

The 12 Disciples of Jesus

Objective:

To explore the lives, backgrounds, strengths, and weaknesses of each of the 12 disciples, helping students understand their significance in the New Testament.

The 12 Disciples Overview

1. Peter (Simon)

- **Origin:** Bethsaida, later Capernaum (John 1:44; Matthew 4:18)
- **Strengths:** Leadership, boldness, faith (Matthew 16:16)
- **Weaknesses:** Impulsiveness, denial of Jesus (Matthew 26:69-75)
- **Life After Christ:** Became a leader in the early church; crucified upside down (traditionally).

2. James (son of Zebedee)

- **Origin:** Son of Zebedee and Salome, from Galilee (Matthew 4:21)
- **Strengths:** Zealous, a strong witness for Christ (Acts 12:2)
- **Weaknesses:** Ambitious (Luke 9:54)
- **Life After Christ:** Martyred by Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:1-2).

3. John

- **Origin:** Brother of James, also from Galilee (Matthew 4:21)
- **Strengths:** Deep love for Christ, called the "beloved disciple" (John 13:23)
- **Weaknesses:** Sons of Thunder temperament (Mark 3:17)
- **Life After Christ:** Exiled to Patmos, authored the Gospel of John and Revelation.

4. Andrew

- **Origin:** Brother of Peter, also from Bethsaida (John 1:40)
- **Strengths:** Faithful, brought others to Christ (John 1:41)
- **Weaknesses:** Less prominent, overshadowed by Peter (John 6:8)
- **Life After Christ:** Preached in various regions, traditionally crucified on an X-shaped cross.

5. Philip

- **Origin:** From Bethsaida (John 1:44)
- **Strengths:** Curious, direct (John 14:8)
- **Weaknesses:** Doubtful, hesitant (John 6:7)
- **Life After Christ:** Preached in Greece, Syria, and Phrygia; traditionally martyred.

6. Bartholomew (Nathanael)

- **Origin:** Likely from Cana in Galilee (John 21:2)
- **Strengths:** Honest, straightforward (John 1:47)
- **Weaknesses:** Initially skeptical (John 1:46)
- **Life After Christ:** Preached in various regions; traditionally martyred.

7. **Matthew (Levi)**

- **Origin:** Tax collector from Capernaum (Matthew 9:9)
- **Strengths:** Background in record-keeping, detailed (Gospel of Matthew)
- **Weaknesses:** Viewed negatively due to his profession (Matthew 9:10-11)
- **Life After Christ:** Evangelized in various regions; traditionally martyred.

8. **Thomas (Didymus)**

- **Origin:** From the region of Judea (John 11:16)
- **Strengths:** Loyal, courageous (John 11:16)
- **Weaknesses:** Doubtful (John 20:24-25)
- **Life After Christ:** Preached in India; traditionally martyred.

9. **James (son of Alphaeus)**

- **Origin:** Often called James the Less; not much is detailed about him (Matthew 10:3)
- **Strengths:** Faithful, loyal (though not much is mentioned in scripture)
- **Weaknesses:** Little known; overshadowed by others
- **Life After Christ:** Tradition holds he was martyred.

10. **Thaddeus (Judas, son of James)**

- **Origin:** Son of James, possibly from Galilee (Luke 6:16)
- **Strengths:** Faithful, asked important questions (John 14:22)
- **Weaknesses:** Less prominent in the Gospels
- **Life After Christ:** Preached in various regions; traditionally martyred.

11. **Simon the Zealot**

- **Origin:** From Galilee (Luke 6:15)
- **Strengths:** Passionate, zealous for God (Acts 1:13)
- **Weaknesses:** His zeal could lead to aggression (Zealots were known for their rebellion)
- **Life After Christ:** Preached in various regions; traditionally martyred.

12. **Judas Iscariot**

- **Origin:** From Judea (John 12:4)
- **Strengths:** Administrative skills (handled the money bag) (John 12:6)
- **Weaknesses:** Greed, betrayal of Jesus (Matthew 26:14-16)
- **Life After Christ:** Betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver; died by suicide (Matthew 27:3-5).

Fill-in-the-Blank Questions:

1. Peter was originally from _____ and became a leader in the early church.
 2. James, son of Zebedee, was known for his _____ and was martyred by Herod.
 3. John is often referred to as the "_____ disciple."
 4. Andrew brought his brother _____ to Jesus.
 5. Philip was from _____ and was known for his curiosity.
 6. Matthew was a _____ collector before following Jesus.
 7. Thomas is often remembered for his _____.
 8. James, son of Alphaeus, is also known as _____.
 9. Thaddeus is the son of _____ and is known for his faithfulness.
 10. Simon the Zealot was known for his _____ for God.
 11. Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus for _____ pieces of silver.
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Reflection Questions:

1. Which disciple's strengths do you relate to most, and why? _____

 2. How can you learn from the weaknesses of the disciples in your own life? _____

 3. Reflect on how God used each disciple despite their flaws. What does this teach you about God's grace? _____

 4. How can you apply the lessons learned from the lives of the disciples to your own faith journey? _____

 5. In what ways can you share your faith like the disciples did, bringing others to Christ? _____

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