and showed them mercy. He knew their needs. He was not served with dainties while they ate the crumbs and was not on horseback while they followed on foot.
- He taught them and kept those standards Himself and revealed God to them. There was so much to learn, and they got on with the business.
- There was a clear-cut mission and vision, with the trajectory laid out. They could see the course going as scheduled. They saw first-class leadership and management principles in real life.

- He believed in them and delegated tasks to them. He got them involved and took ownership of events. They could count on Him.
- They saw true righteousness and holiness compared to the scribes and Pharisees they had known all their lives.
- He blessed them with Himself in the person of the Holy Spirit.
- He saw greatness in them and did not throw away the baby with the birth water.

They came to Jesus with raw manners and personality. The transformative power of the light in Christ Jesus turned them around. The same should be true of everyone who comes to the Lord. While it is perfectly okay to come the way we are, there should be a tangible change through the Word of God. It is a lesson to all leaders not to expect so much from the people but to teach and nurture them to perfection. Also, we should bear with one another, pray for each other and grow together in grace.

## Reference

Thompson, F., 2011. The Thompson Chain-Reference.  
5th ed. Indianapolis: B.B. Kirkbride Bible Company, INC.

We have used the King James Version Thompson Chain Reference Bible for thirty-one years, which has been a blessing to us as a family. This Bible offers no commentary on any subject in the Word, allowing the Holy Spirit to guide and speak to you directly. The chain-reference system gets one into the lifestyle of comparing Scriptures to Scriptures, which makes one appreciate the power of the Word of God.



A peep through the window will only show their names and faces, but a walk-in reveals more. A team of 12 with diverse characters. Some were dynamic, and some were happy to take the back seat, yet they were called. We tend to emphasise only a few of their attributes, blanking out the more intriguing aspects of their personalities. Many of their areas of success and difficulties can be seen in our lives today. The question is, what got them the job? Why did Jesus intimately pastor only 12? These are questions worth sleeping over.

This book is a beautiful work and easy to read. Our Father is glorified in it.



Pastor Grace co-labours with her husband to lead International Ministers Fellowship, Global School of Ministry, the Global Advanced Mentorship Program and Arise Metropolitan Assembly. A nurse by background with a BSc in Health Education, a Post Graduate studies in Management and Project Management.

She rose through the ranks to senior managerial positions in the healthcare system. Pastor Grace is married to Apostle George Akalonu and they are blessed with 5 children, Favour, Elect, Arise, Praise and Destiny.

