

Matthew, Thomas, Philip, and Bartholomew

Passages: Lk 5:27–32; Jn 1:43–51; 20:24–29

Memory Verse

“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” (1 Peter 4:10)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Work [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God desires each of us to contribute to the growth of the church.2. God has called each of us to preach the gospel.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God chooses whom He wills to be His vessels.2. God loves us and desires for our faith to be strong.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Be courageous in evangelizing for God.2. Pursue a full understanding of the Scriptures.

Overview

Spiritual Teachings

- A. Matthew
 1. The Calling of Matthew
 2. Matthew’s Servitude and Characteristics
- B. Thomas
 1. The Calling of Thomas
 2. Thomas’ Servitude and Characteristics
- C. Philip
 1. The Calling of Philip
 2. Philip’s Servitude and Characteristics
- D. Bartholomew
 1. The Calling of Bartholomew
 2. Bartholomew’s Servitude and Characteristics

Life Application

1. Recognize our gifts and use them to serve God.
2. Take courage in preaching and letting others see Christ in us.

Memory Verse

Conclusion: We must learn from Matthew, Philip, Bartholomew, and Thomas to use our individual gifts and characteristics to serve God faithfully and have the same thirst for the truth.

A. Matthew

1. The Calling of Matthew

Matthew, also known as Levi, was sitting at the tax office when Jesus Christ saw him and said, “Follow Me.” Matthew immediately “left all, rose up, and followed Him” (Lk 5:27–28). As a tax collector, Matthew was despised by many, but his wealth, position, and social status did not stop him from following Jesus, nor did they stop Jesus from naming him a beloved apostle.

2. Matthew’s Servitude and Characteristics

He understood that he was a sinner

In Matthew’s record of his calling by Jesus, he does not hide the fact that he was a tax collector, a person whose work caused him to be despised by the people (Mt 9:9–11). At the time of his calling, he invited Jesus and his tax collector friends for a banquet at his house. Matthew records only that Jesus “sat at the table in the house” (Mt 9:10) – he does not mention that it was he who hosted Jesus in his home. But the Gospel of Luke records this meal as a “great feast in [Matthew’s] own house” (Lk 5:29). By choosing not to boast of his generosity, Matthew shows us that he was humble and had an understanding that he was a sinner.

When we decide to offer ourselves to the Lord and follow Him, we must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. But to fix our eyes forward, we must first turn our gaze inward. It is important to acknowledge our status as sinners and repent of our sins before we can truly follow Jesus.

B. Thomas

1. The Calling of Thomas

The Bible does not record how Thomas first comes to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, but Jesus Christ names him as one of the twelve apostles (Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18; Lk 6:15). Together with the other eleven apostles, Thomas is given the commission to heal, cast out unclean spirits, and preach the coming of the kingdom of heaven (Mt 10:1, 5–8).

2. Thomas’ Servitude and Characteristics

a. Willing to follow Jesus to whatever end

When Jesus set out to resurrect Lazarus in Bethany, just two miles from Jerusalem, Thomas stated, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him” (Jn 11:16). Later, before His crucifixion, Jesus said to the disciples, “I go to prepare a place for you. [...] I will come again and receive you to Myself. [...] And where I go you know, and the way you know” (Jn 14:2–4). Thomas asked, “We do not know where you are going, so how is it possible that we know the way there?” Although Thomas could not discern Jesus’ words, he was clearly anxious to follow Him and wanted to understand how.

Like Thomas, we need to commit ourselves to following Jesus, both in our character and in the direction He guides our lives. But regardless of our determination, we must never neglect to pray for direction and study the Bible so that we can follow Him in spirit and in truth. As Jesus tells Thomas, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (Jn 14:6).

b. Went from doubt to affirmation

Thomas was not present when Jesus first appeared to His disciples and showed them His

hands and His side. When they later told him of Jesus' appearance, Thomas firmly stated, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe" (Jn 20:25). The disciples' words were not enough. He wanted to see and touch for himself what Jesus had shown them.

Jesus Christ's extraordinary resurrection would cause many to doubt. At the same time, Jesus Christ knew that Thomas needed to see in order to believe, as Thomas' faith was still maturing. So, He appeared once again before the disciples (Jn 20:26–29). Thomas' awestruck reply—"My Lord and my God!"—shows his increase in faith and his understanding of not only Jesus' resurrection but also His deity.

Today, we may have doubts like Thomas, but we must pray to the Lord that He will increase our faith (Lk 17:5). There is no shame in lacking faith, but we need to be aware of our lack and seek to overcome it with the help of the Lord. As long as we ask Him, Jesus Christ will come to us like He came to Thomas.

C. Philip

1. The Calling of Philip

When Jesus Christ was traveling to Galilee one day, "He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow Me'" (Jn 1:43). That day, Philip became a disciple of Jesus Christ.

2. Philip's Servitude and Characteristics

a. *Eager to preach for the Lord*

As soon as Philip became a disciple, he went to his friend Bartholomew and told him that he had found the Savior they had been waiting for (Jn 1:45). Bartholomew did not believe him, but instead of arguing, Philip simply said, "Come and see" (Jn 1:46).

Philip was courageous in his personal evangelism and actively sought to share his spiritual blessings with others. By sharing his experiences, Philip brought others to the Lord. Personal evangelism is a direct, effective way of preaching the gospel. We should ask the Lord to give us the courage to share the blessings that God has freely given us and bring others to believe in the Lord.

b. *Enthusiastic about pursuing the truth*

"Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us" (Jn 14:8). When Jesus Christ taught about the Father, Philip did not understand completely, so he asked for clarification. This simple question prompted Jesus to elaborate and impart an important teaching (Jn 14:9–11).

We must have the same thirst for truth as Philip had, and ask questions when we have them. God has placed many resources around us that can guide us, such as the Bible, our ministers, our parents, and our religious education teachers. But our best guide is God, so let us be like Philip and bring our questions to the Lord in our pursuit of truth so that we can come to understand Him better.

D. Bartholomew

1. The Calling of Bartholomew

Bartholomew, also known as Nathanael, came to follow Jesus Christ through his friend Philip.

When Philip told him that he had found the Savior, Bartholomew asked, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (Jn 1:46). Despite this, he still went to see Jesus with Philip.

Bartholomew had barely approached Him when Jesus proclaimed, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!” (Jn 1:47). Jesus knew Bartholomew’s character even before meeting him. Jesus further told Bartholomew that He had seen him when he was under the fig tree, out of Jesus’ sight. Bartholomew was moved by Jesus’ omniscience and recognized Jesus as the Lord (Jn 1:49). From that day, Bartholomew followed Jesus Christ and became His faithful disciple.

2. Bartholomew’s Servitude and Characteristics

a. *Well versed in the Scriptures*

When Philip told Bartholomew about Jesus Christ, Philip described Jesus as the one “of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote” (Jn 1:45). It is unlikely that Philip would reference the Scriptures or the prophecies if Bartholomew was not already well versed in them. That Bartholomew recognized Jesus as the Savior was also likely because of his deep understanding of the Scriptures.

Today, we have the complete word of God, the Bible, to study as our source of guidance and power. We must be well versed in the Scriptures like Bartholomew and have the zeal to understand God deeply. Since we have been blessed with the Bible, we should grasp this opportunity to store the abundant word of God in our hearts (Col 3:16). Then, when we have a firm foundation in the truth, we will be able to discern the truth from false teachings.

b. *Had a heart with no deceit*

When Jesus saw Bartholomew, He said, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!” (Jn 1:47). Clearly, Bartholomew was known to Jesus for his sincerity, a characteristic highly valued by Jesus. So, we must remember that the Lord looks into our hearts and searches for sincerity and honesty.

These four men had vastly different strengths and weaknesses, but Jesus Christ chose each of them to be His disciples. Today, we can take courage knowing that God has chosen us in much the same way and has given each of us our own strengths and weaknesses. Whether we have a heart of humility like Matthew, a willingness to follow like Thomas, a courageous heart like Philip, or a sincere heart like Bartholomew, God has chosen each of us to be His own. Just as the apostles spread the gospel after Jesus’ ascension, we too must use the gifts He has given us to glorify God and shine the light of Christ through our actions.

Check for Understanding

1. **How did Matthew show that he recognized his status as a sinner?** He did not boast about the details of the dinner he had with his friends and Jesus.
2. **How did Thomas go from doubt to affirmation?** When the disciples told him that they had seen Jesus after He resurrected, Thomas did not believe. But when Jesus appeared to him, he touched Jesus’ wounds physically and believed.
3. **What did Philip do right after he chose to follow Jesus?** He immediately went to tell his friend Bartholomew that he had found the Messiah.
4. **Which characteristic of Bartholomew’s did Jesus greatly value?** Jesus valued his honesty, as He called Bartholomew “an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!”

Life Application

1. Recognize our gifts and use them to serve God.

Paul teaches us that there are many gifts, but they are given by the same Spirit, and each gift is given for the benefit of everyone (1 Cor 12:4, 7–11). He further states that, as a body has many parts that work together as one, the church has many members with gifts that must work together as one (1 Cor 12:20–26). Each part of the body is integral to the function of a person as a whole, so the contribution of each member of the body of Christ is crucial to a healthy church. Each one of us has been given a gift (Rom 12:6).

You may wonder, “What is my gift?” There may be times when we feel like we have no gift, but actually, no skill is too small to be considered a gift. There are many things we can do in the church, even something as simple as cleaning up. Identifying our gifts may be as simple as observing carefully and seeing where help is needed. Then, when we see the need, we can do our best to help where we can to serve the church and glorify God.

One time, in a remote mountain church, a blind sister was eager to play hymns for the Lord. However, she was not able to see the sheet music. Therefore, she prayed to the Lord about her wish and put great effort into memorizing the connections between the sound each key produced and its location on the keyboard. Eventually, she managed to memorize the music in the entire hymn book and was able to play piano for service.

Sometimes it is easy to recognize our gifts when we realize we have a natural talent for certain things, such as using computers or playing instruments. Other times, we may be eager to serve God in a certain way, but lack skill, in which case we should pray earnestly for that gift. But no matter what gifts we already have or what gifts we seek, we need to put effort into developing them for God’s purpose.

2. Take courage in preaching and letting others see Christ in us.

There are times when we are at school or in other social situations when we feel like we must hide our identity as children of Christ. Perhaps it is because we fear others may exclude us, mock us, spread rumors about us behind our backs, or simply because we feel uncomfortable being vulnerable in public. However, God does not want us to hide our identity as His chosen children. Rather, He wants us to boldly proclaim our honored status and tell others that they, too, can become children of God if they come to believe in Him.

One time, a young brother was so excited to show others his prayer after he had received the Holy Spirit. So, he prayed in the rice field while his classmates were nearby watching. However, one of his classmates made fun of him by kicking him from the back, causing the young brother to fall face down in the muddy water. The young brother felt frustrated by this incident, but a few days later, the classmate who had made fun of him suddenly passed away.

God will always have our back when we courageously share our faith with those around us. But more importantly, we have been given the most precious truth in the entire world, so why should we be ashamed of it? In 2 Timothy 2:12, Paul wrote, “If we deny Him, He also will deny us.” Knowing this, we must take courage in preaching to others and bringing others to Christ.

Memory Verse

“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” (1 Peter 4:10)

Meaning

1. All of God’s chosen children have been given a gift of some sort. Our gifts may be very different from those of our brothers and sisters, but God has given them to us so that we can use them to build ourselves and each other up in love.
2. A steward is someone who has been given the authority of the master in the master’s absence. In this case, we have been given authority over the gifts that are God’s grace to us. To be good stewards, we must manage our gifts wisely by first identifying them, then expanding them through practice, and finally utilizing them for the growth of the church, which is ultimately for God’s purpose.

Conclusion

Each of the four apostles brought different strengths to Jesus’ ministry. Matthew, once a despised tax collector, recognized his status as a sinner, accepted Jesus and followed Him faithfully. Philip preached and testified eagerly for Jesus. Bartholomew was well versed in the Scriptures, so he could recognize Jesus Christ when he met Him. Thomas wanted to be sure of his faith and did not want others to sway his beliefs. We must learn from Matthew, Philip, Bartholomew, and Thomas to use our individual gifts and characteristics to serve God faithfully in preaching and living out Christ. Further, we must learn from their pursuit to fully understand the Scriptures to have the same thirst for the gospel and its truths.

Lesson 7 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What is a steward? How do we become good stewards?
A steward is someone who has been given the authority of the master in the master's absence. To be a good steward, we must manage our gifts wisely by first identifying them, then expanding them through practice, and finally utilizing them for the growth of the church which is ultimately for God's purpose.
2. What were two of Matthew's characteristics, and how did he show them?
He was humble and understood his own status as a sinner by choosing not to boast of his generosity when hosting Jesus at his home with a "great feast" (Lk 5:29).
3. What important actions must we take in order to follow Christ as closely as Thomas did?
We need to commit ourselves to following Jesus, both in our character and in the direction He guides our lives. To do so, we must never neglect to pray for direction and study the Bible so that we can follow Him in spirit and in truth.
4. What were Philip and Bartholomew's characteristics?
Philip was eager to preach for the Lord, and he was enthusiastic about pursuing the truth. Bartholomew was well versed in the Scriptures, and he had a heart with no deceit.
5. What gifts do you have? How can you use it or them to serve God?
Personal answers.