



#11: Jesus picks a team | Pastor Joe Wittwer | August 30, 2009

Note 1: Due to **Labor Day** next week's SSG will not be published until Tues, Sept 8. If you have a Monday group, we recommend you keep the bulletin outline from Mike Fairburn's sermon notes and form the main points into questions for discussion.

Note 2: The **African Children's Choir** is visiting Sunday, Sept 13, so there will be no SSG that week. We encourage you to plan a time of pure fellowship and fun—think food!

A. Fellowship Time (10-15 minutes)

1. Chitchat. Perhaps offer coffee, tea, or a cold drink with some snacks.
2. Pray (or invite someone to pray) to open the discussion.

B. Review Time (Read the summary below to the group: 5-10 minutes)

In Mark 3 Jesus' focus takes a significant shift from working primarily with the crowds to training His team of 12 hand-picked disciples. He knows that He is going to die, so He begins the process of passing the baton to carry on the message of the kingdom. **Mark 3:7-19** tells the story: *"Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. When they heard all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him. Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, 'You are the Son of God.' But he gave them strict orders not to tell who he was" (vv.7-12).* In these six verses, Jesus withdraws to the lake, and a large crowd from all the surrounding countries and regions comes to him to be healed and freed. In the next 6 verses, Jesus moves from the lakeside with the crowd to the mountainside where He picks His team. *"Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder); Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him" (vv. 13-19).*

1. Jesus called a team.

The Christian faith began with a small group who banded together to follow Jesus. He died alone on the cross, but He lived His life in community. He surrounded Himself with a dozen guys with whom He shared every moment of life for roughly three years. We can't follow Jesus alone either. We can *practice* alone by praying, reading our Bible, journaling, and meditating, but Christianity is *played* as a team sport. And Jesus picked a very diverse team. Matthew was a tax collector while Simon was a Zealot. In other words, Jesus picked both a traitor to Israel and a radical Jewish nationalist who wanted to eliminate such traitors. What did these men have in common with each other, or with four fishermen, or a half dozen other guys from diverse backgrounds? They each said yes to Jesus. But it wasn't easy—they often fought like cats and dogs. Nevertheless, they hung together because of Jesus, and they learned to love each other.

2. Jesus called them to come into relationship with Him.

Mark 3:14: *"He appointed twelve designating them apostles that they might be with him."* Out of all of His followers, Jesus chose twelve to be apostles, the ones He would entrust with His message and mission. Jesus is a gambler! He risked His entire enterprise to a team of twelve men, and now He trusts His message and mission to us! He came and gave His life to bring us back to God and make all things right again. The first job for the apostles was "to be

with Him.” He wanted them to catch His heart. He wanted to train and coach them. Centuries later, the baton has been passed to us. But before we’re sent on mission, we have to be in relationship and practice the presence of God. This is how Jesus developed and trained His team then and how He trains us today. In Acts 4, the Jewish leaders arrested Peter and John after they had healed a paralyzed man and then proclaimed to an astonished crowd that Jesus had done it. Peter answered their accusers in **Acts 4:9-10**, *“Do you want to know how he was healed? Let me clearly state to all of you and to all the people of Israel that he was healed by the powerful name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, the man you crucified but whom God raised from the dead.”* Peter said this to the very people who had framed and executed Jesus. Where did Peter get this courage? Note **Acts 4:13**, *“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.”* These were ordinary men who had been with Jesus. Before we try to go and do something for Jesus, we first need to be with Him.

3. Jesus called them to go on mission for Him.

Mark 3:14-15: *“He appointed twelve—designating them apostle—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.”* Jesus picked a team, first to be with Him and second to send them out to do His mission. Jesus preached and healed and freed people. In **John 20:21**, the resurrected Jesus tells His team, *“As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.”* Every member of Jesus’ team was a missionary. Every Christian is a missionary. Jesus calls us to come so we can go. He wants us to be an outward-focused church, a church for others, a church that is on a mission from God.

C. Life Group Questions (select, revise, and add as desired: 20-40 minutes)

1. How is trying being a Christian solo like trying to play a team sport solo? (Don’t just laugh. ☺ Talk about some clear parallels and their implications.) In your own experience, when has a team approach to your faith in Jesus promoted growth and "success" for you and others?
2. The religious leaders noted that although “unschooled,” Peter and John were extraordinary because they had been with Jesus; our success as disciples comes from learning from Jesus and knowing His heart. What are some of the ways you do that, both by yourself and as part of a team? [Leaders: Sunday worship, PBJ, Life Group, serving , classes, etc.]
3. What does Jesus want His team to do? If we’re to reach out to an unsaved world, can we do that effectively if we only stick around other believers?—What does Joe mean by a “Christian ghetto”? How are you spending (or how can you spend) meaningful time with non-Christians?
4. God has called us to Him through His son, and He has a purpose for us all. What do you perceive as some of your key roles on the team at this time in your life?

D. Personal Application (1-3 Minutes)

- Keep spending that crucial PBJ time, and during it stay open to leadings from God on how you can best be a part of Jesus’ team, especially in regard to how you can reach out in His name to a broken world.
- This week reach out to someone who isn’t a follower of Jesus; it can be simple: just an invitation to lunch or coffee to let someone know you care about him or her. Let God take it from there.

E. Prayer Time (As a whole group or subgroups of 3-4: 10-15 Minutes)

- Pray that everyone at Life Center will find a way to join a small team—through Life Groups or similar approaches—for friendship and spiritual growth. And pray about how your group might get involved in *The Hole in Our Gospel* series coming up this fall.
- Also ask God to move our whole church to become His missionaries in one way or another, reaching out to our neighbors, our community, and our world.
- Bring any other concerns or praises that came up during the discussion before God.