

Small Group Discussion Outline



One of the most incredible things about the God we believe in, and yet, also one of the most difficult to grasp is that He became like us. Almighty God laid aside all His glory and His right to use His power so that, becoming man, Jesus could be the perfect substitute for our lives.

Of course, it's very easy to picture Jesus as some kind of super-human, someone with abilities and strength far beyond anything we could ever hope to experience. Somewhere in amongst this view we can easily forget that Jesus experienced the same kinds of things we experience and had the same needs that we have.

Read the following passages, after each one answer the question below.



Read: Mark 11:12; John 19:28; John 4:6; Matthew 14:12-13b



What need did Jesus have?

The Bible paints an amazing picture of Jesus - fully God, yet also fully man. Jesus got hungry, thirsty, tired, and when His cousin was executed Jesus was sad and needed time alone.

The Bible also describes numerous occasions where Jesus "had compassion" on the people. So we serve the Most High Living God who became human, just like us, and had the same needs - both emotional and physical - that we do.



Read: Luke 5:1-11

Read: Matthew 4:18

At first it may appear that there is a discrepancy in these two versions of what happened, however, in ancient times it was very common to note just the eldest family member or the most significant characters in order to convey the particular message that the writer was wanting to share. Peter was Andrew's older brother and plays a much more public role in the life of Christ and the Early Church.



The first people Jesus called had three significant things in common. Any ideas?

Peter, his brother Andrew, and James, and his brother John were all fishermen. They were hard working, diligent people. They were brothers, two sets of brothers working together - they knew the value of family and relationships. Lastly, they were business partners - they knew how to work together, that they needed each others help and support. They knew that they could rely on each other.

When Three
is Not a Crowd

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PO Box 196
Waiuku 1852
New Zealand

We know from the Bible that Jesus had twelve close friends, the twelve disciples. Of these twelve, though, Jesus formed a close relationship with just a few of them - they were His best friends. Jesus recognised, right at the beginning of His ministry, that He needed good, faithful friends.

The disciples were not simply called into a student-teacher relationship with Jesus, nor were they simply there to help facilitate the spreading of Jesus' teachings. These twelve friends were there to fulfil a need Jesus recognised that He had for friendship.



Read: Mark 5:35-37; Mark 9:2-3; Mark 13:3-4; Mark 14:32-34

Who were the three that were consistently close to Jesus?

In all of the accounts above, Peter, James and John were the common thread. The only exception being Andrew in the third passage - remember that Andrew was Peter's brother, and so this is not unusual. However, out of all the disciples - and we read elsewhere in the Bible that Jesus had at least another 120 (Acts 1:15), Jesus chose just three to be His best friends.



Read: John 1:42; Mark 3:17

With Scripture there is a tendency to spiritualize everything, to-be-sure, everything contains an element of spiritual truth to be gleaned, but sometimes we would do well to look at certain things a little more simplistically. Here, Jesus gave His three best friends nicknames - it's what friends do!



Read: Luke 22:8; Acts 3:1; Acts 8:14

Who's missing?

What we can see in the above passages is a process of separation and isolation. James, once the inseparable friend and partner of Peter, James, the brother of John, James, one of Jesus' best friends finds himself on the outside.



Read: Acts 12:1-2

James found himself isolated. He found himself in the wrong place at the wrong time - separated from those he'd grown with in Christ.

Jesus had nicknamed him one of the "Son's of Thunder" - it is very likely that his big mouth got him into trouble and resulted in his execution. Our friends are there to protect us from ourselves.

Throughout the whole of Jesus' ministry James had thrived as one of His disciples. Even after the crucifixion we see James gathered in the Upper Room at Pentecost (Acts 1:13).



So what happened?

The Bible does not give us any explanation, but we can see that James became separated, isolated from his friends and support network. He was still following Jesus, but he became cut off from his closest friends.

Jesus knew that He needed friends and sought them out and spent time with them. For James, becoming separated from his friends resulted in death because he wasn't in a position for them to support him. Good, Christian friends are absolutely vital to our Christian growth...(to be continued)

WAIUKU ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Ph: (09) 235 7341 **Mob:** (021) 187 1928 **Email:** waiukuag@wag.org.nz **Web:** www.wag.org.nz