

Series: Reintroducing Jesus
Text: Luke 6:12-16
May 17, 2015: Gospel Community Study Guide

This Study Guide is based on a sermon by Dr. Joshua Mack. You will find the link to the sermon here.

<http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?sid=52515551540>

Getting Started:

“An influential apostle stood on stage before members of the large church he pastors in Southern California. The apostle told of a man who came to him offering a large sum of money. Surprised by the gesture, he told the man, “That’s a lot of money.” The man replied, “I want to give it to you. You’re my apostle.” The apostle then agreed that it was appropriate to accept the money. He recalled the story in Acts 4: 34– 37, about members of the early church who brought all their money and laid it at the feet of Christ’s apostles. Although this apostle was initially surprised by the man’s action, his acceptance of this generous gift sent a message to others. They , too, should give of their resources to this apostle since he is their local spiritual authority.

As the apostle recounted the story, a young man in the audience suddenly stood up. With confusion written on his face, he said, tentatively, but loud enough for all to hear, “Something is not right here. Something is just not right.” The young man’s voice wasn’t angry. He simply seemed baffled, like he was trying to sort out what was wrong about what was going on. The apostle looked at him and said, “You’re out of order.” A couple of burly men quickly escorted the young man out of the building. The apostle continued on, as if the interruption never happened.

While some in the audience may have forgotten about the incident, at least one person, Liam, still remembers. Most of the people saw a young man who, by questioning the authority of a respected apostle, acted rebelliously. But Liam saw someone who didn’t seem rebellious at all, but rather genuinely alarmed. Why was he alarmed? Though he couldn’t quite put his finger on it, the young man seemed to sense

something unbiblical about the way the apostle exerted authority over the people in the church. This scene plays out in New Apostolic churches throughout the world. And it goes to the heart of New Apostolic teachings. It raises the question: **Are there apostles today who share a level of authority similar to Christ’s original apostles?”**

(God’s Super-Apostles: Encountering the Worldwide Prophets and Apostles Movement, R. Douglas Gievett and Holly Pivec)

The Big Idea:

There are lots of people who are claiming to be apostles. There are many who say we should be doing what the apostles did. We need to study God's Word to know what it says about apostles so that we aren't confused by all the noise we are hearing all around us. It is important we are confident about what the Scripture teaches, because some people will really look down on us for having a different opinion and try to intimidate us into believing something different.

Into the Text:

In looking at Luke 6:12-16 this past Sunday we were introduced to the first group of apostles to appear in the Bible.

Read the following definitions of the Greek word *apostolos* and then try to summarize how they answer the question, what does the word *apostle* mean?

“A messenger, envoy, delegate, one commissioned by another to represent him in some way...”

“Properly, someone sent (commissioned), focusing back on the authority (commissioning) of the sender (note the prefix, *apo*.”

While the word *apostle* has this very general meaning, in the Bible it also has a more technical meaning to describe these twelve men that Jesus commissioned. (Do you hear that? There were different kinds of apostles in the Bible.) This is important to understand. There were apostles with a little a, and then there were apostles with a capital A. Does everyone understand the distinction? Please read the following quote if anyone is confused by what is being said:

“Most of the time this word *apostle* occurs in the New Testament, it is not used generally of a messenger. Instead, the word *apostolos* occurs in the New Testament primarily of a unique group of men, handpicked by Christ, and placed into a specific office. Usually the word *apostle* refers to an office in the church. In fact, when you look at all the times this word occurs, you will find that almost entirely it refers to the twelve, and to Paul, to the twelve apostles and to Paul, the official representatives of Christ. It occurs this way ten times in the gospel, almost thirty times in Acts, more than thirty times in Paul's letters, and eight times in the rest of the New Testament. So understand then, the apostles were in an office. They were chosen and commissioned by Christ to be his direct representatives. An apostle can act in another person's place in a way that is authoritative and legally binding, an authorized representative.”

One word that helps us get an idea the significance of these apostles is the Aramaic word “shaliah.” Read the follow explanation from John MacArthur of what this word means and then share what you think is the significance of what he is saying:

“Remember that the common language in Israel in Jesus’ time – the language Jesus Himself spoke was not Hebrew but Aramaic. In that first century Jewish culture, the shaliah was an official representative of the Sanhedrin, the ruling council of Israel. A shaliah exercised the full rights of the Sanhedrin. He spoke for them and when he spoke, he spoke with their authority. He was owed the same respect and deference as the council itself. But he never delivered his own message; his task was to deliver the message of the group whom he represented. The office of shaliah was well known. Shaliah were sent out to settle legal or religious disputes, and they acted with the full authority of the whole council. Some prominent rabbis also had their shaliah, ‘sent ones’ who taught their message and represented them with their full authority. Even the Jewish Mishnah (a collection of oral traditions originally conceived as a commentary on the Law) recognized the role of the shaliah. It says, ‘The one sent by the man is as the man himself.’ So the nature of the office was well known to the Jewish people. Thus when Jesus appointed apostles, He was saying something very familiar to the people in that culture. These were his delegates. They were his trusted shaliah. They spoke with His authority, delivered His message, and exercised His authority.”

Let’s take some time to look at the characteristics that we see in the Bible that were true of these kind of apostles.

1.) What did Jesus do in Luke 6:12 before he called the apostles? What does that tell us?

Read the following verses and note what Paul says about where his apostleship came from:

Galatians 1:1

Galatians 1:15,16

1 Corinthians 1:1 (by whose will was Paul called as an apostle?)

2.) Did the disciples raise their hands and volunteer to be apostles? What actually happened?

Read the following verses and note where Paul says his ministry came from:

Acts 20:24

Romans 1:5

3.) One of the ways we see the significance of their being twelve apostles is in the fact that after Judas died, the apostles chose someone to replace him. When they made this choice however, there were certain qualifications. Read the following passage and identify what that qualification was:

Acts 1:20-26

(How did Paul meet this qualification – at least generally?)

1 Corinthians 15:8 (What is the significance of the word last, if one of the qualifications of a true apostle was seeing the risen Jesus?)

One author explains, "...being an eyewitness was a necessary condition for being an apostle of Christ. In other words, apostles of Christ only received their recognition as apostles based on an appearance from the Lord. This is consistent with Paul's view. He cited having "seen Jesus our Lord" as evidence of his own apostleship (1 Cor. 9: 1). Being an eyewitness was not a sufficient

condition, however. Paul states in 1 Corinthians 15: 6 that Christ appeared to "more than five hundred brothers at one time." These brethren, though they were blessed with an eyewitness appearance, are not called apostles— in clear contrast to those who are called apostles in the immediately surrounding verses. Presumably, then, one could have been an eyewitness without receiving the status of an apostle of Christ. So, what criteria, other than an eyewitness experience of Christ, qualified one as an apostle of Christ and differentiated one from those who were eyewitnesses? In addition to an eyewitness encounter, the Twelve and Paul also received a personal commission from Christ."

4.) Finally, God authenticated true apostles through signs and wonders.

1 Corinthians 12:12 (What was the purpose of the signs and wonders according to this verse?)

Acts 2:43

Romans 15:17-19

Hebrews 2:1-4

(This is very important just to note. The purpose of the signs and miracles was to authenticate the messenger as someone speaking divine revelation. Miracles are called signs and wonders because they were designed to confirm that someone was delivering new revelation from God and to cause wonder that would act as a sign pointing to a true spokesman. Now that we have the completion of revelation, that the canon has been closed, there is no need for that any longer.)

Digging Deeper:

So far we have looked at two kinds of apostles. Apostles that were sent by the churches, Apostles that were commissioned directly by Christ, and now we can just take a moment and look at one last kind of apostle mentioned in Scripture. The false apostle. Read the following verses and note the characteristics of a false apostle:

2 Corinthians 2:17, 4:2,5, 5:12,10:10,11:4,5,12:11

Summing Up:

We may not have answered every question about apostles, but hopefully we have given you something to think about! What are some things you have learned from our study? What questions do you still have that you would like to discuss?