

Twelve Ordinary Men: Philip

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[0 : 00] Well, if you would, this evening, and with the Lord's help, if you would turn with me to the Gospel of Luke, the Gospel according to Luke, and chapter 6. Luke chapter 6, page 1039 in the Pew Bible.

Luke chapter 6, and we're reading in verse 13.

And when day came, Jesus called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles, Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew, his brother, and James, and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James, the son of Alphaeus, and Simon, who was called the Zealot, and Judas, the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. You know, every time we read this list, as I said it before, I'm always reminded that these men weren't chosen and called and commissioned.

They weren't chosen, called, and commissioned because they were rich or because they were religious. They weren't chosen, called, and commissioned because they were the best or the brightest, the smartest or the sharpest, the clearest, or even the cleverest.

[1 : 34] And it certainly wasn't because they were the most educated, the most equipped, the most delicate, the most encouraging, or even the most engaging kinds of people. Because as you know, this list of disciples of Jesus, they were just twelve ordinary men.

Twelve ordinary men. But that's why it's good for us to learn from their experience and to learn from their example. Because these disciples, they remind us and they reassure us that they were just like us.

They were just like us. Even their faults and failings, their tears and triumphs, their doubts and denials. They're all helpful. It's all helpful for us because it reminds us that every disciple is a learner.

We're all learners. That's what the word disciple means. It means learner. And this evening, we're learning from the experience and from the example of the fifth disciple in this list of learners.

We're making our way slowly through this list. And so the fifth disciple in this list of learners, as we said, is Philip. And I want us to think about Philip under three headings.

[2 : 45] Philip's friendship, Philip's figures, and Philip's focus. Philip's friendship, Philip's figures, and Philip's focus.

So first of all, Philip's friendship. Philip's friendship. You know, I think it's important to highlight from the outset that Philip the Apostle is not Philip the Evangelist.

Philip the Apostle is not Philip the Evangelist. There are two Philips mentioned in the New Testament. There's Philip the Apostle, who is here in the Gospel accounts, the one whom we're studying this evening.

And he's referred to as Philip the Apostle because, as we read, Jesus describes these twelve ordinary men as apostles. They're sent ones. But Philip the Apostle is not to be confused with Philip the Evangelist.

Philip the Evangelist, he appears in the book of Acts. Philip the Evangelist, he is, as he's described in Acts chapter 6, he was one of the first deacons in the church.

[3 : 47] But he was given the title of Philip the Evangelist because he was not only a deacon, but he was also someone who went out and preached the gospel. In fact, we read in Acts chapter 8 that when Philip the Evangelist went to Samaria to preach the gospel, Simon the sorcerer, he came to faith in Jesus Christ.

And then also, when you reach the end of Acts chapter 8, Philip the Evangelist is still preaching the gospel because the Ethiopian eunuch also came to faith in Jesus Christ.

And you remember how the Ethiopian eunuch came to know this Philip the Evangelist. It was when Philip evangelized the Ethiopian eunuch as he was reading from Isaiah chapter 53.

And Philip the Evangelist asked the Ethiopian eunuch, do you understand what you're reading? And the Ethiopian eunuch confessed, how can I unless someone guides me?

And with that, Philip the Evangelist, he began the very first Christianity Explored course, pointing this Ethiopian eunuch to Jesus.

[4 : 53] He was Philip the Evangelist. And I draw your attention to Philip the Evangelist because in comparison to Philip the Apostle, whom we're looking at this evening, he was very different.

He was very different. Philip the Evangelist in the book of Acts, he was what you would call an extrovert. He was someone who confronted people about their sin. He was someone who challenged people all the time about their soul.

He was someone who called sinners to seek the Savior. And, you know, we need people like Philip the Evangelist. We need people in their homes and in their families, in their workplaces and in their hobby spaces, who are willing and wanting to freely speak and share about the Savior.

We need people like Philip the Evangelist, who will confront others about their sin and challenge them about their soul and call people to seek the Savior while they are still on mercy's ground.

We need people who are extroverts, who are evangelistic extroverts like Philip the Evangelist was. But Philip the Apostle, whom we see here in the Gospels, he wasn't that kind of Philip at all.

[6 : 08] He was of a completely different disposition. And rather than an extrovert like Philip the Evangelist, Philip the Apostle was more of an introvert.

Because when it came to speaking and sharing about the Savior, Philip the Apostle was more of an anxious and apprehensive apostle.

He was more reserved and reticent in his approach to sharing the Gospel. Philip the Apostle wasn't the kind of guy who would boldly confront or challenge or call anyone to come to Christ.

He certainly wouldn't speak to sorcerers about their soul or even evangelize Ethiopian eunuchs. Rather, Philip the Apostle.

Philip was a friend. Philip the Apostle was a friend. And as we read in John chapter 1, Philip was a friend, boys and girls, to Nathanael.

[7 : 11] Philip was a friend to Nathanael. In fact, it was because of Philip's friendship that Nathanael found Jesus. It was because of Philip's friendship that Nathanael found Jesus.

Because we read that when Jesus found Philip, Philip found his friend Nathanael. And he found his friend Nathanael to tell him one thing. We have found Jesus.

That's what we read in John chapter 1. Philip went to find Nathanael and say to him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, We have found Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

And you know, Philip the Apostle, he may not have been this extrovert evangelist, but Philip the Apostle was a faithful friend. He was a faithful friend.

And as you know, the Lord has given us all friendships. You have friends that I'm not friends with.

The Lord has given us friendships. We are friends with people in this congregation, but also people within our community and further afield.

[8 : 22] We have friendships with those in our workplaces. Friendships with those in our hobby spaces. And all these friendships, the Lord has given us these friendships. So just like Philip and Nathanael, we will get alongside our friends in the hope that we will speak and share with them and tell them, tell them that we have found Jesus and tell them that they too can find Jesus because Jesus is a wonderful Savior.

That's what Philip did with Nathanael. He went to tell his friend that he had found Jesus and that he too can find this wonderful Savior. But there's more because Nathanael, you'll remember, and we'll look at him next time that we're studying the Apostles.

Nathanael was skeptical. He was a skeptic when it came to the Savior because he questioned his friend Philip. Straight away, he questions Philip and says, can anything good come out of Nazareth?

Can anything good come out of Nazareth? And all Philip could say to Nathanael was, come and see. Just come and see. And needless to say, that's our role and our responsibility too.

You know, we might not be an extrovert evangelist. We might not be out there calling people to come to Christ, but we can be a faithful friend. We can be a faithful friend.

[9 : 50] We can get alongside people. We can speak and share of our experience. We can tell people that we have found Jesus and they can find Jesus too.

We can invite them just like Philip invited Nathanael. We can invite them. Come and see. You might be a skeptic. And all we can say to them is, come and see. Come and see.

Come to a church service with me. Come and see and listen to this testimony at the testimony evening. Come and see at this praise night. Come and see this church event. Come and see who this Jesus is.

Come and see that he's a friend of sinners. You know, whatever it is, like Philip, we can invite our friends to come and see. Come and see this wonderful Savior who is able to save to the uttermost. And so we see Philip's friendship. Philip's friendship. Then secondly, Philip's figures. So Philip's friendship and Philip's figures. Philip's figures.

[10 : 54] You know, another comparison between Philip, the extrovert evangelist, and Philip, the apprehensive apostle. Another comparison is that Philip, Philip, the extrovert evangelist, he was from Caesarea.

Whereas Philip, the apprehensive apostle, he was from Bethsaida. Which, as we read in two passages, we read that that is where Andrew and Peter were also from.

They were from the rural village just north of the Sea of Galilee called Bethsaida. And you know, like it is in our own rural community, living along the west side.

You know, you would know most people. They would know most people living in their rural village, just like we know most people living in our rural village. Philip would have known Andrew. He would have known Peter.

They probably were around the same age. They probably went to the same school. They probably worshipped in the same synagogue. They maybe even lived on the same street. In fact, it's often suggested that like Peter and Andrew and James and John, these first four apostles, it's often suggested that Philip was also a fisherman who worked alongside them.

[12 : 08] But Philip was different to these first four disciples. Peter, you remember, he was opinionated. He was always outspoken. Andrew was the gentle and gracious one.

James and John, they were boanerges. They were the sons of thunder. They were passionate for the Lord and passionate for the lost. But Philip, as we said, he was this apprehensive kind of guy. He was an anxious apostle. Philip was apprehensive and anxious. But what made Philip unique, and this is what I find amazing, what made Philip unique was that he had a Greek name.

He had a Greek name. All of the apostles would have had Hebrew names, and that's mentioned. But Philip's name is a Greek name, and he's only ever used, he's only ever explained in the Gospels using his Greek name.

And his name, I know you're all listening intently for his name, his name means lover of horses. So Philip is a Greek name, which means lover of horses.

[13 : 21] But even though Philip had a Greek name, he would have been a Jew, like all the other apostles, a Jew by birth. But the reason Philip had a Greek name was because of the impact and the influence of Alexander the Great.

The reason Philip had a Greek name was because of the impact and influence of Alexander the Great. Which is really interesting because Alexander the Great actually took place, he was around 400 years before Philip.

The death of Alexander the Great was in the 4th century BC. And it was just after the death of Alexander the Great that there were all these Greek colonies that spread throughout the ancient world.

And these Greek colonies, they had an impact and an influence upon different nations because of their Greek customs and their Greek culture. To the point that many people started to speak in Greek.

And those who spoke in Greek, they became known as Hellenists. But you know, I find, what I find amazing is that, well, first of all, our God is amazing.

[14 : 30] But you know, we often say that history is His story. History is God's story. History is His story. And it's so true. Because when Jesus was born, the impact and the influence of all these Greek colonies and Greek culture and Greek customs, it meant that lots and lots of people in Israel spoke Greek.

They were Hellenists. They were Hellenistic Jews. In fact, the Greek that they spoke was called Koine Greek. It was common Greek. It was a common language which everyone spoke.

It was also the language that the New Testament was written in. It was written in the language of the people. A language that everyone could understand. Koine Greek.

Common Greek. And because it was written in a language that everyone would understand, everyone would understand the message of the gospel. No one could misunderstand it.

Because everyone could understand this common language. But what's more is that the Hellenistic period, it came to an end just around 32 AD, just before the death of Jesus.

[15 : 41] And it was then that the Roman Empire emerged not only to play its part in the death of Jesus, but also to play its part in the spread of the gospel. Because as you know, the Roman Empire, they built lots of roads.

The roads that would be used to spread that gospel, the New Testament message, that had been written in this common language. This language of Koine Greek. And don't you find it amazing that there was one language with one message and it was being spread through all these different roads?

That the Lord had paved the way. And it reminds us that, well, history is His story, but nothing happens by chance or coincidence. No, it's all ordered and all ordained according to the perfect plan, path, purpose, and providence of the Lord.

And that's certainly true in your life and it's true in my life, just as it was true in Philip's life. It was all ordered and ordained by the Lord.

Everything was ordered and ordained by the Lord. Even all His meetings. All our meetings are ordered and ordained by the Lord. And we see that even with Philip.

[16 : 55] He had a meeting in John chapter 12. We read there that as a Hellenistic Jew, as someone who could speak Greek, there were other Hellenistic Jews who came to Philip.

And they came to Philip because they were looking for Jesus. And they said to Philip, and of all people, they came to Philip because they knew he was a Hellenistic Jew. They said to Philip, Sir, we would see Jesus.

Sir, we would see Jesus. And you know, I love those words. Sir, we would see Jesus. As I said before, I've loved them so much that I had them written on the pulpit.

So if you want to see those words there, just come up to the pulpit anytime. Sir, we would see Jesus. But what I find interesting is that when these Hellenistic Jews came to Philip looking for Jesus, we read that Philip went to tell Andrew.

And Andrew and Philip went to tell Jesus. And it's interesting that Philip told Andrew and not Peter or James or John.

[18 : 05] And for me, in many ways, it's obvious why Philip told Andrew because Philip and Andrew, they were very similar in their character. As we said, Philip was this apprehensive and anxious person.

Andrew was this gentle and gracious person. They had a similar temperament. They were comparable in their character, which is why they naturally gravitated towards one another. They were very similar in their outlook. One was anxious and apprehensive, so he was quite reserved and reticent. The other was gentle and gracious, very soft in the way he dealt with people. But you know, Philip and Andrew were not only comparable in their character, they were also very distinct. distinct in their disposition, especially when it came to the feeding of the 5,000.

Because as we read there in John chapter 6, when Jesus saw this large crowd coming towards him, out of all the twelve, he turns to Philip.

[19 : 08] John MacArthur calls him the bean counter. He was the guy who was looking after all the organization of the twelve. But it's amazing, Jesus turned to Philip and he said to Philip, where are we going to buy bread so that all these people may eat?

Where are we going to buy bread so that all these people may eat? Of course, Jesus knew what he was going to do. We read that in the passage. But Jesus asked Philip in order to test Philip's faith. Because Philip knew that it was late in the day. Philip knew that it was coming to the end of the day and people would be hungry and there certainly wouldn't be a KFC or a McDonald's around to help feed all these people.

And as this large crowd is arriving, you know, you can almost imagine what was going on. All the apostles are getting anxious, they're getting apprehensive, they're seeing all these, all this crowd

gathering together.

But Philip is there. He's counting. He's already started counting heads. And Philip's figures, they were rising all the time.

[20 : 14] He was counting everyone who was arriving. 1,000. Then he keep counting. 2,000. Keep counting. 3,000. 4,000.

5,000. And that's not including the women and the children. And you know, with his anxious and apprehensive disposition, Philip would have been sweating.

He would have absolutely been scratching his head as he turned to Jesus and said, there are about 25,000 people here.

200 denarii will not be enough to buy bread for everyone just to get even a little. Now, 200 denarii, it's a lot of money.

That's about eight months' wages. To put it into perspective, eight months' wages of a UK salary is about 25,000 pound. So, 25,000 pound is what is 200 denarii.

[21 : 19] It works out, this crowd of 25,000 people, it works out about one pound ahead for the crowd of 25,000. Which isn't too bad, one pound ahead, but it's a hefty bill for a picnic for all these people.

But as we said, Philip and Andrew, they were similar in their outlook. But when it came to feeding the 5,000, we see that Philip used his head, but Andrew used his heart.

Philip used his head where Andrew, whereas Andrew used his heart. Because while Philip was working out all these figures, Andrew just went for a little walk and found a little boy on his lunchbox. And as Andrew always did, he graciously and gently and calmly and collectively, he brought this little boy to Jesus. Do you know, my friend, when Philip used his head, Andrew used his heart. And Philip used his head because he was an anxious person. He was an apprehensive person. Philip was the kind of guy where everything was a cup half empty.

[22 : 32] Philip was a half empty cup kind of guy. He had a defeatist disposition. He was always pessimistic in his perspective where everything he said it was impossible.

Everything's impossible. So what's the point? You know, Philip would have been saying to Jesus, Jesus, there are 25,000 people here. We don't have the resources.

We don't have the resilience. to feed them. It's not going to happen. Just forget it. Just forget it. You know, my friend, Philip was always looking at things with facts and figures, but not with faith.

Philip was using his head while Andrew was using his heart. Philip was always looking at things with facts and figures. And you see that throughout the Gospels. He's always using his head and not his heart.

He's always looking at things with facts and figures, but not with faith. And in his commentary, John MacArthur, this is what he writes about Philip. He says, it seems that Philip was a classic process person.

[23 : 38] He was a facts and figures guy. By the book, practical minded, a non-forward thinking type of individual. He was the kind of guy who tends to be a corporate killjoy, always pessimistic, always obsessed with identifying reasons for things that can't be done, rather than finding ways to do them.

Philip was predisposed, he says, to be a pragmatist and a cynic, and sometimes a defeatist, rather than a visionary. Philip was always looking at the facts, always looking at the figures, always saying, it can't be done, it's impossible, there's no point.

He always had this defeatist disposition, a pessimistic perspective. It was always facts and figures, and not faith. And you know, there are many people like that too.

Many people like Philip, and sadly, you often find him in the church, especially when it comes to evangelism, or outreach, or upgrades, or doing something.

Like Philip, they will list the facts, and list the figures, and say, we don't have the resources. What's the point? We don't have the resilience, we don't have the manpower, we can't do it, it's impossible.

[25 : 06] But as you know, my friend, Jesus reminds us what is impossible with men is possible with God. I know that's something I think we should always remember, something we should never forget.

What is impossible with men is possible with God. And tonight, we worship the God of the impossible. We worship the God of the impossible.

So why do we put God into our little boxes? Why do we put boundaries and barriers upon God? Why do we restrict and restrain the God of the universe?

And we do it, sometimes without even thinking, we restrict and restrain the God of the universe? As we said this morning from Psalm 24, the earth belongs unto the Lord, and all that it contains, the world that is inhabited, and all that there remains.

So why do we put boundaries and barriers upon the God of the Bible? Why do we look at things with facts and figures and not with faith?

[26 : 11] Because as we've been reminded with Philip, it's faith that we need. It's faith that we need. It's faith that we need even though things might look dark and dead in a day of small things.

You know, we need to remember, and that's why we're looking at the book of Revelation midweek, because in the book of Revelation we're being reminded that Jesus is a risen ruling and reigning king who is going to return.

He is the sovereign, superior, and supreme ruler over all things. Therefore, if Jesus is able to use a little boy's lunchbox to feed thousands, then he's able to do in us, and he's able to do for us, as Paul says, exceedingly, abundantly, above all, more than we could ask or even think.

We worship the God of the impossible, and what is impossible with men is possible with God. You know, Philip, sadly, was always looking at the facts and figures, but not with faith, which is why he needed to focus on Jesus.

He needed to focus on Jesus. That brings us, lastly and briefly, to Philip's focus. Philip's focus. So, Philip's friendship, Philip's figures, and Philip's focus.

[27 : 41] You know, the last chapter that we read about Philip was from John chapter 14, and those well-known words of Jesus were Jesus was in the upper room with his disciples, and he's concluding the Last Supper, and he's consecrating the Lord's Supper.

And it was also at that point that Jesus declared that one disciple would deceive him, another disciple would deny him, and all the other disciples would desert him. And you know, undoubtedly, the Last Supper, the Lord's Supper, it was a low point for the disciples.

It was a low point, which is why Jesus spoke into the heart of the situation, and he spoke to all these troubled hearts of the disciples, and he said to them, let not your heart be troubled.

You believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house and 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 I will receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

And as we read, it was then that Thomas spoke up. We'll come to Thomas in a few weeks' time. Thomas said, Lord, we do not know where you are going.

[28 : 54] How can we know the way? And Jesus replies with those well-known words, pointing to himself, saying, I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me.

But then Philip speaks, and Philip says to Jesus, Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us. Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.

And with that, Jesus, straight on to Philip, he says immediately to Philip, he questions Philip's faith, and he says to Philip, have I been with you this long, and you still do not know me, Philip?

You know, what I think to say, have I been with you this long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me, says Jesus, has seen the Father.

How can you say then, show us the Father? You know, my friend, Jesus questioned Philip's faith because Philip's focus was all wrong.

[30 : 05] Jesus questioned Philip's faith because Philip's focus was all wrong. For three years, Philip had been looking at Jesus, and listening to Jesus, and learning from Jesus, but he still hadn't come to this place where he's loving Jesus personally.

He still didn't completely lean upon Jesus for his salvation. He didn't still lean upon Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life, that no man comes to the Father except through him.

And Jesus asks Philip, he says to him, have I been with you this long, this long, and you still do not know me, Philip?

You know, I wonder if Jesus could say that of you or God's evening. Have I been with you this long, and you still don't know me?

Have I been with you this long, and you still don't know me? Yes, you've been looking at your Bible, and yes, you've been listening in church, and yes, you've been learning from all these sermons that

you hear, and you've been learning for a long time, but you still don't love me, and you still don't lean upon me completely and wholly for your salvation.

[31 : 30] You still don't claim and confess that I am the way, the truth, and the life. Have I been with you this long, and you still don't know me?

don't I wonder, has it been years? Has it been decades for some of you?

And Jesus is saying to you tonight, have I been with you this long? All these years, I've been with you, and you still, you still don't know me. You've been looking and listening and learning for such a long time, such a long time, but you're still not loving, still not leaning your whole weight, your whole faith upon Jesus.

And you're not leaning your whole faith upon Jesus, because like Philip, your focus is all wrong, where your focus is upon self, where you need to be good enough to come to this Jesus, or you need to know enough to come to this Jesus, or you need to have done enough before you come to this Jesus.

But you know, if that's the case, my friend, your focus is all wrong. Your focus needs to be upon Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone, him and him alone.

[33 : 01] Because Jesus is saying tonight, as he said to Philip in the upper room, with all the disciples there, he said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father but by me.

But by me. Have I been with you so long, this long, and you still do not know me? Have I been with you?

And so we see Philip's friendship, Philip's figure, and Philip's focus. He was the anxious and apprehensive apostle who always looked at things with facts and figures, but not with faith, which is why Philip's focus and our focus, our focus needs to be upon one person, Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone.

Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone. Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to Thee this evening for reminding us that we need to focus upon Jesus.

And Lord, we confess that how often our focus is diverted to other things and other directions, but we pray that Thou wouldst refocus our direction this evening to look upon Jesus and to see that He remains the way, the truth, and the life, that no man comes to the Father except through Him.

[34 : 38] O Lord, bless Thy truth to us, we plead, that we would learn from these twelve ordinary men and see that in their failures and even in their faith, that we can learn from their example and their experience, that we might grow and learn to be more like Jesus.

Bless us, Lord, in the week that lies ahead, a week that is unknown to any of us, but Lord, we commit ourselves into Thy care and keeping. Keep our going out and our coming in from this time forth and even forevermore, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for His sake.

Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this evening. We're going to sing in Psalm 25 in the Sing Psalms version. Psalm 25, Sing Psalms version, page 29.

Singing from verse 8 down to the verse marked 15. Psalm 25, Sing Psalms version, page 29.

Before we sing, I've got the three questions. Are you ready? Yeah. Who was Philip's friend? Nathaniel.

[36 : 01] Yeah. What does the name Philip mean? Lover of horses. Yeah. How much is 200 denarii? 25,000 pound.

Yeah. 200 denarii. It's not bad. Very, very good. Okay, so singing Psalm 25, verse 8 down to verse marked 15.

Because the Lord is just and good, he shows his paths to all who stray. He guides the meek in what is right and teaches them his holy way.

And we're singing, remember, about friends, the theme of friends. It says there in verse 14, God's friends are those who fear his name. With them his covenant he will share.

My eyes are always on the Lord. He'll free my feet from every snare. So we're singing these verses of Psalm 25 to God's praise. Because the Lord is just and good, he shows his path to all who stray.

[37 : 19] He guides the meek in what is right and teaches them his holy way.

to those who keep his covenant laws.

He shows his love consistently. For your name's sake, O Lord, my God, forgive my great iniquity. who then are those who fear the Lord.

He'll teach to them the chosen way, that they may prosper all their life.

[38 : 50] Their children in the land will stay. God's friends are those who fear his name, with them his covenant he will share.

My eyes are always on the Lord. He'll free my feet from every snare.

the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever more.

Amen.