

THE DISCIPLES

by Gail Keffer

This is a series of devotionals based on the disciples and their work to further the Gospel. It can also be used as a series of Bible studies, if preferred.



Peter is represented with keys which show his confession and the Lord's gift to him of the keys of the kingdom, Matthew 16:18,19. The keys are often shown with an inverted cross.

Andrew is said to have died on an "X" shaped cross because he did not feel worthy to die on the same kind of cross as Christ.



James is represented by three scallop shells which are symbolic of his pilgrimage and mission zeal.

John is represented by the chalice with the serpent. Supposedly an attempt to poison John was averted when he blessed the chalice with the poison and the poison escaped in the form of a serpent.



Phillip is represented by the cross with two loaves of bread, due to Phillip's remark when Jesus fed the multitude. John 6:7

Jude is symbolized by a sailing ship signifying his mission work to Syria, Arabia, and Mesopotamia.



James is represented by the saw because he was supposedly thrown from the top of a temple and sawn asunder.

Matthew is represented by money bags referring to his early occupation as a tax collector.



Thomas with the vertical spear and a carpenter's square. Tradition says that Thomas erected a church in East India with his own hands.

Bartholomew is symbolized with the Bible and knife because he is said to have been flayed alive for preaching the Gospel.



Simon is shown as the fish and Bible because through the power of the Gospel, he became a great fisher of men.

Matthias is shown with the Bible and the double bladed battle axe. It is said he was beheaded with a double bladed axe for his missionary zeal.



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ANDREW

Andrew is said to have died on an "X" shaped cross because he did not feel worthy to die on the same kind of cross as Christ.



“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? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain that nothing be lost.” John 6:8-12.

Do you ever feel that you are just a one person with no great power to do anything? Andrew may have felt that way. I think that at some point most of us do. His brother, Peter, whom Andrew actually introduced to Christ was the outspoken one. Andrew never seemed to mind. Authorities have called him selfless, optimistic, and universal.

Andrew was regarded so highly that he is the patron saint of Russia, Greece and Scotland. He is not mentioned much in the gospels, but when he is, it is in a giving situation. Our scripture tells of one of these times. The disciples were very concerned as to how Christ was going to feed the 5,000 people that had turned out to hear him speak. Andrew approached Christ and said a small boy had five loaves and two fish. He knew it wasn't much, but it was a start. Andrew had faith that even though it was just a small lunch, Christ could do something with it.

How often we have heard or been told “Oh, ye of little faith.” Andrew was not one of little faith. He had great faith; he was secure in his faith, and he loved his Lord and Savior with all his heart. Andrew didn't have to be in the lime light. He wouldn't have been one to be in a newspaper or have his picture shown in everything. He was behind the scenes. That is where we need to be. We need to be willing to step out in faith and know that Christ is using us. We are part of his kingdom, and he will use us as we are, if we ask him. Sometimes no one will know that we are doing it, but God knows and that is all that counts. Are we willing to step out and do God's will even though it may not be the popular thing to do?

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, we know you are with us, and yet we are afraid to step out, to be the one behind the scenes that is doing the bidding of your will. Many times we want to be seen. We want to be thanked in public. Help us to be willing to do the work behind the scenes. Help us to spread your word and to have the faith that allows us to serve you in every day of our lives. Amen.

1. Would you like to be labeled selfless, optimistic, and universal? What does that mean?
2. How important are the people behind the scenes? How can you be the one behind the scenes?
3. Another disciple actually said that there was no way to get anything for the people to eat? What would you have done?
4. Is this what people mean today by saying that we need to “get outside the box”? Can we?

JAMES, THE ELDER



James is represented by three scallop shells which are symbolic of his pilgrimage and mission zeal.

“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 KJV

As I read about James, the Elder, the brother of John, not to be confused with James the Younger who was the brother of Christ, I thought his personality was very interesting. We don't hear much about him although he was one of the three that seemed to be with Christ the most. What we do know is that he was called to be a fisher of men as was his brother, John.

He and his brother apparently had a good fishing business because they had other people working for them. He and John asked for a special seat in heaven! (Mark 10:35-45) For Christ to name them “sons on thunder,” they must have deserved it! I do not think it was a negative nickname. Are we ever sons of thunder? He was so much a son of thunder that he was the first one to die. He became the first of the twelve to be a Christian martyr because he spoke up for Christ against pagans. Sometimes we are offended by the people who speak up because we want them to be more silent. We don't want to “stir up the waters.” Didn't Christ turn the tables in the temple? Should we do something when we think things are wrong?

I'm not saying that we should go around with a temper all the time, but after prayer when we see something that needs to be said or done for the glory of God, should we be willing to do it? Are we willing to stick out our neck for Christ and his word? Are we willing to stand up to others who put down our Lord and Saviour? The church needs to have people like him and people who are the silent workers. Only when we all work together to spread the word of God to others in our community and serve missions will our church grow.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Please help us to realize the great gift of Your Son that You have given to us, and then help us to spread the good news to others so that they too are willing to speak out and work silently to tell others so they too can spend eternity with you, and that gift can begin today. Amen.

1. What do you think it means to be a “son of thunder?” Are you willing to be a “son of thunder?”
2. Are we ever called to speak up for Christ?
3. Why were these brothers with a good fishing business willing to leave a job and family behind to follow an “itinerant speaker?”
4. Where do you fit into the church with these people who dare to be seen and heard?
5. Do we dare to follow sometimes instead of leading?

James the Younger



James is represented by the saw because he was supposedly thrown from the top of a temple and sawn asunder.

“Consider the lilies how they grow. They toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which is to day in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Luke 12:27-31

Have you ever heard the phrase, “Bloom where you are planted?” This was the situation with James, the Younger, one of Christ’s disciples. Other disciples were sent to parts of the known world at that time, but he stayed in Jerusalem where his work was just as important, and more dangerous than the places where many of the others went. In Jerusalem, people knew of Christ and what had happened. They wanted to stop this transformation they saw taking place.

The lily of the field blooms where it is planted and shows all the glory of God. God knows of every need, no matter how small before we even ask. Most of us know where we are. Some of us were born in a certain area and have stayed there. Some of us have moved at least once. Some have moved several times. So we are planted here. We are citizens of this wonderful country. Are we spreading the word of God through our thoughts, actions, and even our very lives? James did.

James was chosen to spend his time in Jerusalem among many people that wanted to get rid of this interruption that had changed not only personal lives, but the actions of people in government and even daily work. He knew he was a target, but he refused to hide. He went out. He preached. He bloomed as God had planned. He suffered and died for his cause. We are not asked to die for our causes in that way, but we are asked to bloom to spread the word, and let our talents be seen by others. God will never hide our beauty. Only we can do that to ourselves. We can be like the lily of the field and be arrayed in beauty that only God can provide. We can use our talents and brighten the lives of many people, by just asking how they are doing by showing that we care in some small way. Or, we can keep our talents hidden, and never receive the benefits that come from sharing with others. The choice is ours.

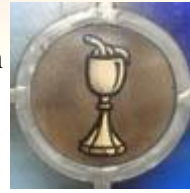
Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for the beauty that we see around us every day. Help us to see not only the beauty of the flowers and nature, but help us to see the beauty in each other and then want to share our beauty, our talents with them so that all may know that you are our Lord and Savior and care for us each day, just as you do the small lily, and even more. Amen.

1. Are we blooming? What does it mean to compare us to a lily of the field?
2. Would it be easier to work in your own home town or go to a strange land where people didn’t know your history?
3. Are we using our talents for the Lord? If so, can we see the benefits?

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JOHN

John is represented by the chalice with the serpent. Supposedly an attempt to poison John was averted when he blessed the chalice with the poison and the poison escaped in the form of a serpent.



“And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.” Luke 9:49-50.

John, called a Son of Thunder, was ambitious. But, he was humbled by Christ on several occasions. One such occasion is given above. He thought he knew what he should do, and he was sometimes early to act, and then had to step back, and think it out again. Some scholars think that is why we do not hear much from John. He was a doer, and he did what Christ commanded him to do. He realized that he was “a son of thunder” and sometimes too eager, but he loved the Lord, and he was willing to do whatever it took to spread the Good News which he did until his dying day. From the cross, Jesus commanded him to take care of His mother, Mary, which he did. John was the perfect example of how Jesus Christ can take people with their varied natural gifts and talents and use them for greatness. Of the disciples, only John and Matthew wrote books of the Bible.

Some people are talkers, and some are doers. It takes both to make the Kingdom grow. Whichever you are, you are important, just as John, Peter, and all the others were important although they were all different. Our problem comes when we try to put everyone into “our mold.” Christ took these men where they were, with their varied personalities, and they did the job.

We all have talents. Some of us could be called “a son of thunder.” But the Lord will use us as we are. The only thing we have to realize is that we are as varied as the disciples, and we need to recognize each other’s gifts, and not criticize because they are not like “us.” Some people will say about someone “he marches to a different drummer.” Is that wrong?

If he is willing to do the work of the Lord, even though it is a little different than the way we do it, we need to acknowledge him and stand up for him to others so they can see that everyone has gifts. Our only concern needs to be the people that don’t use their talent for the good of the Kingdom. Too often we are afraid to stand up for someone because he is a little different, or like John, he comes across a little “gruff.” Only when we love this person where he is can we sing the song, “They’ll know we are Christians by our love.”

Prayer: Heavenly Father, you have given all of us many gifts, some we don’t even realize we have until we are called upon to use them. Help us to be thankful for those talents, and then help us to use them to further your work on this earth just as Christ used the disciples with their varied temperaments and talents.

1. Can we ever be too eager to act?
2. How can we discover our talents in the Lord’s work, and also help others discover and use their talents?
3. Do we have spiritual gifts? Are you using them?

JUDE

Jude is symbolized by a sailing ship signifying his mission work to Syria, Arabia, and Mesopotamia.



“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.” John 14: 22-24 King James Version

Do you ever question things? Is it wrong to question? Sometimes I used to think that it was. I thought that I should just accept everything as I was told, and not question. People older than I knew the right answers! I was taught to respect them and listen to them. My grandmother always seemed to have an answer for my questions, even though she told me I asked too many questions! I wanted to learn, and she was very willing to teach!

Then I realized that questioning is not wrong. If we study the disciples, we find they questioned our Lord at different times. Why? They wanted to learn. They were in a situation that was unique to them, a situation that they could not conceive, just as we cannot say how we would have reacted in the same situation. Even today, we cannot conceive in our finite minds what Heaven will be like.

The quote given above is the only quote we have from Thaddaeus or Judas as he is referred to in John. He knew that Jesus was special and he had a special message to all the world. He had done miracles in front of these men and many others. He had appeared to them on many occasions. But how were other people going to know him if he did not “manifest” (show) himself to others as he had done to them?

How? Through Thaddaeus, the other disciples, and us. We are the ones that must show or manifest by our actions that we do believe in Christ and love him. The Bible tells us that there is only one way to inherit eternal life. We must accept Christ as our personal Savior. No amount of good works can get us in. We can't buy it. If we could only work to earn it!!! We must work when we accept Christ, not because good works is going to get us eternal life, but because we now have something that is so wonderful that we want to share it with the world. The only way to do that is to live our lives as Christ has told us to live, and tell others the good news. We are the ones that need to manifest.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the wonderful gift of eternal life, through your only Son whom you sent so that we could some day share eternity with you. Help us to show this love to others by our words, actions, and deeds as we live each day on this earth. In Christ's name we pray. Amen

1. Why is it so difficult to accept this free gift from a very loving Heavenly Father?
2. How can questioning strengthen our faith?
3. Can we be depended on to do the job?
4. Do you ever wonder how we can inherit eternal life by just believing and doing God's work?

MATTHEW

Matthew is represented by money bags referring to his early occupation as a tax collector.



“You are like salt for all mankind. But if salt loses its taste, there is no way to make it salty again. It has become worthless, so it is thrown away and people walk on it.” Matthew 5:13 Good News for Modern Man

Have you ever thought of yourself as salt? Alone it is just a tiny thing extracted from the earth in various forms and it doesn't cost much, but it is that added thing that brings out the flavor in food and preserves it in many cases also.

When Jesus called Matthew to be a Disciple, he said. “Follow me”. And he arose, and followed him. Matthew had heard that he was salt. What does that mean? If we are but one grain of salt, working with other grains of salt, we can make a difference.

THE MESSAGE words it this way. “Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage.” If we look at Matthew's life after the death of Jesus, we could wonder why he followed so willing. Matthew didn't hesitate. He arose and followed him immediately. If we are willing to be the salt, what is demanded of us? Are we willing to be a disciple?

We think about it at times, and at times the mercury (our spirit) goes so high in the thermometer built inside of us that we even think we can serve on a committee or maybe even talk with someone about coming to church. Let's not work too hard at it and ask them if they know your Jesus. If we are the salt, we must make a difference. Or have we lost our zeal?

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father so many times we look at nature and see the beauty and take it for granted. We eat food daily, and sometimes we stop to give thanks for it. Help us to realize that we are the salt of the world, we are the light of the world, and only through us can you forward your work to others on this earth so that someday we may all join you eternally. Help us to be proud to be the salt. Help us to make a difference. Help us to show love to all, even the publicans and sinners like ourselves. In thy name we pray. Amen.

1. Are we just salt? – a tiny grain in the world? Aren't we more important than that?
2. Are we willing to follow? What is the reward? What was the reward for Matthew?
3. Are we the salt of life? Can we make a difference in everyone else's lives by what we do, say, and even think?
4. Are we willing to give all that we have on this earth to have eternal life with Him?

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BARTHOLOMEW/NATHANAEL*

Bartholomew is symbolized with the Bible and knife because he is said to have been flayed alive for preaching the Gospel.



“Philip now went off to look for Nathanael and told him, ‘We have found the Messiah!—the very person Moses and the prophets told about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth!’ ‘Nazareth!’ exclaimed Nathanael. ‘Can anything good come from there?’ ‘Just come and see for yourself,’ Philip declared.” John 1 45-49 The Living Bible

Many times the phrase “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” has been interpreted as a negative question. Some Bible scholars paint a much different picture. Barclay, a noted authority on the scriptures, feels that this is evidence that Philip and Nathanael had been searching for the Messiah. Nathanael’s response is more of a wonderful fulfillment of a prayer than a statement of disbelief. Further, Nathanael’s response showed that he had knowledge that a Messiah was to come, and he believed he had found him. Christ told Nathanael he had known about him even before Philip brought him to join the disciples!

We say we study the scriptures, and we hunt for answers, and then we get them through study, prayer, or from another person and we doubt. The fact that Christ knew Nathanael was enough for him. He believed and went on to become a great missionary. Many times we need to stop and look at the people that God has chosen to lead us. We can begin at the birth of Christ with the lowly shepherds, and some guys running around the country side following a star. They thought they were hunting the Messiah, a new King. And, that King was born in a lowly stable. Come on, let’s get real. None of them had any “doctoral degree”. The shepherds weren’t even allowed to testify in court.

Perhaps we need to realize that God chooses the people he knows will do the job regardless of their background, education, social status, or even where they were born. Nathanael was willing to take Christ on His word and follow Him. He didn’t require a blinding experience like Paul.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we see so many signs of your love everyday, and we take them for granted. Help us to accept them as Your gifts to us, and then help us to lead others to know that You are the one, and through You we can all have eternal life with you beginning today and forever. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen

1. Can anything good come from someone in a neighboring town? Don’t they have to be from far away and have many degrees?
2. And who would have believed those “wise” men? Would you? Would I?
3. What do we require before we realize that Christ is the One?
4. What can we learn about ourselves from Nathanael?

*Some scholars believe that Nathanael and Bartholomew were the same. Others believe they were two different men. Nathanael is mentioned in John; Bartholomew is mentioned in Matthew, Mark, Luke and Acts.

PETER



Peter is represented with keys which show his confession and the Lord's gift to him of the keys of the kingdom, Matt:16:18,19. The keys are often shown with an inverted cross.

“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.’” John 21:15

No disciple is talked about as much in the Bible as Peter. Peter had the honor of being told by Christ that he would be the corner stone of the church. He was a simple fisherman. Matthew probably had more knowledge of dealing with money. Some disciples were carpenters, and were able to actually build the church buildings.

Peter wanted to be like Christ even to walking on water, but when Christ bid him to come, he got out of the boat, stepped on the water, and his humanness took over again! The wind kicked up, the waves rolled, and he began to sink. Christ reached out, caught him, and questioned “Why did you doubt O ye of little faith. “

He denied Christ three times before the crucifixion, and yet he was the one chosen by Christ to lead the church after he was gone. Many times Christ questioned him, and while Peter wanted to believe, he also wanted to be sure. He wanted to know. He would tell Christ, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Along with his questioning, he never gave up. He made many mistakes, but he asked for forgiveness and Christ forgave him. He had many talents, and Christ knew he could handle the job.

We are many times like Peter. We make great speeches and then we don't follow through. We say we are going to do something, but we don't quite get to it. We are like Peter in many ways. He wanted to be so much more. Christ allowed him to do all that he wanted to do. We are permitted that same joy. If we really want to “feed the sheep” we have that opportunity every day by the way we live, talk, work, and pray. We cannot be like Christ, but can we be like Peter?

An old song tells us how to live. It says “Put your Hand in the Hand of the Man who stilled the water. Put your hand in the hand of the Man who calmed the sea. Take a look at yourself and you can look at others differently by putting your hand in the hand of the Man from Galilee.”

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father. You know our strengths and weaknesses much better than we do. Please Lord, help us to be like You as much as possible in our serving day by day. Help us to feed the sheep by putting our hand in Your hand. Amen.

1. Why Peter?
2. How does the choice of Peter and his life affect us?
3. Do we speak out when we should, and sometimes when we should not?
4. Do we ask for forgiveness and then set out to make things right?
5. Are we willing to give a tithe of our time to serving Him and the church as we feed the sheep?

PHILIP



Philip is represented by the cross with two loaves of bread, due to Philip's remark when Jesus fed the multitude. John 6:7

“Philip saith unto him, ‘Lord, shew 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, Shew us the Father? Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.’” John 14:8, 9, 12

We first meet Philip when Christ called him as a disciple. He immediately went to get Nathanael so that he too might know this great man. He had a mission zeal from the very beginning. He might be like a person we sometimes call a “New Christian” very eager to tell others about the wonderful Saviour he has found. We need to have that same zeal every day that Philip carried to his death. Perhaps one of the most often quoted scriptures about him is given above in the verse for this meditation. Philip was wise, and yet he was weak. He was like all of us. In the upper room he asked Christ to show him The Father. Christ answered “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”

And then he went on to verify Philip’s question by telling him that he would do great works, greater than those that he had seen Christ do. What a wonderful answer. We never hear of Philip doubting again. He accepted what Christ had said and went on to be a missionary of great zeal. But, he didn’t ask anyone else. He asked Christ himself, and when he got the answer, he believed. So often we pray for an answer, but when we get it, we try to change it. We want Christ to give us an answer, but if we don’t like it, we challenge it.

There is an old song called “Just a Closer Walk with Thee” by an unknown writer. I believe the first verse and chorus are the way that Philip felt when he received that answer from Christ. “I am weak, but Thou art strong; Jesus, keep me from all wrong; I’ll be satisfied as long As I walk, let me walk close to Thee. Just a closer walk with Thee; Grant it, Jesus, is my plea, Daily walking close to Thee, Let it be, dear Lord, let it be.”

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we don’t have the hardships of Philip, and we have so much more assurance now than he did at that time, and yet we question. Help us to seek to walk daily with you, to ask for your guidance, and then be willing to follow so that we may be able to tell others “the Good News” just as Philip did so many years ago. Amen

1. How can we be like Philip every day?
2. How can we simplify our lives today and tomorrow?
3. How can we ask Christ? How can we follow Him?
4. Do we really want a closer walk with Him?

THOMAS



Thomas with the vertical spear and a carpenter's square. Tradition says that Thomas erected a church in East India with his own hands.

“Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

After the crucifixion, Christ appeared to many of the disciples. They questioned. “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” He answered “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

They had seen him alive after the crucifixion, and yet they questioned. Can we think we would have been any different than Thomas and the disciples?

You know the rest of the story. Thomas wanted proof. He wanted to put his hand in the palm of Christ's hands and feel the side where they had thrust the sword. He had been at the crucifixion evidently. He knew about the sword and the nails. Why couldn't he just accept it on faith? This Christ had been dead, and was now alive.

Christ then appeared to him when he was with the disciples a second time. They were assembled in a room with the doors closed. Christ appeared to them, and talked with Thomas and told him to put his hand in His hand and thrust it into His side, and to believe. Thomas did. He responded, “My Lord and My God.”

Now we come into the picture. Christ went on to say to Thomas, “Because you saw me, you believed, blessed are they that have not seen, and yet believe.” All we have to do is believe. He asks nothing else. But, if we believe, we will want to serve. All the disciples went out and preached the Word, and many others were saved. Proof of that is a Christian faith that has lasted through many wars, devastating situations, and unkept promises on the part of mankind. Christ has never failed. He was there at Golgotha; he is here today, right now.

We sing a song that says, “I have decided to follow Jesus, No turning back, no turning back!” With His grace, we can go forward.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your witness to the disciples at the time. Thank you for giving your life on Calvary so that we might have eternal life. Dear Father, just as you gave them your Holy Spirit, help us to recognize that we also have that gift and help our doubts to be turned into positives. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

1. Are we like Thomas? Do we ever doubt?
2. Is it all right to doubt?
3. How can we show the world that we love Jesus? And that we believe in him?

SIMON, THE ZEALOT



Simon is shown as the fish and Bible because through the power of the Gospel, he became a great fisher of men.

“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 Zealot, and Judas the brother of James.” Acts.1:13 KJV

Simon the Zealot is fairly unknown in the Scriptures. He was supposedly older when he decided to follow Jesus. Before that time, he had been a very, very staunch fighter against Christ. He was supposedly a member of the Jewish religious-political faction, known for its fanatical resistance to Roman rule who became just as staunch a supporter for Jesus as he had been for the Jewish patriots earlier. We hear in the Scripture above that he was with the other disciples at this gathering, but we don't hear about his saying anything. We do know that he traveled to tell The Good News, and we know that he was killed because of his convictions, just as most of the other disciples. According to word sources, a zealot is a supporter, a believer, a devotee, an advocate, and an enthusiast.

There are many Simons in this world. They don't say much, they don't wave the flag, but they are in the background. It is the lady that takes a little something to a neighbor that is in pain or recuperating, the gentleman that makes sure the older neighbor's walk is shoveled in the winter, or the lawn mowed in the summer, the child that helps another with his homework when the going is tough, the person who sends a card when someone is in the hospital, the person that takes a little time each holiday to say “Hi” to someone in a nursing home, or even the person who is lonely down the street, the person who takes time to volunteer for an organization like the Salvation Army ringers, or hammering nails for Habitat for Humanity. We don't hear about them, but they are the core that showers God's grace on others. They are the people that keep the “doers” and “talkers” going. They are always there and very constant in their work. Together, we can make it work, but God uses all of us to do His will as long as we are willing to use the gifts He has given to us.

Not everybody wants to be seen. Many people in the church are just like Simon. They are the glue that keeps the rest going.

Prayer: Dear Lord, you are an amazing God. You have created us in your image and given us gifts far beyond our expectations or ability to comprehend. Help us to do our job to spread Your word and Your love to others each day in our own unique way. Amen

1. Are we a Zealot?
2. How can each of us do that little thing that helps the cause even if we don't want to be seen?
3. How can we recognize others that are a part of the “glue” and encourage them to continue to be a zealot? An enthusiast? A believer?

MATTHIAS

Matthias is shown with the Bible and the double bladed battle axe. It is said he was beheaded with a double bladed axe for his missionary zeal.



“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” II Timothy 2:15

Matthias!!! He wasn't one of the original twelve. What is his claim to fame? According to books that I have read, and resources I have checked, Matthias was just a second-hand chance apostle!!! At least that is what it appears at first glance. He was chosen to replace Judas. Do we want to be like Judas or like Matthias? Oh, don't think for a minute that we are not sometimes very much like Judas! We do our fair share of sinning. But, through AMAZING GRACE, we are free to work, study, and spread the word of God.

Many years ago, a minister came to our church for a series of sermons. Every night he told us to memorize II Timothy 2:15: I Thessalonians 5:22. He said it so many times that over the many years that have followed I have never forgotten those verses.

I pray that I fit that verse. Although I know many times that I have sinned and need to be in the shelter of God's amazing grace. I feel that Matthias lived up to it. No, he wasn't one of the original disciples, but he studied and was certainly a workman that had no shame just because he wasn't one of the originals. He did the work of his Lord, and he preached the word of truth throughout the rest of his life. We don't have to be in the lime light all the time, but we do need to study. We know that many people were working after Christ's death to spread His word, or we wouldn't know of it today. Those first twelve couldn't do it all alone. They needed many working people to spread the message to all parts of the earth. Today, we are still those people. We may not be ministers in the ordained sense, but we all have gifts that were given to us free of charge. It would be so easy if we could just buy them, and then not feel so guilty if we didn't use them. But when something as wonderful as eternal life is given to us, we feel a sense of obligation. And that obligation is to make sure that we work to tell others of the wonderful gifts we have been given.

Prayer: Heavenly Father. Thank you for Your amazing grace. May we everyday think of Christmas and Easter as times that You gave everything so that we may have eternal live. As we go through this day and each day that You have given to us, may we work to seek your will for our lives, and be thankful for your concern for each one of us. Help us, as the song says, “to be like You, Lord.” Amen

1. How are we often like Judas?
2. Do we mind being like Matthias? Do we mind being among those that followed Christ at a later time?
3. How can we follow in the steps of Matthias?
4. How can we study to show our faith to others?
5. What gifts do we have to offer?

Judas, the Iscariot

“Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I?
He said unto him, Thou hast said.” Matthew 26:25

When Christ told the disciples that one of them would betray him, they were all sorrowful according to our Scriptures, but one in particular asked again, “Master, Is it I?” Christ doesn’t answer him directly, but Judas knows in his heart that he has already betrayed his Savior and Lord. Certainly, we are not like Judas!

We wouldn’t betray Christ. After all, he told the disciples that it would be better if that person who betrayed him that night had never been born.

I remember a quote that I once read that each of us has a little bit of Judas in us. Can that be true? Do we ever betray Christ. It doesn’t have to be in selling his identity for 30 pieces of silver. It can be in forgetting his commandments to us, especially that one about loving other people!!!

I don’t know about you, but I am guilty of doing wrong and remember another quote “There but for the grace of God, go I.” It is often credited to an English evangelical preacher and martyr, John Bradford. It has been paraphrased many times, and is used in many situations!

My thoughts go to communion at our church. As I was growing up, I was told that communion was a private time to ask for forgiveness and praise God for His grace and forgiveness. That did not mean that I could go out and sin again and ask for forgiveness at the next communion!!! But, it did mean that God’s grace would forgive me many times over, I think some people say 70 times 7, but I have sinned many more times than that! I know that I should be sorrowful for my sins just as the disciples were, and I know that God will forgive me.

My task is given in a song my family used to sing. It is called “My Task” by E. L. Ashford.

To love someone more dearly ev’ry day
To help a wand’ring child to find his way
To ponder o’er a noble tho’t and pray
And smile when evening falls, this is my task

To follow truth as blind me long for light
To do my best from dawn of day till night

To keep my heart fit for His holy sight
And answer when He calls, this is my task

And then my Savior by and by to meet
When faith hath made her task on earth complete
And lay my homage at the Master's feet
Within the jasper walls, his crowns my task.

Prayer: Dear Lord and Savior, we know that we sin, we know that we are tempted daily. Help us to know that not only can we overcome many of those temptations, but avoid some of them altogether if we only seek your truth and follow the way you have prepared for us ever day. The task is easy, and the reward is awesome. Thank you for your guidance. Amen.

1. Do we, through amazing grace, have forgiveness and acceptance by Christ every hour, every day?
2. We have the assurance that we are indeed a part of His kingdom, and that we can be accepted if we ask. Why didn’t Judas ask for this same forgiveness? Why do we hesitate at times?
3. Why did Christ forewarn him before he actually committed his crime? Are we ever forewarned of impending disaster, maybe not in that manner, but in making wrong choices in daily life?

PETER, JAMES, JOHN, AND ANDREW

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: For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.' Mark 13: 1-6 KJV

These disciples had the great privilege of going up on Mount Olives with Christ. Many things had been happening, and the disciples were confused as to exactly what to know for sure, and what they were to do. They wanted to know what was going to happen next. One of them asked, "Tell us, when is this going to happen? What sign will we get that things are coming to a head?"

Christ did not paint a very good picture. He didn't promise them a "rose garden." He told them there would be many things happen that would be very bad, fighting between families, and even among brothers, war, and rumors of wars, false gods, and people even saying they were god. Whenever it was time they would know because they would see the son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. They of course thought this was going to happen soon.

When? He said then, and He says to us today. "Watch therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." Mark 13:35-37.

None of us know about our time on earth. When we are young, we wonder, and now that I am older, I realize that it is best to leave it in God's hands. I think it means that we must always be ready. We can't put off accepting Christ. He may come in the next minute. If we want to go with him, we must be ready. Bumper stickers have referred to it many times. Groups have gone up into the hills thinking it was going to happen shortly. Scholars have taken dates and put them together and tried to predict when it was going to happen, but they have failed. It is not ours to know. Christ did not give the disciples an exact time, nor has He given it to us. Peter, Andrews, James, and John knew then as much as we know today. As a child I learned a song called "The Wedding Banquet." Although it was based on a parable, it says the same thing, we must be ready. The one line says "When the Lord and Master calls us, be certain not to say, I cannot come." It made a great impact on me. Are we ready?

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, we know that we could not possibly comprehend all that you have done for us, or all that you have planned. Help us to live each day so that we are ready when you call, regardless of the time or place, so that we may be able to spend eternity with you. And, dear Lord, help us to tell that same story to others, so that they may also be ready for your call. In Christ's name we pray. Amen

1. Did the disciples think Christ was coming back soon?
2. Do you think there are signs that Christ is coming again soon?
3. Is the time of his second coming important?
4. What part do we play in our being ready?
5. What part do we play in someone else's being ready? Do we have a responsibility for them?

Notes: These references are given to help continuance of study for a particular person, and although the verse is given with the particular name, the reader will find a need to read some verses on either side of the reference to put the name into context. Many books have been written on the people in the Bible and many sources are quoted every day; I have tried to just list the Scripture references.

Andrew: We are first introduced to Andrew being called as a disciple in Matthew 4:18. We do not hear much about him as an individual. One small reference, but a very significant one in terms of Andrew's faith is found in John 6:14. Other references include Matthew 10:2, Mark 1:16 and 29; Mark 3:18; Mark 13:3; Luke 6:14; John 1:40 and 44; John 12:22 and Acts 1:13.

James, the Elder: (James the son of Zebedee) We only know of his being mentioned four times in the New Testament, but his reputation was one of a zealot for Christ. References are Matt 4:21; Matt. 10:2; Mark 1:19; and Mark 3:17 where he is referred to with his brother as a "son of thunder."

James, the Younger: (James the son of Alphaeus) The only mention we have of James, the Younger, in the Bible are places where he is mentioned with the other disciples. However, we do know that he was left to work in Jerusalem after the death of Christ and was supposedly the first disciple to be killed for his work. He is mentioned in Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; and Acts 1:13.

John: This is not John, the Baptist. He is John, the son of Zebedee as mentioned in Matt. 4:21. He is also listed with other disciples in Matt. 10:2; Matt. 17:1; Mark 1:19 and 29; Mark 3:17; Mark 5:37; and Mark 9:2 and 38. Perhaps one of the best known passages about John and his brother is Mark 10: 35-41. He is also mentioned with the other disciples in Mark 13:3; Mark 14:33; Luke 5:10; Luke 9:49-50, and Luke 6:14. In the last few days John and Peter were sent to prepare the Passover Luke 22:8; and were asked to pray with Christ Acts 3. Check also Acts 5:13-19; and Acts 8:14. He is also believed to be the one called the beloved disciple and the one that Christ asked to watch over Mary at the crucifixion.

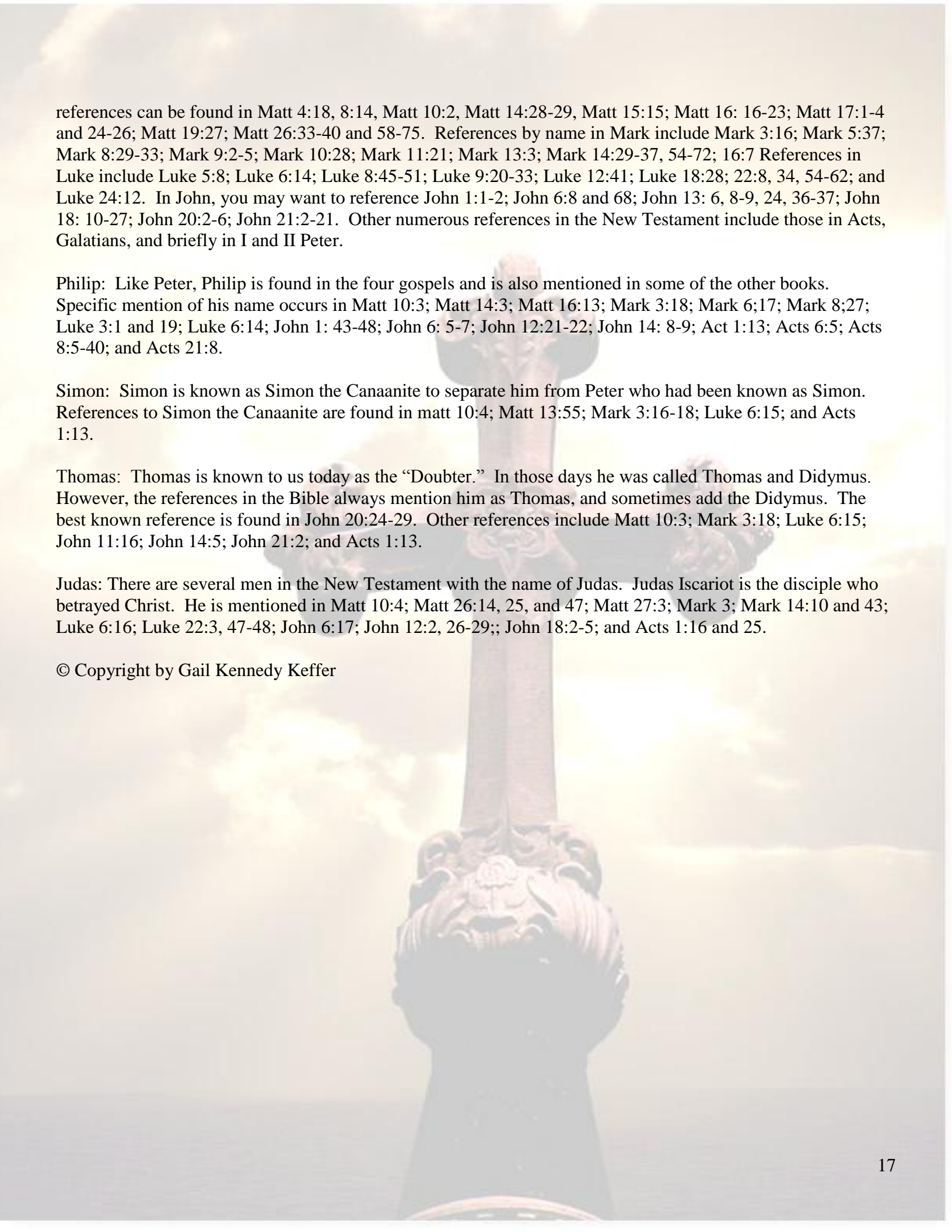
Jude: The book of Jude is of course a reference, but the authorship is somewhat debated as to whether or not it is the same Jude who had served as a disciple. If you believe that it is, then the book of Jude tells of his conviction. Many sources feel that Jude was also called Judas, not the Iscariot. Others say that he was also called Thaddaeus. References for further study in addition to the book of Jude include John 14: 22-24, Matt 10:3 and Mark 3:18. As the brother of Christ, the name Jude is also referred to in Matt 13:55 and Acts 1:16. A man named Jude is also mentioned as traveling with Paul and Barnabas in spreading the word in Acts 15:22, 27, and 32.

Matthew: Many believe the book of Matthew was written by Matthew, the disciple so the entire book can serve as a reference. We do know of his mention as a disciple of Christ who gave up tax collecting in Matt 9:9, Matt 10:3, Mark 3:18, Luke 6:15 and Acts 1:13.

Bartholomew/Nathanael: Here we have another example of seemingly multiple names for the same man. Bartholomew as a disciple is mentioned in Matt 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13. Nathanael is mentioned in John 1: 45-49, and again in John 21 where Christ reveals himself to the disciples and Nathanael is included in the list.

Matthias: Matthias is only mentioned as we know him by that name in Acts 1:22-26.

Peter: Peter also had another name before he followed Christ; he had been known as Simon. There are so many references to Peter, unlike some of the rest. Actually he is mentioned many times in all four of the gospels, so I have merely listed the references, but to study Peter is to study the four gospels and beyond. Particular



references can be found in Matt 4:18, 8:14, Matt 10:2, Matt 14:28-29, Matt 15:15; Matt 16: 16-23; Matt 17:1-4 and 24-26; Matt 19:27; Matt 26:33-40 and 58-75. References by name in Mark include Mark 3:16; Mark 5:37; Mark 8:29-33; Mark 9:2-5; Mark 10:28; Mark 11:21; Mark 13:3; Mark 14:29-37, 54-72; 16:7 References in Luke include Luke 5:8; Luke 6:14; Luke 8:45-51; Luke 9:20-33; Luke 12:41; Luke 18:28; 22:8, 34, 54-62; and Luke 24:12. In John, you may want to reference John 1:1-2; John 6:8 and 68; John 13: 6, 8-9, 24, 36-37; John 18: 10-27; John 20:2-6; John 21:2-21. Other numerous references in the New Testament include those in Acts, Galatians, and briefly in I and II Peter.

Philip: Like Peter, Philip is found in the four gospels and is also mentioned in some of the other books. Specific mention of his name occurs in Matt 10:3; Matt 14:3; Matt 16:13; Mark 3:18; Mark 6:17; Mark 8:27; Luke 3:1 and 19; Luke 6:14; John 1: 43-48; John 6: 5-7; John 12:21-22; John 14: 8-9; Act 1:13; Acts 6:5; Acts 8:5-40; and Acts 21:8.

Simon: Simon is known as Simon the Canaanite to separate him from Peter who had been known as Simon. References to Simon the Canaanite are found in Matt 10:4; Matt 13:55; Mark 3:16-18; Luke 6:15; and Acts 1:13.

Thomas: Thomas is known to us today as the “Doubter.” In those days he was called Thomas and Didymus. However, the references in the Bible always mention him as Thomas, and sometimes add the Didymus. The best known reference is found in John 20:24-29. Other references include Matt 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; John 11:16; John 14:5; John 21:2; and Acts 1:13.

Judas: There are several men in the New Testament with the name of Judas. Judas Iscariot is the disciple who betrayed Christ. He is mentioned in Matt 10:4; Matt 26:14, 25, and 47; Matt 27:3; Mark 3; Mark 14:10 and 43; Luke 6:16; Luke 22:3, 47-48; John 6:17; John 12:2, 26-29;; John 18:2-5; and Acts 1:16 and 25.

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